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**Record Group/Collection:** Donated Historical Materials  
**Collection/Office of Origin:** Frieden, Lex, Collection  
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**Folder Title:**

"Keynote Presentation by Lex Frieden at 40th Annual Meeting of the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, April 15, 1987"

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**Stack:**

**Row:**

**Section:**

**Shelf:**

**Position:**

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KEYNOTE PRESENTATION MADE BY LEX FRIEDEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON THE HANDICAPPED, AT THE 40TH ANNUAL MEETING OF  
THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT OF THE HANDICAPPED, DENVER,  
COLORADO, APRIL 15, 1987

THANK YOU, MRS. VIERRA, FOR THAT VERY KIND INTRODUCTION. I WOULD  
ALSO LIKE TO THANK SANDRA PARRINO, CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL  
COUNCIL ON THE HANDICAPPED, AND THE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL FOR ALL  
THE SUPPORT WHICH THEY HAVE GIVEN ME DURING MY TENURE AS DIRECTOR  
OF THE COUNCIL. AS YOU MAY KNOW, THE COUNCIL IS COMPOSED OF  
FIFTEEN INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT AND  
CONFIRMED BY THE SENATE. MORE THAN HALF OF THE MEMBERS OF THE  
COUNCIL ARE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES OR PARENTS OF PERSONS WITH  
DISABILITIES. ALL OF THE MEMBERS ARE VERY KNOWLEDGEABLE AND  
DEDICATED TO THEIR WORK ON THE COUNCIL. WITHOUT THEIR SUPPORT, I  
WOULD NOT HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE HERE TODAY.

ALSO, THANKS TO THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE, THE COLORADO COALITION,  
AND THE MEMBERS OF THE ANNUAL MEETING PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR  
INVITING ME HERE AND FOR GIVING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE SOME  
IDEAS WITH YOU TODAY. THIS IS TRULY AN HONOR AND A PRIVILEGE FOR  
ME.

I WAS ASKED TO PRESENT A CONSUMER PERSPECTIVE OF DISABILITY POLICY. I WILL BE PLEASED TO DO THAT. HOWEVER, BEFORE I PROCEED FURTHER, I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW; HOW MANY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE IN THE AUDIENCE? HOW MANY OF YOU ARE FAMILY MEMBERS OR FRIENDS OF SOMEONE WHO IS DISABLED? HOW MANY OF YOU ARE EMPLOYERS OF DISABLED PEOPLE? HOW MANY REHABILITATION PROFESSIONALS AND OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS ARE IN THE AUDIENCE TODAY? HOW MANY OF YOU CONSIDER YOURSELVES TO BE ADVOCATES FOR THE RIGHTS OF DISABLED PEOPLE?

HOW MANY OF YOU WANT ME TO TALK ABOUT HOW HAPPY DISABLED PEOPLE ARE AND ABOUT WHAT GREAT WORKERS DISABLED PEOPLE MAKE? HOW MANY OF YOU WANT ME TO TELL IT LIKE IT IS -- ABOUT HOW MOST OF US ARE UNDEREMPLOYED AND UNDER-PAID, OR MAYBE NOT EMPLOYED AT ALL? ABOUT HOW WE DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING, ATTENDENT SERVICES, READERS OR INTERPRETERS? HOW MANY OF YOU WANT ME TO TALK ABOUT DISCRIMINATION -- ABOUT HOW SOME EMPLOYERS DENY US JOBS AND SOME SCHOOLS DENY US ADMISSION BECAUSE WE ARE DISABLED -- ABOUT HOW SOME AIRLINES AND SOME BUS TRANSPORTATION COMPANIES DENY US SERVICE BECAUSE WE ARE DISABLED -- ABOUT HOW SOME INSURANCE COMPANIES WILL NOT INSURE US BECAUSE THEY CONSIDER US TO BE DAMAGED GOODS?! HOW MANY OF YOU WANT ME TO TALK ABOUT HOW THERE IS MORE TO LIFE THAN WORK -- ABOUT HOW MANY OF US ALSO WANT THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE MORE

INDEPENDENT, TO HAVE ACCESS TO RECREATION, CULTURAL AND LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES? HOW MANY OF YOU WANT ME TO TALK ABOUT INDEPENDENT LIVING -- ABOUT DISABLED PEOPLE MAKING DECISIONS WHICH AFFECT OUR OWN LIVES (AS OPPOSED TO ALWAYS HAVING NONDISABLED POLICY MAKERS, MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS, VOCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT OUR LIVES FOR US)?

HOW MANY OF YOU WANT ME TO TALK ABOUT HOW PUBLIC INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION AND REHABILITATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND IN SERVICES DESIGNED TO HELP US BE MORE INDEPENDENT WILL ACTUALLY RESULT IN US BEING MORE PRODUCTIVE AND SELF-SUFFICIENT, AND AS A RESULT, LESS DEPENDENT ON PUBLIC EXPENDITURES, AND LESS BURDENSOME ON OUR FELLOW TAXPAYERS? HOW MANY OF YOU WANT ME TO TALK ABOUT HOW WE SHALL OVERCOME DISCRIMINATION AND PREJUDICE -- HOW WE WILL SUCCEED IN OBTAINING OUR RIGHTS; HOW WE WILL GET JOBS; HOW WE WILL BECOME PRODUCTIVE, SELF-SUPPORTING CITIZENS AND TAXPAYERS; AND ABOUT HOW, INSTEAD OF BEING THE PROBLEM, WE WILL BECOME PART OF THE SOLUTION TO THE PENDING CRISIS IMPOSED BY OUR NATIONAL DEBT?

I BROKE MY NECK IN AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT NEARLY TWENTY YEARS AGO AND JUST FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCE, I CAN SAY, AND MAYBE SOME OF YOU CAN ALSO RELATE TO THIS -- WE HAVE MADE GREAT PROGRESS DURING THE LAST TWO DECADES IN ESTABLISHING THE RIGHTS OF DISABLED PEOPLE,

IN IMPROVING ACCESS TO FACILITIES AND SERVICES, IN DEVELOPING AND EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, IN CHANGING ATTITUDES OF POLICY MAKERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC, AND IN MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE MORE NORMAL, MORE ACCEPTABLE AND MORE ROUTINE.

THE CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES, AND IN PARTICULAR THOSE OF US WHO HAVE A PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE ISSUE, SHOULD BE PROUD OF THE FACT THAT THERE ARE MORE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES EMPLOYED IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY THAN THERE HAVE BEEN IN THIS OR ANY OTHER COUNTRY IN THE WORLD AT THIS OR ANY OTHER TIME IN HISTORY. THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF DEDICATED DISABLED AND NONDISABLED PROFESSIONALS AND VOLUNTEERS, PARENTS AND ADVOCATES, COUNSELORS AND PROVIDERS, EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES -- MANY PEOPLE REPRESENTED HERE TODAY -- WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS PROGRESS. THEY SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED AND CONGRATULATED.

WE NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR PROGRESS AND GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE. BUT FRIENDS ... IF WE ARE GOING TO CONTINUE MAKING PROGRESS, IF WE ARE GOING TO REALLY DELIVER THE AMERICAN DREAM TO 36 MILLION AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES -- THEN WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO RECOGNIZE OUR FAILURES JUST AS WE RECOGNIZE OUR SUCCESSES. OF THE 24 MILLION DISABLED PEOPLE OF WORKING AGE IN THE UNITED STATES

TODAY, APPROXIMATELY ONE THIRD ARE WORKING. EIGHT MILLION DISABLED PEOPLE WITH JOBS IS GREAT; BUT WHAT ABOUT THE 8 MILLION WHO WANT TO WORK AND CANNOT FIND JOBS. OR WHAT ABOUT THE 8 MILLION WHO CONSIDER THEMSELVES TOO DISABLED TO WORK OR WHO ARE SO DISCOURAGED THAT THEY ARE NOT EVEN LOOKING FOR JOBS ANYMORE? WHAT ABOUT THE FACT THAT MOST PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND MOST PUBLIC HOUSING IN THIS COUNTRY IS NOT ACCESSIBLE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES? WHAT ABOUT THE FACT THAT IT TAKES OFTEN MORE THAN A WEEKS NOTICE TO GET AN INTERPRETER FOR A DEAF PERSON OR A READER FOR A BLIND PERSON, OR A RESPITE CARE PROVIDER FOR A PERSON WHO IS MENTALLY RETARDED OR AN ATTENDANT FOR A PERSON WHO IS PHYSICALLY DISABLED OR NEEDED THERAPY AND MEDICATION FOR A PERSON WITH ACUTE SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL ILLNESS?

YOU KNOW, A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO I WAS WORKING ON MY NOTES FOR THESE REMARKS TODAY -- AND BROWSING THROUGH SOME OLD FILES, I CAME UPON THE REJECTION LETTER I RECEIVED WHEN I APPLIED TO GO TO COLLEGE SEVERAL MONTHS AFTER I BECAME DISABLED. I WAS REMEMBERING MY FEELINGS OF BEWILDERMENT, DISAPPOINTMENT, AND DISILLUSIONMENT ABOUT THE FACT THAT I HAD BEEN TURNED DOWN FOR ADMISSION TO THE UNIVERSITY STRICTLY ON THE BASIS OF MY DISABILITY. I WAS A PRETTY PATRIOTIC KID AND PROBABLY PRETTY GREEN, HAVING BEEN RAISED IN A QUIET TOWN IN RURAL OKLAHOMA. I EVEN WROTE AN ESSAY IN HIGH

SCHOOL, BEFORE I BECAME DISABLED, ABOUT HOW PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES SHOULD BE TREATED WITH COMPASSION AND WITH DIGNITY. I NEVER IMAGINED HOW CRUEL AND PAINFUL PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION COULD BE, UNTIL I EXPERIENCED IT MYSELF. I DO NOT THINK THAT ANYONE CAN UNDERSTAND REAL DISCRIMINATION UNTIL THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED IT THEMSELVES.

WHILE THINKING ABOUT THAT -- MY FIRST CONFRONTATION WITH BLATANT DISCRIMINATION, I BEGAN TO MUSE ABOUT HOW MUCH PROGRESS THE DISABILITY MOVEMENT, THE DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND THE INDEPENDENT LIVING MOVEMENT HAVE MADE IN THIS COUNTRY -- AND THEN THE TELEPHONE RANG -- IT WAS A WOMAN CALLING FROM TEXAS WHO WAS BEWILDERED, DISAPPOINTED AND DISILLUSIONED. SHE HAD JUST BEEN DENIED ADMISSION TO A GRADUATE PROGRAM BECAUSE SHE WAS DISABLED.

DID YOU KNOW THE GROVE CITY DECISION BY THE SUPREME COURT NEARLY THREE YEARS AGO SET THE DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT BACK FIFTEEN YEARS? DID YOU KNOW THE CIVIL RIGHTS RESTORATION ACT WHICH WOULD RESTORE THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO THE SAME PROTECTION AS BEFORE GROVE CITY HAS BEEN STALLED IN THREE SUCCESSIVE CONGRESSES? DID YOU KNOW THAT EVEN IF THE GROVE CITY SITUATION WAS FIXED, MOST BUSINESSES IN THIS COUNTRY COULD DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF DISABILITY -- LEGALLY?

I HESITATE TO USE A TRITE QUOTATION, BUT MANY OF YOU PROBABLY HEARD A FORMER PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE SAY "ENOUGH IS ENOUGH". WELL, I BELIEVE ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. I AND THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON THE HANDICAPPED AND MANY OF OUR ADVISERS, COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS, AND PERHAPS MANY OF YOU HERE TODAY, BELIEVE IT IS ABOUT TIME TO STATE ONCE AND FOR ALL, WITHOUT EQUIVOCATION AND IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS THAT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE EQUAL AND THAT WE SHOULD BE TREATED EQUALLY UNDER THE LAW; BY OUR GOVERNMENT; AND BY OUR FELLOW CITIZENS.

IN OUR REPORT "TOWARD INDEPENDENCE", THE NATIONAL COUNCIL RECOMMENDED: "CONGRESS SHOULD ENACT A COMPREHENSIVE LAW REQUIRING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, WITH BROAD COVERAGE AND SETTING CLEAR, CONSISTENT, AND ENFORCEABLE STANDARDS PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF HANDICAP".

THE COUNCIL BELIEVES THAT SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 IS PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT MILESTONE AND TOOL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THEIR STRUGGLE TO OBTAIN EQUAL RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR SOCIETY. BUT THE GUARANTEES OF SECTION 504 FALL FAR SHORT OF THE PROTECTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION PROVIDED TO OTHER MINORITIES AND WOMEN, AND FAIL TO ADDRESS MANY OF THE MOST

SERIOUS TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION THAT DISADVANTAGE AND DEBILITATE MANY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

THE PRIMARY GOALS OF A NEWLY CONSTITUTED COMPREHENSIVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY LAW, AS CONCEIVED BY THE COUNCIL, WOULD BE: 1.) TO PROVIDE COVERAGE COMMENSURATE WITH THAT AFFORDED IN STATUTES PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF RACE, SEX, NATIONAL ORIGIN, AND RELIGION; 2.) TO PROVIDE CLEAR, STRONG, CONSISTENT, ENFORCEABLE STANDARDS FOR ADDRESSING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES; AND 3.) TO ADDRESS THE MAJOR AREAS OF DISCRIMINATION FACED DAY-TO-DAY BY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.

THE STATUTE ENVISIONED BY THE COUNCIL WOULD ENCOMPASS MANY AREAS THAT ARE CURRENTLY COVERED UNDER OTHER TYPES OF CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS, BUT NOT THOSE WHICH NOW PROHIBIT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES. THIS COMPREHENSIVE STATUTE WOULD APPLY TO 1.) THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, ANY OF ITS AGENCIES AND DEPARTMENTS, AND THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE; 2.) ANY RECIPIENT OF FEDERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE; 3.) ANY FEDERAL CONTRACTOR, SUBCONTRACTOR, OR LICENSEE; 4.) ANY EMPLOYER ENGAGED IN AN INDUSTRY AFFECTING COMMERCE, ANY EMPLOYMENT AGENCY, OR LABOR UNION; 5.) ANY SELLER, LANDLORD, OR OTHER PROVIDER OF HOUSING COVERED BY TITLE VIII OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1968; 6.) ANY PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION COVERED BY

TITLE II OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; 7.) ANY PERSON, COMPANY, OR AGENCY THAT ENGAGES IN THE BUSINESS OF INTERSTATE TRANSPORTATION OF PERSONS, GOODS, DOCUMENTS, OR DATA; 8.) ANY PERSON, COMPANY OR AGENCY THAT MAKES USE OF THE MAILES OR INTERSTATE COMMUNICATIONS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES FOR SELLING, ARRANGING OR PROVIDING INSURANCE; AND 9.) ANY STATE, OR AGENCY OR POLITICAL SUBDIVISION OF A STATE.

THE COUNCIL'S PROPOSES TO SPELL OUT THE SPECIFIC TYPES OF ACTIONS WHICH CONSTITUTE ILLEGAL DISCRIMINATION. FROM EXISTING SECTION 504 REGULATIONS, THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WOULD BE FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION: 1) INTENTIONAL EXCLUSION; 2) UNINTENTIONAL EXCLUSION; 3.) SEGREGATION; 4.) UNEQUAL OR INFERIOR SERVICES, BENEFITS, OR ACTIVITIES; OR 5.) LESS EFFECTIVE SERVICES, BENEFITS, OR ACTIVITIES. IN ADDITION, THREE OTHER FORMS OF UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATION WOULD BE DELINEATED: FAILING TO REMOVE ARCHITECTURAL, TRANSPORTATION, AND COMMUNICATION BARRIERS; REFUSING TO MAKE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS TO ENABLE A PARTICULAR PERSON WITH A DISABILITY TO PARTICIPATE; AND IMPOSING DISCRIMINATORY QUALIFICATIONS STANDARDS, SELECTION CRITERIA, AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA.

SOME POLITICAL WAGS AND OTHER CRITICS HAVE SAID THE DISABLED

COMMUNITY DOES NOT HAVE THE NEED, THE DESIRE, THE POLITICAL SAVVY, THE ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITY, OR THE SIMPLE DETERMINATION TO PULL THIS OFF -- TO DEVELOP AND SEE PASSED THIS TYPE OF COMPREHENSIVE LEGISLATION. WELL, I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT. I BELIEVE WE DO HAVE THE NEED, THE DESIRE, THE SAVVY, THE ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITY, AND THE DETERMINATION TO SUCCEED IN ACHIEVING OUR GOAL OF CLEAR PROTECTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION UNDER THE LAW.

LET'S BE DISABILITY PROUD! LET'S BE STRIDENT IN OUR VIEWS ABOUT EQUALITY! LET'S REFUSE TO COMPROMISE OUR BASIC RIGHTS AS CITIZENS! LET'S MARCH FORWARD IN UNITY AND STAND AS ONE, REGARDLESS OF OUR DISABILITY TYPE AND OF OUR OTHER DIFFERENCES! LET'S DEMAND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY, EQUAL RIGHTS, EQUAL PROTECTION AND EQUAL PARTICIPATION!

WE HAVE PROVEN WE CAN WORK; WE HAVE PROVEN WE CAN LEAD; WE HAVE PROVEN WE CAN BE PRODUCTIVE; AND WE HAVE PROVEN WE CAN CONTRIBUTE. NOW, LET US PROVE WE CAN WORK TOGETHER TO DEVELOP A CONSENSUS APPROACH TO LEGISLATING NONDISCRIMINATION. LET US PROVE THAT WE CAN STAND TOGETHER IN UNITY TO SEEK OUR RIGHTS; AND LET US STAND TOGETHER AS ONE UNTIL WE SUCCEED ONCE AND FOR ALL IN ESTABLISHING, BY LAW, EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND EQUAL RIGHTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES!

THANK YOU.

IL Report  
R.P. Farnsworth

making decisions  
addressing problems  
accounting responsibility  
recognizing opportunity

alone or together

via ILCo - services, peer support, advocacy

200 centers - NCTE - legislation - state funding

Ben's Study & Act - 1997  
Some other drafting toward institutionalization

must obtain growth, enthusiasm  
must preserve advocacy orientation (beyond ILC)  
must reach out to new groups and individuals

education  
commitment organization  
leadership  
action  
new people

must be prepared to assume responsibility, control  
must be willing to assume risks  
must be firmly committed to the ultimate goal:  
inclusion, equality, independence

Washington Conf.  
New York City - West 92