

THE NEW MEXICAN INSTITUTE OF REHABILITATION FOR DISABLED PERSONS

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President of Mexican Rehabilitation Association

Editor's Note: The new Institute at Mexico City will be the scene of the Joint Session of OALMA and the Mexican Rehabilitation Association, October 23-24. We are indebted to Mr. O'Farrill for this account of the founding of this Institute.

As a result of the accident I suffered some two years ago, I had the opportunity to visit the principal rehabilitation centers in the United States and become aware of the benefits which a rehabilitation program could bring to all the handicapped of Mexico.

In March of 1958, I began a campaign through *Novedades* and the *News*, two newspapers of which I am the publisher, to create a Mexican institute for the rehabilitation of disabled persons, which could also serve the needs of other Latin American nations.

Our idea has received the vigorous moral and material support of the country's leaders, principally from former President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines; Dr. Ignacio Morones Prieto, Minister of Health in the former administration; from different governmental departments; decentralized groups, and from the present President of the Republic, Adolfo Lopez Mateos, who has received and supported the idea with great enthusiasm. In addition, we have been able to count by the thousands the expressions of sympathy from all sectors of society.

At the meeting which was held at the Hotel del Prado, when I was installed as President of the Mexican Rehabilitation Association, representatives of the Mexican citizenry manifested the civic maturity of private initiative when, in just a few minutes, a good part of the necessary funds was raised.

Dr. Jose Alvarez Amezquita, Minister of Health, has received our work with great enthusiasm and from the start has offered us his moral support and his valuable cooperation to help insure the success of the program.

With the Department of Health acting as an intermediary, we have obtained the donation of a splendid building located on a large extension of land at San Fernando #15, Tlalpan, D. F., and which amply covers our present needs. Immediately thereafter a subsidy was agreed upon by the Department of Health, and Dr. Luis F. Vales Ancona was appointed as Executive Director of the proposed Mexican Institute of Rehabilitation. With the collaboration of the corps of engineers of the Department of Communications and Public Works, we formulated the plans for adapting the building as a well-rounded rehabilitation center.

At our suggestion, the Treasury Department has agreed to exempt taxes from donations made to the Institute, in addition to free importation of certain specialized technical equipment.

Taking advantage of one of my trips to the United States, I discussed with authorities of the U. S. International Cooperation Administration (ICA) the possibility of obtaining technical assistance for the Mexican Rehabilitation Association and the Institute it was setting up. I am glad to report excellent cooperation from ICA. We have now received scholarships, technical assistance, and surplus equipment.

David Amato, Rehabilitation Counselor, assigned by the U. S. International Cooperation Administration to our Embassy in Mexico City. Mr. Amato has been a leader in promoting cooperation between rehabilitation agencies in Mexico and the United States.



Mr. David Amato, Rehabilitation Advisor, who was made available by the International Cooperation Administration, has been of invaluable help in the development of the program.

In addition, we have obtained the cooperation of CARE in this project, which has contributed 125 technical books, with a value of over \$1,000.

On the 20th of October, 1958, the Mexican Institute of Rehabilitation was legally established. The services of the Institute will be at the disposition of all orthopedically handicapped.

The Institute, following the most modern techniques, will have the following program functions:

- a) Physical, psychological and vocational diagnosis of each disabled.
- b) Medical and surgical care, which will leave the invalid in the best condition for receiving treatment.
- c) Fabrication of limbs and braces.
- d) Physical therapy, as an indispensable function in preparing the invalid in the correct use of his artificial limb.
- e) Specialized education services for crippled children.
- f) Vocational training.
- g) A psycho-social department with social services, legal advisors and rehabilitation counselors, will look for adequate employment for each patient, in accordance with the new abilities of the individual.
- h) Training of technicians in the various fields of rehabilitation for Mexico's needs as well as those of other Latin American countries.
- i) Public education to develop acceptance of the rehabilitated individual.
- j) Establishment of an industry completely operated by rehabilitated persons, which will be a demonstration and example that the will of man, if teamed with ability, overcomes all obstacles.

**Romulo O'Farrill, Sr., President of the
Mexican Rehabilitation Association.**



An analysis of the positions and functions to be carried out has been made. We are convinced that a good administrative organization is basic for the efficient functioning of the Institute.

Accepting special invitations from the Mexican Rehabilitation Association, we have been visited by Mr. Rollin Atwood, Chief of Latin American Operations of the International Cooperation Administration; Dr. Thomas J. Canty, Chief of the Prosthetic Research Laboratory of the Oakland Naval Hospital; Mr. Henry Viscardi, Jr., President of Abilities, Inc., Albertson, N. Y.; Dr. B. W. Hogan, Surgeon General of U. S. Navy; Dr. Frank Berry, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Defense of the United States. All of these men have given us inspiring encouragement.

The Prosthetic Research Laboratory of the Oakland Naval Hospital under the direction of Dr. Thomas J. Canty, has given us excellent cooperation in training eight Mexicans, who have specialized as technicians in the manufacture and fitting of limbs and braces.

Functioning as a part of the Institute, an industry operated totally by rehabilitated persons, will be established as a living example of the productivity of such persons. The Department of Industrial Research of the Bank of Mexico has carried out at our request a study of the type of industry which would be most suitable to establish, taking into consideration the following factors:

- a) An industrial enterprise which would be economically flexible.
- b) Assuring that said enterprise would principally employ materials and parts manufactured in this country.
- c) Giving work to the largest possible number of rehabilitated workers.
- d) Making certain that the industrial processes do not constitute dangers for such workers.
- e) The investment would not have to be too large.
- f) The enterprise to be established will produce articles which are now being imported in large quantity, and thereby conserve dollars.

Mr. Henry Viscardi, Jr., Director of Abilities, Inc., of Albertson, N. Y., who inspired us with this project, is an honorary member of the Mexican Rehabilitation Association. He has offered us his valuable assistance and experience to help make this industry a reality.

We must not forget the enormous social and educational importance which the acceptance of the rehabilitated individual means for everyone in Mexico. To this end, and with the kind offer of the Mexican Association of Publicity Agencies, who have designated a great publicity man and a fine friend, Mr. Everardo Camacho, as their representative, we are organizing the widest publicity campaign on record, with the collaboration of the national press, which has offered its unselfish and noble support; with the aid of the enterprises with which I am associated, such as the newspapers *Novedades* and *The News*, the *Diario de la Tarde*; and with the radio and television firms which are directed by Mr. Emilio Azcarraga and myself. We hope to make this campaign reach the heart of each and every Mexican, and with their generous and noble assistance, added to the valuable aid we are already receiving, we shall have a model rehabilitation center, one that will inspire, we hope, other Latin American countries to establish similar centers.

The Mexican Rehabilitation Association, over which I am proud to preside, has been the coordinating organ for the rehabilitation movement in the Mexican Republic. Through the board of directors and the technical council of this association, we have carried out a program of public education in the rehabilitation field, which culminated with the Second National Congress of Rehabilitation held in November, 1958.

I feel that we are in a period of much activity. Although the Institute is not yet in operation, work that will lead to the fulfillment of our goals is in an advanced stage. We are certain that through this project we are helping create a better way of life for all disabled persons in our country.
