Copy

Speeches 1935
North Carolina
Commission for
the Blind
1935, Jan. 29

I am here to ask you to appoint a commission which shall be a friend and counsellor to the blind of North Carolina.

In so-called "good times" with all the aid obtained from the public the lot of the handicapped is distressing enough. Now when we are in the throes of change and upheaval, the handicapped are easily overlooked, and the first to suffer are those whose existence depends upon the generosity of their fellowmen. How quickly do we, absorbed in our own problems, forget the difficulties of the handicapped! Looking into their future today, it is dark indeed.

If you think about it seriously, I believe you will agree with me that no state is progressive, or even civilized if it does not strive to give each one of its people a Square Deal. Also when you think about it, you will see that no unfortunate class can be rehabilitated without the assistance of the state. My friends, it is your plain duty not to let the work for the blind in your state topple to defeat for want of a commission. That would be like taking away his staff from a cripple or the lamp from the miner's cap or the spade with which a thirsty man digs in the desert for water!

No! It is not in the heart of North Carolina to let that happen. It will not leave its blind to poverty and helpless dependence.

Again, please bear in mind that most of the blind are adult men and women. You support a school for blind youth at Raleigh, but they too will soon grow up, and what are they going to do when they leave school if there is no state agency to take an interest in them? Is it commonsense to educate them and let them live the rest of their days in idleness and be a burden to their families?

I plead with you, be generous. Be it said to the credit of humanity that the poorest people in the State will not begrudge their blind a special service.

Helen Keller

Spoken before the North Carolina Legislature,

Raleigh, January 29, 1935