

DISCUSSION GROUP REPORTS

DISCUSSION GROUP ONE

This group's discussions were oriented to public relations activities of the Professional Rehabilitation Workers With the Adult Deaf. Following a review of the functions and activities of the U.S. President's Committee for Employment of the Physically Handicapped and similar committees organized by the governors of the various states, it was suggested that our organization be represented on these committees. It was noted, however, that the scope of the PRWAD's purposes extends beyond employment, and it should also make its existence known to various national health and welfare organizations.

It was recommended that news releases and the PRWAD President's Newsletter be sent to professional journals to create more awareness of our organization among the various disciplines. It was emphasized, however, that individual members of the PRWAD have vital responsibilities to alert their own disciplines and their colleagues to our organization's existence.

The question of what the PRWAD's relationship should be with various vocational rehabilitation programs for the deaf was debated.

It was suggested that the organization establish standards at two or three levels to differentiate full membership from student membership. Criteria for full membership was discussed. Suggestions included knowledge and competency in the Language of Signs plus supervised experience in working with deaf people. This discussion led to the recommendation that the PRWAD establish a committee to study the feasibility of a Certification Board on establishment of standards for training professional workers with the adult deaf in various university training programs.

The discussion then centered around the roles of educators in the rehabilitation of deaf adults. Some persons in the group felt that there

EDITOR'S NOTE: *During the convention, those in attendance were broken down into three smaller groups for discussion of pertinent topics on the second day of the meeting. This article summarizes these discussions.*

is a tendency among educators to perceive deaf adults as "extensions" of deaf children and to fail to comprehend the depths of the problems faced by deaf adults. It was suggested that perhaps members of the PRWAD should take an active interest in people who work with deaf children. The question was then raised as to whether the PRWAD has a responsibility to programs involved in the training of teachers for the deaf, or to encourage that the neophyte teacher be exposed to deaf adults as a part of his preparation. If this were desirable, then perhaps the PRWAD should set up a committee to organize current information and pertinent research on deaf adults and make this available to teacher training programs. At the very least, such a committee could emphasize the need for orientation to the cultural and socio-economic "world" of deaf adults, or prepare a list of recommended readings for students in teacher-training programs.

It was suggested that the PRWAD make a special effort to work harmoniously with social and fraternal organizations of deaf adults.

A closer look at counselors of deaf adults was felt to be desirable to clarify what kind of persons make up the PRWAD and to document their functions and roles in the rehabilitation of deaf adults.

The group also felt more emphasis and publicity should be given to individual deaf persons who have successfully demonstrated their potential.

DISCUSSION GROUP TWO

This group discussed the question of whether it was desirable for teachers, administrators and others involved in the education of the deaf be permitted to join or otherwise be represented within the PRWAD. From this discussion rose a recommendation that such personnel be included especially if they work with older children within the school. It was noted that educators and state vocational rehabilitation agency counselors often coordinate their efforts after school children reach a certain age. The schools need the feedback from the rehabilitation counselor to improve their programs; the rehabilitation counselor needs background data on his clients for evaluation, planning of the rehabilitation process and eventual placement.

The question of what the role of the PRWAD would be within the Council of Organizations Serving the Deaf was then discussed. It was noted that the PRWAD was unique in relation to other national organizations in that it consists of a multiplicity of professional disciplines with a mutual objective. Among the members are ministers, directors of speech programs, state vocational rehabilitation

agency counselors, guidance counselors, assistant superintendents of schools for the deaf, placement officers and representatives from organizations of deaf adults. It was recommended that those who represent the PRWAD on the Board of the COSD be selected from different professional disciplines.

Requirements for membership within the PRWAD was the next topic. It was recommended that the Executive Board appoint a committee or study group to determine membership requirements and qualifications and to define these in terms of the organization's goals. Inasmuch as the current membership represents a wide scope of professional disciplines, the committee should not be too rigidly limited and should have enough leeway to establish fairly broad qualifications for memberships. The group generally supported the idea of student memberships to support recruitment and expansion.

The group felt that the PRWAD's official publication, the *Journal of Rehabilitation of the Deaf*, was excellent. Since membership consists of a variety of disciplines, the Journal, it was felt, should reflect this scope in its content. It was recommended that the excellence in quality and all other areas be maintained, and that all members should contribute articles that would be of interest and value to others and which would assist in achieving the goals of the organization.

DISCUSSION GROUP THREE

This group also recommended that the PRWAD make an effort to gain representation on the President's Committee for the Employment of the Physically Handicapped and on the various state governors' committees. Representation should also be sought on other national health and welfare organizations.

Publicity and general public relations, it was felt, should receive major attention from the organization.

It was recommended that the PRWAD establish a training or standards committee which would study the preparation necessary for providing quality rehabilitation services to deaf adults. The committee's deliberations could result in suggestions or recommendations in the following areas:

1. Guidelines for training programs in colleges and universities.
2. Establishing professional standards.
3. Establishing criteria for admission to full membership in the PRWAD.

The role of the PRWAD in helping educators of the deaf to better understand and know deaf adults was discussed. This was considered an area of need. One concrete suggestion was that student teachers have greater contact with deaf adults as part of their preparation.