

even great men—who love freedom but who are so blinded by what they call the “rampant materialism” of the western world that they profess to see no great difference between what this monument represents and what Communism represents. That difference is measured by the phrase: Freedom under law.

What do we mean by freedom under law? We mean a great deal more, surely, than mere obedience to written laws. We mean acknowledgment of the fact that there are moral limitations on civil power. We mean that human beings have rights, *as human beings*, which are superior to what may be thought to be the rights of the state, or of society. This is the truth which all men of good will must some day see. It is the truth exemplified in the Magna Carta and in the American Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights. This is the truth to which we must cling, the truth we must never permit to become trite with dull repetition, the truth we must proclaim and proclaim again until it echoes and re-echoes not only in that half of the World which is free, but also in that half of the World which is enslaved. This is the truth which is the crux of our heritage of freedom, which has made mighty nations of both Britain and America, the truth which is at once the sword and the shield of the Free World in its battle against the alien tyranny of Communism.

Freedom can be won only in struggle; and once won, no matter how ably recorded in writing for posterity, it can never be assured to any new generation not willing to fight for it. When freedom becomes ingrained in the civilization of a people, when they understand it, cherish it, and guard it, when their institutions bespeak it and their daily lives are guided by it, when they love it more than life and covet it not merely for themselves but for each other, then only is it truly theirs.

Mere love of country will not suffice without understanding devotion to its true ideals. Compromise between what we know is good and what we know is evil is wholly evil, and can produce no good. Each generation that would pass on to its children the heritage of freedom must be honestly and intelligently ready to live, or to die, for human liberty. It must count no personal ambition, no private gain, no popular cause or national slogan for a single instant more important

than the freedom of man.

We honor here an idea; not the idea of a man, but the idea of a people, and an idea *for* all people; the idea of a permanent law of the land preserving and safeguarding the fundamental rights and liberties of every individual.

We Americans thank God and England for the origin and development of that body of law and those principles of government which were the foundation and have been the inspiration of America's legal system and of the great basic guaranties of individual liberty and self-determination which underlie our Constitutional structure.

It is in the spirit of perpetual union with you to serve and preserve the ideal of Magna Carta that American lawyers offer this monument as a token of reverence for our joint heritage of freedom under law. It is our earnest desire that this ceremony may be seen and understood throughout the whole World as encompassing not merely the dedication of a monument but also the re-dedication of the people of two great nations to the principles which have made and kept them free. Then will this monument stand forever as a symbolic beacon to summon all enslaved peoples toward the freedom that can be theirs. The ultimate goal of all people in all nations must be peace in freedom under the rule of law, which means a peace embodying the principles of the Great Charter we honor here today. May God grant us the wisdom and leadership to move steadily toward this goal with all possible speed.

This simple monument of Portland Stone was designed by Sir Edward Maufe, one of England's most renowned architects, to harmonize with the natural beauty of this setting. We are most pleased and gratified with his beautiful creation, which we are assured will last for more than 1,000 years. As Chairman of the American Bar Association's Committee to commemorate Magna Carta, on behalf of the people of America, acting through our legal profession, I hereby present it to you who represent the legal profession and the people of England and the great Commonwealth of Nations. In doing so we dedicate this monument to our joint heritage of individual freedom under law and to the hope that this great idea and ideal of Magna Carta will in the near future be extended to all mankind.

Cross Of Blindness

OUR PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY

By JACOBUS tenBROEK, *President, National Federation of the Blind, Chairman, Department of Speech, University of California, Berkeley, California, Member of the California State Board of Social Welfare*

Delivered at the Banquet of the Annual Convention, New Orleans, Louisiana, July 6, 1957

IN THE SHORT 17 years since our founding of the National Federation of the Blind, we have grown from a handful of men and women scattered over seven states to a federation of 43 state affiliates. The first convention of the NFB in 1940 was attended by 12 or 15 persons—our convention last year had a registration of 705 from every corner of the union.

That is rapid organizational growth by any yardstick. Who are these people of the National Federation of the Blind? What is the purpose that has led them to self-organization in such numbers, and unites them now with such apparent dedication and enthusiasm?

It is not enough, I think, to answer that the members of the NFB are drawn together by their common interest in the

welfare of the blind; for many of the sighted share that, too. Nor is it sufficient to say that we are united only because we are blind; many who are affiliated with agencies for the blind have that characteristic also. It is fundamental to the uniqueness of our group that we are the only nation-wide organization *for* the blind which is also *of* the blind. The composition of the NFB, indeed, is living testimony to the fact—unfortunately not yet accepted by society as a whole—that the blind are capable of self-organization: which is to say, of leading themselves, of directing their own destiny.

Yet this is still only half the truth, only a part of the characteristic which defines our Federation and provides its reason for being. Our real distinction from other organizations in the field of blind welfare lies in the social precept and personal

conviction which are the motive source of our activity and the wellspring of our faith. The belief that we who are blind are normal human beings sets us sharply apart from other groups designed to aid the blind. We have all the typical and ordinary range of talents and techniques, attitudes and aspirations. Our underlying assumption is not—as it is with some other groups—the intrinsic helplessness and everlasting dependency of those who happen to lack sight, but rather their innate capacity to nullify and overrule this disability—to find their place in the community—with much the same degree of success and failure to be found among the general population.

Perhaps I can best document this thesis of the normality of the blind with a random sample of the occupations represented at our national convention a year ago in San Francisco. Among the blind delegates in attendance, there were: 3 blind physicists engaged in experimental work for the United States Government. There was one blind chemist also doing experimental work for the national government. There were 2 university instructors of the rank of full professor, a number of other college instructors of various ranks, and several blind teachers of sighted students in primary and secondary grades in the public schools. There were 13 lawyers, most in private practice, 2 employed as attorneys by the United States Government, one serving as the chairman of a state public service commission, one serving as a clerk to a state chief justice. There were 3 chiropractors, one osteopath, 10 secretaries, 17 factory workers, one shoemaker, one cab dispatcher, one bookmender, one appliance repairman, 4 telephone switchboard operators, numerous businessmen in various businesses, 5 musicians, 30 students, many directors and workers in programs for the blind, and 61 housewives.

At any other convention there would be nothing at all remarkable about this broad cross-section of achievement and ability; it is exactly what you would expect to find at a gathering of the American Legion or the Exalted Order of Elks, or at a town meeting in your community. Anywhere else, that is, but at a convention of the blind. It never ceases to surprise the public that a blind man may be able to hold his own in business, operate a farm successfully, argue a brief in a court of law, teach a class of sighted students, or conduct experiments in a chemistry lab. It comes as a shock to the average person to discover that the blind not only can but *do* perform as well as the next man in all the normal and varied callings of the community.

But this "shock of recognition," on the part of many people, too easily gives way to a mood of satisfaction and an attitude of complacency. After all, if the blind are so capable, so successful and so independent what is all the fuss about? Where is the need for all this organization and militant activity? Why can't the blind let well enough alone?

These are reasonable questions, surely, and deserve a reasoned answer. I believe that the answer may best be given by reciting a list of sixteen specific events which have taken place recently in various parts of the country. The events are:

1. A blind man (incidentally a distinguished educator and citizen of his community) was denied a room in a well-known YMCA in New York City—*not* on the ground that his appearance betokened inability to pay, which it did not; *not* on the ground that he had an unsavory reputation, which he did not; *not* on the ground that his behavior was or was likely to be disorderly, which it was not—but on the ground that he was blind.

2. A blind man was rejected as a donor by the blood bank in his city—*not* on the ground that his blood was not red; *not* on the ground that his blood was watery, defective in corpuscles or diseased; *not* on the ground that he would be physically harmed by the loss of the blood—but on the ground

that he was blind.

3. A blind man (in this case a successful lawyer with an established reputation in his community) was denied the rental of a safety-deposit box by his bank—*not* on the ground that he was a well-known bank robber; *not* on the ground that he had nothing to put in it; *not* on the ground that he couldn't pay the rental price—but on the ground that he was blind.

4. A blind man was rejected for jury duty in a California city—*not* on the ground of mental incompetence; *not* on the ground of moral irresponsibility; *not* on the ground that he would not weigh the evidence impartially and come to a just verdict—but on the ground that he was blind.

5. A blind college student majoring in education was denied permission to perform practice teaching by a state university—*not* on the ground that her academic record was poor; *not* on the ground that she had not satisfied the prerequisites; *not* on the ground that she lacked the educational or personal qualifications—but on the ground that she was blind.

6. A blind applicant for public employment was denied consideration by a State Civil Service Commission—*not* on the ground that he lacked the education or experience specifications; *not* on the ground that he was not of good moral character; *not* on the ground that he lacked the residence or citizenship requirements—but on the ground that he was blind.

7. A blind woman was refused a plane ticket by an airline—*not* on the ground that she couldn't pay for her ticket; *not* on the ground that her heart was weak and couldn't stand the excitement; *not* on the ground that she was a carrier of contagion—but on the ground that she was blind.

8. A blind machinist was declared ineligible for a position he had already held for five years. This declaration was the result of a routine medical examination. It came on the heels of his complete clearance and reinstatement on the job following a similar medical finding the year before. These determinations were made—*not* on the ground of new medical evidence showing that he was blind, for that was known all along; *not* on the ground that he could not do the job which he had successfully performed for five years with high ratings; *not* on the ground of any factor related to his employment—they were made on the ground that he was blind.

9. A blind high school student who was a duly qualified candidate for student body president was removed from the list of candidates by authority of the principal and faculty of the school—*not* on the ground that he was an outside infiltrator from some other school; *not* on the ground that he was on probation; *not* on the ground that he was not loyal to the principles of the United States Constitution—but on the ground that he was blind.

10. Travelers' Insurance Company, in its standard policy issued to cover trips on railroads, expressly exempts the blind from coverage—*not* on the ground that there is statistical or actuarial evidence that blind travelers are more prone to accidents than sighted travelers are; *not* on the ground that suitcases or fellow passengers fall on them more often; *not* on the ground that trains carrying blind passengers are more likely to be wrecked unless it is the engineer who is blind—but solely on the ground of blindness. Many, if not most, other insurance companies selling other forms of insurance either will not cover the blind or increase the premium.

11. A blind man, who had been a successful justice court and police court judge in his community for eleven years, ran for the position of superior court judge in the general election of 1956. During the campaign his opponents did not argue that he was ignorant of the law and therefore incompetent; or that he had been guilty of bilking widows and orphans; or that he lacked the quality of mercy. Almost the only argu-

ment that they used against him was that he was blind. The voters, however, elected him handily. At the next session of the state legislature a bill was introduced disqualifying blind persons as judges. The organized blind of the state were able to modify this bill but not to defeat it.

12. More than sixty blind men and women—among them doctors, teachers, businessmen and members of various professions—were recently ordered by the building and safety authority of a large city to move out of their hotel-type living quarters. This was *not* on the ground that they were pyromaniacs and likely to start fires; *not* on the ground that they were delinquent in their rent; *not* on the ground that they disturbed their neighbors with riotous living—but on the ground that as blind people they were subject to the code provisions regarding the “bed-ridden, ambulatory and helpless;” that anyone who is legally blind must live in an institution-type building—with all the rooms on the ground floor, with no stairs at the end of halls, with hard, fire-proof furniture, with chairs and smoking-stands lined up along the wall “so they won’t fall over them.”

13. The Education Code of one of our states provides that deaf, dumb, and blind children may be sent at state expense to a school for the deaf, dumb, or blind, if they possess the following qualifications: (1) They are free from offensive or contagious diseases; (2) they have no parent, relative, guardian or nearest friend able to pay for their education; (3) that by reason of deafness, dumbness or blindness, they are disqualified from being taught by the ordinary process of instruction or education.

14. In a recent opinion the supreme court of one of the states held that a blind person who sought compensation for an injury due to an accident which he claimed arose out of and in the course of his employment by the state board of industries for the blind, was a ward of the state and therefore not entitled to compensation. The conception that blind shop-workers are wards of the state was overcome in another state only by a recent legislative enactment.

15. A blind person, duly convicted of a felony and sentenced to a state penitentiary, was denied parole when he became eligible therefor—*not* on the ground that he had not served the required time; *not* on the ground that his prison behavior had been bad; *not* on the ground that he had not been rehabilitated—but on the ground that he was blind.

16. A blind man who sat down at a gambling table in Reno, where such things are legal, was denied an opportunity to play—*not* on the ground that he didn’t know the rules of the game; *not* on the ground that he might cheat the dealer or the other players; *not* on the ground that he didn’t have any money to lose—but on the ground that he was blind.

These last two cases show that the blind are normal in every respect.

What emerges from this set of events, is the age-old stereotype of blindness as witlessness and helplessness. By virtue of this pervasive impression, a blind man is held to be incapable of weighing the evidence presented at a trial or performing the duties of a teacher. He cannot take care of himself in a room of his own, and is not to be trusted on a plane. A sightless person would not know what he has put into or removed from a safety-deposit box; and he has no right to employment in the public service. He must not even be permitted to continue on a job he has performed successfully for years. Even his blood cannot be given voluntarily for the common cause.

Contrast these two lists—the one of the occupations represented at the NFB convention; the other of the discriminatory activities—the first is a list of accomplishments of what the blind have done and therefore can do; the second is a list of

prohibitions of what the blind are thought incompetent to do and therefore are debarred from attempting. The first list refers to the physical disability of blindness. It demonstrates in graphic fashion how slight a disadvantage is the mere loss of sight to the mental capacity and vocational talent of the individual. The second list refers not to the disability but to the *handicap* which is imposed upon the blind by others. The origin of the disability is plainly inside the blind person. The origin and responsibility for the handicap are just as plainly outside him—in the attitudes and preconceptions of the community.

Let me be very clear about this. I have no wish to minimize the character and extent of blindness as a disability. It is for all of us a constant nuisance and a serious inconvenience. To overcome it requires effort and patience and initiative and guts. It is not compensated for, despite the fairy-tales to the contrary, by the spontaneous emergence of a miraculous “sixth sense” or any other magical powers. It means nothing more or less than the loss of one of the five senses and a correspondingly greater reliance upon the four that remain—as well as upon the brain, the heart, and the spirit.

It may be said that the discriminatory acts which I have cited, and others like them which are occurring all the time, simply do not reflect informed thought. They are occasional happenings, unpremeditated, irrational or accidental. Surely no one would justify them; no one would say that they represent an accurate appraisal of the blind and of blindness.

Well, let us see. Let us look at some pronouncements of presumably thoughtful and informed persons writing about the blind—agency heads, educators, administrators, social workers, historians, psychologists and public officials. What do they have to say about the potentialities of the blind in terms of intellectual capacity, vocational talent, and psychological condition? What do they report concerning the prospects for social integration on the basis of normality and economic advancement on the basis of talent?

First, an educator. Here are the words of a prominent authority on the education of the blind, himself for thirty years a superintendent of a school for the blind. “It is wrong to start with the school,” this authority writes, “and to teach there a number of occupations that the blind can do, but to teach them out of relation to their practical and relative values. This is equivalent to attempting to create trades for the blind and then more or less angrily to demand that the world recognize the work and buy the product, whether useful or useless.” More than this, it is necessary to recognize the unfitness of the blind “as a class” for any sort of competition and therefore to afford them not only protection but monopoly wherever possible. Declaring that “it must be unqualifiedly conceded that there is little in an industrial way that a blind person can do at all that cannot be done better and more expeditiously by people with sight,” this expert considers that there are only two ways out: one being the extension of concessions and monopolies, and the other the designation of certain “preferred” occupations for the blind—“leaving the battle of wits only to those select few that may be considered, and determined to be, specially fit.”

The conclusion that employment possibilities for the blind are confined, with only negligible exceptions, to the purview of sheltered workshops is contained in this set of “facts” about the blind which the same authority asserts are “generally conceded by those who have given the subject much thought:” “. . . that the handicrafts in which the blind can do first-class work are very limited in number, with basketry, weaving, knitting, broom- and brush-making, and chair-caning as the most promising and most thoroughly tried out . . . that in these crafts the blind cannot enter into direct competition

with the seeing either in the quality of product or the amount turned out in a given time . . . that the crafts pursued by the blind may best be carried on in special workshops under the charge of government officials or trained officers of certain benevolent associations . . . that among the 'higher' callings piano-tuning and massage are, under favoring conditions such as prevail for masseurs in Japan, the fields offering the greatest chance of success, while the learned professions, including teaching, are on the whole only for those of very superior talent and, more particularly, very superior courage and determination to win at all costs."

Second, an historian. The basis for this assessment, and its justification, have been presented in blunt and explicit language by a well-known historian of blindness and the blind in the United States. He says, ". . . there exists in the community a body of men who, by reason of a physical defect, namely, the loss of sight, are disqualified from engaging in the regular pursuits of men and who are thus largely rendered incapable of providing for themselves independently." They are to be regarded as a "disabled and infirm fraction of the people" or, more specifically, as "sighted men in a dark room." "Rather than let them drift into absolute dependence and become a distinct burden, society is to lend an appropriate helping hand" through the creation of sheltered, publicly subsidized employment.

Third, administrators. That this pessimistic appraisal of the range of talent among the blind has not been limited to the schoolmen and historians may be shown by two succinct statements from wartime pamphlets produced by the Civil Service Commission in an effort to broaden employment opportunities for the physically disabled. "The blind," it was found, "are especially proficient in manual occupations requiring a delicate sense of touch. They are well suited to jobs which are repetitious in nature." Again: "The placement of persons who are blind presents various special problems. Small groups of positions in sheltered environment, involving repetitive work, were surveyed in Government establishments and were found to have placement potentialities for the blind." Such findings as these were doubtless at the base of a remark of a certain public official who wrote that: "Helping the blind has its strong appeal to the sensibilities of everyone; on the other hand, we should avoid making the public service an eleemosynary institution."

Fourth, a blind agency head. The executive director of one of the largest private agencies for the blind justifies the failure of the philanthropic groups in these blunt terms: "The fact that so few workers or organizations are doing anything appreciable to (improve the condition of the blind) cannot be explained entirely on the grounds that they are not in the vanguard of social thinking. It is rather because they are realistic enough to recognize that the rank and file of blind people have neither the exceptional urge for independence nor the personal qualifications necessary to satisfactory adjustment in the sighted world . . . It is very difficult and exceptional for a blind person to be as productive as a sighted person."

Fifth, a psychologist. Even plainer language—as well as more impressive jargon—has been used by another authority who is widely considered the pre-eminent expert in the field of blind psychology. "Until recently," he writes, "the blind and those interested in them have insisted that society revise and modify its attitude toward this specific group. Obviously, for many reasons, this is an impossibility, and effort spent on such a program is as futile as spitting into the wind . . . it is extremely doubtful whether the degree of emotional maturity and social adaptability of the blind would long support and sustain any social change of attitude, if it were possible

to achieve it." If this is not plain enough, the writer continues: "A further confusion of attitude is found in educators and workers for the blind who try to propagandize society with the rational concept that the blind are normal individuals without vision. This desperate whistling in the dark does more damage than good. The blind perceive it as a hypocritical distortion of their true state, and society discovers it to be a misrepresentation of actual facts . . . It is dodging the issue to place the responsibility on the unbelieving and non-receptive popular attitudes . . . The only true answer lies in the unfortunate circumstance that the blind share with other neurotics the nonaggressive personality and the inability to participate fully in society . . . There are two general directions for attacking such a problem, either to adjust the individual to his environment, or to rearrange the environment so that it ceases to be a difficulty to the individual. It is quite obvious that the latter program is not only inadvisable, but also impossible. However, it is the attack that nearly every frustrated, maladjusted person futilely attempts."

Sixth, a social worker. This sweeping negation of all attempts to modify the prejudicial attitudes of society toward the blind, however eccentric and extreme it may sound, finds strong support in the field of social case work. In areas where "such ideas remain steadfast," reads a typical report, "it is the function of the social case worker to assist the blind person to work within these preconceived ideas. Since handicapped persons are a minority group in society, there is greater possibility of bringing about a change in an individual within a stated length of time than there is in reversing accepted concepts within the culture." The "well-adjusted blind person," it is argued, should be able to get along in this restrictive social setting, and the case worker must concentrate on his personal adjustment since it is easier to reform the client than to reform society.

Seventh, a blind philanthropist. Let me close my list of testimonials with one final citation. I think it must already be sufficiently obvious that, granting the assumptions contained in all these statements, the blind have no business organizing themselves apart from sighted supervision; that a social movement of the blind and by the blind is doomed to futility, frustration, and failure. But just in case the point is not clear enough, I offer the considered opinion of a well-known figure in the history of blind philanthropy:

"It cannot, then, be through the all-blind society that the blind leader of the blind finds adequate opportunity for the exercise of his leadership. The wise leader will know that the best interests of each blind person lie within the keeping of the 999 sighted people who, with himself, make up each one thousand of any average population. He will know, further, that if he wishes to promote the interests of the blind, he must become a leader of the sighted upon whose understanding and patronage the fulfillment of these interests depends . . . There is . . . no advantage accruing from membership in an all-blind organization which might not be acquired in greater measure through membership in a society of sighted people."

What is the substance of all these damning commentaries? What are the common assumptions which underlie the attitudes of the leaders of blind philanthropy and the authorities on blind welfare? The fundamental concepts can, I think, be simply stated. First, the blind are by virtue of their defect emotionally immature if not psychologically abnormal; they are mentally inferior and narrowly circumscribed in the range of their ability—and therefore inevitably doomed to vocational monotony, economic dependency, and social isolation. Second, even if their capabilities were different they are necessarily bound to the fixed status and subordinate role ordained

by "society," whose attitudes toward them are permanent and unalterable. Third, they must place their faith and trust, not in themselves and in their own organizations, but in the sighted public and most particularly in those who have appointed themselves the protectors and custodians of the blind.

A few simple observations are in order. First, as to the immutability of social attitudes and discriminatory actions towards the blind, we know from intimate experience that the sighted public wishes well of the blind and that its misconceptions are rather the result of innocence and superstition than of deliberate cruelty and malice aforethought. There was a time, in the days of Rome, when blind infants were thrown to the wolves or sold into slavery. That time is no more. There was a time, in the middle ages, when blind beggars were the butts of amusement at country fairs, decked out in paper spectacles and donkeys' ears. That time is no more. There was a time, which still exists to a surprising extent, when the parents of a blind child regarded his disability as a divine judgment upon their own sins. But that time is now beginning to disappear at least in the civilized world.

The blind are no longer greeted by society with open hostility and frantic avoidance, but with compassion and sympathy. It is true that an open heart is no guarantee of an open mind. It is true that good intentions are not enough. It is true that tolerance is a far cry from brotherhood, and that protection and trusteeship are not the synonyms of equality and freedom. But the remarkable progress already made in the civilizing of brute impulses and the humanizing of social attitudes towards the blind is compelling evidence that there is nothing fixed or immutable about the social status quo for the blind and that, if the blind themselves are capable of independence and inter-dependence within society, society is capable of welcoming them.

Our own experience as individuals and as members of the National Federation of the Blind gives support at short range to what long range history already makes plain. We have observed and experienced the gradual breakdown of legal obstacles and prejudicial acts; we have participated in the expansion of opportunities for the blind in virtually every phase of social life and economic livelihood—in federal, state and local civil service; in teaching and other professions; in the addition of a constructive element to public welfare. Let anyone who thinks social attitudes cannot be changed read this statement contained in a recent pamphlet of the Federal Civil Service Commission:

"Sometimes a mistaken notion is held that . . . the blind can do work only where keenness of vision is not important in the job. The truth appears to be that the blind can do work demanding different degrees of keenness of vision on the part of the sighted. If there is any difference in job proficiency related to a degree of keenness of vision required for the sighted, it is this: the blind appear to work with greater proficiency at jobs where the element is present to a noticeable extent in the sighted job than where vision is only generally useful."

Second, are the blind mentally inferior, emotionally adolescent and psychologically disturbed; or on the contrary, are they normal and capable of social and economic integration? The evidence that they are the latter can be drawn from many quarters: scientific, medical, historical, and theoretical. But the evidence which is most persuasive is that which I have already presented: it is the evidence displayed in the lives and performance of such average and ordinary blind men and women as those who attended our national convention last summer. It is the evidence of their vocational accomplishments, their personal achievements, the plain normality of their daily lives. To me their record is more than an impres-

sive demonstration: it is a clinching rebuttal.

It would, of course, be a gross exaggeration to maintain that all blind persons have surmounted their physical disability and conquered their social handicap.

It is not the education of the sighted only which is needed to establish the right of the blind to equality and integration. Just as necessary is the education of the blind themselves. For the process of their rehabilitation is not ended with physical and vocational training; it is complete only when they have driven the last vestige of the public stereotype of the blind from their own minds. In this sense, and to this extent only, is it true that the blind person must "adjust" to his handicap and to society. His adjustment need not—indeed must not—mean his submission to all prevailing social norms and values. His goal is not conformity but autonomy: not acquiescence, but self-determination and self-control.

From all of this it should be clear that it is a long way yet from the blind alleys of dependency and segregation to the main thoroughfares of personal independence and social integration which we have set as our goal. And I believe it is equally plain that our progress toward that goal will demand the most forceful and skillful application of all the means at our command: that is, the means of education, persuasion, demonstration, and legislation.

We need the means of *education* to bring the public and the blind themselves to a true recognition of the nature of blindness—to tear away the fossil layers of mythology and prejudice. We need *persuasion* to induce employers to try us out and convince society to take us in. We need *demonstration* to prove our capacity and normality in every act of living and of making a living. And finally we need *legislation* to reform the statute books and obliterate the legal barriers which stand in the way of normal life and equal opportunity—replacing them with laws which accurately reflect the accumulated knowledge of modern science and the ethics of democratic society.

This final platform in our program of equality—the platform of adequate legislation—is in many respects the most crucial and pressing of all. For until the blind are guaranteed freedom of opportunity and endeavor within the law there can be little demonstration of their ability and little prospect of persuasion. What is needed is nothing less than a new spirit of the laws, which will uproot the discriminatory clauses and prejudicial assumptions that presently hinder the efforts of the blind toward self-advancement and self-support. The new philosophy requires that programs for the blind be founded upon the social conception of their normality and the social purpose of their reintegration into the community, with aids and services adjusted to these conceptions.

These then are the objectives of the self-organized blind; goals freely chosen for them by themselves. And this is the true significance of an organization of the blind, by the blind, for the blind. For the blind the age of charity, like that of chivalry, is dead; but this is not to say that there is no place for either of these virtues. In order to achieve the equality that is their right; in order to gain the opportunity that is their due, and in order to attain the position of full membership in the community that is their goal, the blind have continuing need for the understanding and sympathy and liberality of their sighted neighbors and fellow-citizens. But their overriding need is first of all for recognition—recognition of themselves as normal and of their purpose as legitimate. The greatest hope of the blind is that they may be seen as they *are*, not as they have been portrayed; and since they are neither wards nor children, their hope is to be not only seen but also heard—in their own accents and for whatever their cause may be worth.

