

Too often, diminished vision means diminished earning power, diminished employment opportunities or even no employment opportunities at all.

Too often, loss of sight means loss of livelihood.

Far too often, blindness means a lifetime of struggle against misconceptions and obstructively adverse attitudes.

Too often, the occurrence of blindness means the hurts and humiliations of dependency, the indignity of sight-superiority, the despair of inactivity and unproductivity.

We, as blind people, know that blindness need not mean any of these things—for today, it is possible for a blind person to live fully and successfully in normal society, to work constructively, productively, and proficiently in the regular occupations of the community—and we know this is true, for many of us, members of the National Federation of the Blind, are doing it.

For such people, blindness is a nuisance, an inconvenience, a fact of life to be dealt with competently, sensibly, and successfully.

But we of the National Federation of the Blind also know that there are many others for whom blindness is a grievous burden and a major disaster—poorly trained in the techniques of functioning without sight—or not trained at all—never receiving a sound and sensible philosophic orientation to blindness—uninformed or misinformed on the actual limitations imposed upon him by his disability, or the nearly limitless possibilities of worthwhile life and living still available to him, still attainable by him, in spite of his disability.

Under such circumstances, Mr. Chairman, blindness is a disaster, and a lifetime of helplessness and hopelessness is the unhappy lot of such a person.

But whether blindness is a nuisance or a disaster, it should not be needlessly perpetuated in our society.

Mr. Chairman, experience has shown that when a concentrated scientific attack is made upon a particular disease, often and eventually, secret and corrosive causes become curable conditions, and mysteries become medical commonplaces.

We urge this committee and the Congress to approve the creation of a National Eye Institute, that a concentrated scientific attack may be launched against sight-destroying diseases—against glaucoma, diabetes, cataract, and the others whose names are all so well known—so well known to the medical profession who must deal with them, so well known, too, to persons who are blind because of them.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to appear here.

Mr. JARMAN. Mr. Nagle, you have made a very effective and dramatic presentation in your testimony to the committee this morning and we are very grateful to you. Are there questions or comments?

Mr. ROGERS. I want to welcome Mr. Nagle to our committee. We are delighted to have him here. He does an outstanding job for the Federation of the Blind here in Washington.

Your statement is excellent and most persuasive. Thank you.

Mr. JARMAN. Mr. Nelsen?

Mr. NELSEN. I have no questions, but to Mr. Nagle I want to express my appreciation for his testimony.

Certainly we all admire the courage with which he faces his problem and also the enthusiasm with which he represents the people whom he seeks to serve, so I want to thank him for his statement.