

November 2019

President's Address

Alan B. Jones

None

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.wcsu.edu/jadara>

Recommended Citation

Jones, A. B. (2019). President's Address. *JADARA*, 6(2). Retrieved from <https://repository.wcsu.edu/jadara/vol6/iss2/11>

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS — STATUS OF PRWAD

By ALAN B. JONES

In opening this first plenary session of the 1972 Biennial Conference of the PRWAD, I would like to make a few remarks concerning the organization, a "State of the Union" type of talk, as it were. First, it must be stated that being your President is a great honor and one which I hope that can be justified. The responsibilities are great, but, with the capable assistance and guidance of the officers and board members elected by you, this administration should be able to guide the organization in such a way that its growth and strength will continue.

I will not attempt to duplicate the historical presentation of PRWAD given by Bob Lauritsen in Rochester and this morning. If you would like to review his remarks given in Rochester on Sunday, October 11, 1970, I would refer you to the *Journal of Rehabilitation of the Deaf*, vol. 4, no. 3, dated January 1971. That report was well researched and detailed and, in presenting it, Bob effectively pulled the rug from under many succeeding Presidents. We have nothing to add.

The purpose of my talk is to report on the present status of PRWAD and to make predictions and give you charges for the future.

From the start by a small group of persons in St. Louis and Knoxville meetings, we have come to be an established, strong, and dynamic group with a definite identity. At the time of the planning for PRWAD, some remarks were made in the vein of "so who needs it?". Our present situation effectively refutes that deriding attitude. The steady growth in membership attests to the need of this type of professional organization. The acceptance of PRWAD by other organizations in the rehabilitation community and by organizations of and for deaf people confirms our identity establishment. I am here referring to our relationship with such organizations as the National Association of the Deaf, Council of Organizations Serving the Deaf, Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, National Association of Hearing and Speech Agencies and National Rehabilitation Association among others. More reference will be made to the NRA later.

The strength of our organization is demonstrated by the fact that an agency of the Federal government has found us to be qualified to receive a

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

grant in the field of the rehabilitation of deaf persons. Shortly, the Project Director of that project will be introduced to you and will report to you. As part of that project, we now have our own national office and a full-time professional staff person who will also be presented to you in a few moments.

Now, what of the future? We must increase our services to deaf persons and those working with them. Although we can look with pride on our past growth and present situation, we cannot remain static or mark time. We now have a unique organization capable of great benefits to the deaf community. Where else in these United States could you find such an assembly of persons interested in and skilled in the problems of the rehabilitation of deaf persons? Of course, here I refer to all of the aspects of total rehabilitation: education of deaf people, training of workers with deaf people, counseling to deaf people, evaluation of deaf people, vocational opportunities for deaf people and so on. Probably there is no comparable array of such special talent and experience anywhere else in the world.

How can we capitalize on this array of talent and knowledge? First, we must not only pursue to its successful completion our present project, but we must openly solicit additional projects such as research and demonstration of solutions to existing problems, and projects designed to extend rehabilitation services to more deaf people. We have the framework and knowledge to accept further responsibilities in this type of activity. Additional projects will only require additional manpower.

We must get our message to more people in the rehabilitation community. A membership drive is necessary but is not the whole story. While it is a basic purpose of PRWAD to attract more professional workers into its fold, it is also important that the unique problems imposed by deafness be broadcasted to others serving in the area of helping disabled people to achieve their highest level of adjustment. Many of them, although they are dedicated to the broad concept of rehabilitation of all disabled persons, are not aware that deaf persons pose unusual problems to workers in the rehabilitation field.

How do we get our message to professionals not now in our fold? Naturally it is easy to contact those of you who are members of PRWAD through our publications and meetings. But what about those who do not read our publications and do not attend our meetings? The presence here this morning of E. B. Whitten, the message he brought to us, and the expressed and implied interest and help of his organization, the National Rehabilitation Association, seem to me to be a golden opportunity. Through him, through his organization, through its publications, we can reach many thousands of people already interested in rehabilitation but who are, perhaps, not knowledgeable in the rehabilitation of deaf persons. It is not expected that our closer relationship with NRA will create a flood of rehabilitation people coming in our field, but it is hoped that greater awareness and understanding of our problems, as well as our proposals for

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

the solution of these problems, might be attained. This, then, brings us to another aspect of the strength and expertise of the NRA which will be of benefit to us, and that is their expertise in the legislative process. We must be ready to cooperate with the NRA in every way possible in this part of our purpose. It is understood that we are not a politically or legislatively oriented group although this does not mean that we cannot offer our assembled knowledge and skills to organizations which are interested in promoting more and better governmental action on behalf of all disabled persons.

One last remark: The presentation tomorrow evening of an award to a very deserving person made in the name of Boyce R. Williams could not be more appropriate. Although I kid Boyce a lot, he is one of the few men I can beat on the golf course, I sincerely believe that he, by himself, is responsible for the present interest in the problems of deaf persons. As I have said in the past and here repeat, there must have been many times that he must have felt like "a voice crying in the wilderness" with no one to hear. He, however, persisted in his efforts, like the stubborn Welshman that he is.

You can see around you the results of his work. You can see in government action and agencies the results of his work. You can see in legislation, both Federal and State, the results of his work. I cannot think of a better thought on which to conclude these brief remarks.