

JUNE 15, 1964

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
TO THE KENNEDY FOUNDATION MENTAL RETARDATION GROUP  
THE ROSE GARDEN

Mr. Shriver, Mrs. Shriver, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thirty years ago, or even three years ago, if anyone had asked what was being done about mental retardation, the answer would have been a shrug of the shoulder. Your presence here this afternoon indicates how our answer and our attitude is changing. We are answering with our hearts and our heads, not with shrugs and silence.

All Americans can be proud and grateful for the results. Mental retardation afflicts nearly 6 million Americans. It affects 10 times more persons than diabetes; 20 times more than tuberculosis; 600 times more than polio. A retarded child is born every five minutes, 126,000 every year.

Yet, until very recently, our knowledge or interest in thiscrippler was little greater in the Twentieth Century than it had been in the First Century. Today we can say objectively that more has been done in the Government in the past two years than in the previous 200 years to meet the challenge of mental retardation.

Announcements which can be made this afternoon reflect the pace of our progress. First, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development has approved grants which will result in construction of two mental retardation centers, one on the East Coast, the other on the West Coast.

Second, the Civil Service Commission has successfully begun a pioneering program for employing the mentally retarded, 85 percent of whom are employable. We are confident industry, like Government, will find these people make capable, devoted workers at many levels.

Third, the Advertising Council is making the subject of mental retardation their number one effort, a long step forward to awakening public awareness.

Fourth, the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce is dedicating the energy and enterprise of its fine members to support of the program.

Fifth, more encouraging of all are the results promised by development of a simple, inexpensive and accurate test for detection of the condition which causes mental retardation. The PKU tests, made within the first 72 hours after birth, promise to permit salvaging children from retardation by special diets inaugurated early in their lives.

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Research indicates this: that at a cost of \$420 we could have detected the 840 cases of retardation among newborn babies with a saving of \$80 million which is the cost of their institutional care for a lifetime.

We are making spectacular progress on many fronts. The future is exciting and gratifying. The gains achieved and gains to come are due to the compassion and courage of the man who focused our national conscience and capabilities on the problem, John F. Kennedy.

Seventeen months ago, in his message to Congress on retardation, President Kennedy touched the untouchable, and today, only a short time later, a revolution in the field of retardation is under way. That work is being given the most able direction and leadership of the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation under the tireless guidance of Mrs. Eunice Kennedy Shriver, to whom the parents of many children yet unborn will some day owe a great debt.

We have made progress. But our efforts have only begun. We will continue until we find all the answers we have been seeking, until we find a place for all those who suffer with the problem. I believe we will accomplish more toward overcoming retardation in the next five years than the world has accomplished in the last five hundred years.

All of you are participating in a richly rewarding effort and I both thank you and congratulate you.

END

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY  
(New York, N. Y.)

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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT JOSEPH P. KENNEDY, JR. FOUNDATION AWARDS DINNER  
AMERICANA HOTEL, NEW YORK, N. Y.

(AS ACTUALLY DELIVERED)

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Prime Minister, Your Eminence,  
Mrs. Kennedy, Members of the Kennedy Family, Award Winners,  
Distinguished Guests and Friends:

Earlier generations of Americans were fortunate to  
have known the Adamses, the Lees, the Randolphs, the LaFollettes,  
and the Roosevelts.

Our generation is proud and blessed to have known the  
Kennedys. They are an extraordinary family. Fierce competi-  
tors in life, they are a closely knit team, for they are all  
genuine friends as well as relatives -- united in prayer,  
devoted to their parents, and maintaining a community of  
purpose and practice which makes them the world's second  
most powerful Common Market.

Unlike many who have their opportunities, they prefer  
labor to leisure. They place the public good ahead of private  
gain. They both preach excellence and pursue it. They have  
been granted more than their share of greatness, but they  
have also been dealt more than their share of grief. The  
senseless, mindless murder of their martyred brother and son  
brought endless, timeless grief to every American home.

John Kennedy was to have been here tonight. No  
cause was closer to his heart. Millions of people, at home  
and around the world, will reap the harvest of his pioneering  
work in this field -- a field which has been so greatly mis-  
understood and so greatly neglected so many years.

Humbly, I shall carry on for him here, as I intend  
to carry on the great efforts that he started for lasting  
peace. With his memory and his spirit to inspire us, and with  
his words and his works to guide us, we shall live up to that  
trust. We shall finish his fight; and we shall conquer mental  
retardation and mental illness and poverty and every other  
foe of the land that he loved, and every other foe of the  
people he served.

Now it is my high honor and great pleasure to present  
to the Honorable John E. Fogarty, of the State of Rhode Island,  
the International Award of the Kennedy Foundation; to the  
Honorable Lister Hill, of the State of Alabama; to the  
Honorable Bert Combs, former Governor of the State of Kentucky;  
to Dr. Grover Francis Powers, Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics  
at Yale University; to Dr. Robert P. Lafon of the University  
of Montpellier; and to Dr. Lionel S. Penrose, of the University  
of London.

Now it is my proud privilege to present to you the  
great Executive Director of the Kennedy Foundation, Mr.  
Sargent Shriver. Thank you.

END