

POLITICAL ACTION



Marian Beth Goldmen

Although Carter had openly solicited election support from disabled groups and had endorsed new regulations, his election brought only more delay.

As many as 180 demonstrators occupied the entire fourth floor of the federal building in San Francisco for a record 26 days.

Disabled sit-in wins equal opportunity regulations

By Elizabeth Metzger and Ken McEldowney

San Francisco. A 26-day sit-in by disabled demonstrators in the San Francisco regional Health, Education and Welfare offices has forced the signing of historic regulations guaranteeing the civil rights of more than 36 million disabled Americans. The sit-in, the longest ever held in a federal building, ended April 30 with a massive victory rally.

The San Francisco demonstration was the longest of ten nation-wide, sponsored by the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, an umbrella organization of 45 national, state and local disabled groups. The demonstrations were intended to pressure HEW Secretary Joseph Califano into signing regulations to implement Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

As many as 180 demonstrators, organized by the Bay-area 504 Emergency Coalition, occupied the entire fourth floor of the old federal building here. Spearheaded by the Center for Independent Living in Berkeley, the coalition encompassed a wide spectrum of community groups and individuals, including traditional social service organizations, black, Third World, gay, women's, and senior citizens' groups, and a large number of labor unions. The Black Panther party and Delancy Street, an organization of former convicts and drug addicts, helped out by supplying most of the food during the sit-in.

►A contingent to Washington.

For the San Francisco demonstrators,

life on the fourth floor turned into an educational, political and emotional experience. Many who had felt isolated with their disabilities before the demonstration discovered a new family.

By the 14th day the demonstrators decided to take their protest directly to Washington and a contingent of 25 left in an attempt to meet with Califano and President Carter.

Although they were not able to talk to either—Carter left his church from a side door, and Califano left his house by the back door—according to Kitty Cone of the Washington contingent, they were able to gather support from more than 30 members of Congress and “raised a lot of consciousness in Washington.” When Cone, along with about half of the demonstrators, returned to San Francisco on April 27, she predicted that 504 would be signed within a week. The following day Califano signed the regulations.

The controversy stems from the passage of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act in September 1973. Section 504 of the act prohibited discrimination on the basis of disability. It was hailed as the first major federal civil rights law to protect and further the rights of the disabled.

►Delay and more delay.

But for three and a half years, despite prodding by Congress and disabled organizations, two administrations dragged their feet on drafting regulations to implement Section 504. Not until February 1976 was a required economic impact state-

ment completed. It concluded that the benefits of implementing the regulations outweighed the costs.

Finally, in the fall of '76, final regulations were drafted and submitted to the HEW Secretary—but they were never signed.

During his election campaign Jimmy Carter actively solicited the support of disabled groups. In a Sept. 6 speech in Warm Springs, Ga., he said, “No administration that really cared about disabled citizens would spend three years trying to avoid enforcing Section 504.”

But Carter's election brought more delay. Word leaked out of Washington that revisions were in the works that would water down Congressional intent. This is what precipitated the nationwide demonstrations and led to the signing of the final regulations.

The new regulations ban discrimination against disabled Americans, including alcoholics and drug addicts, by all HEW-supported public and private institutions. The major aspects of the new regulations include:

- All new facilities must be readily accessible and useable by disabled people. All programs in existing buildings must be made accessible within 60 days unless structural changes in the facilities must be made. Renovations must be completed within three years;
- Employers cannot discriminate against the disabled if reasonable accommodations can be made to an individual's disability. Employers can no longer require pre-employment physical examinations,

nor inquire into whether an applicant is disabled;

- Every disabled child will be entitled to a free public education within regular classrooms “to the maximum extent possible.” In the unusual cases where placement in special residential facilities is necessary costs will be paid by public authorities;

- Colleges and universities must make reasonable modifications in academic requirements to ensure full educational opportunity for disabled students. When necessary, the schools shall also provide auxiliary aids such as readers in libraries or interpreters for the deaf;

- Within one year each institution must complete a self-evaluation process in consultation with disabled people and organizations to determine which of their policies and practices need to be changed to insure compliance with Section 504.

While these regulations only apply to programs funded by HEW, Califano noted in signing them that “this regulation will be the basis for other similar regulations that will be issued by all other federal departments and agencies that will affect all recipients of federal funds.”

When the San Francisco demonstrators heard that the regulations were signed they were visibly pleased. “We came here to do what we had to and we succeeded,” said Dusty Irvine, who just had ended a 23-day fast. She and others had refused to eat until the regulations were signed. “The government took notice of us. We won the victory, by God. No one gave us anything,” said Kitty Cone.

►A developed presence in Berkeley.

The April demonstration was not the first time the Bay area disabled have had to fight for their rights and have succeeded. Their movement began in Berkeley in the mid '60s when Ed Roberts, who is now Director of Rehabilitation in California, tried to attend the University of California at Berkeley and succeeded. The university had objected to his attendance because it didn't want to take responsibility for a student dependent on an iron lung.

Other disabled students followed Roberts' lead. Soon they started a special Disabled Students Program with counseling and support services, and in the early '70s they and other members of the Berkeley disabled community formed the Center for Independent Living.

CIL lobbied the Berkeley City Council successfully for street curb ramps and elevators in public buildings. Its service program deals with the day-to-day needs of living independently. Other CIL projects tackle the social, political and environmental problems that affect nearly all disabled, blind and elderly people. Among its services CIL offers a 24-hour wheelchair repair service and an alternative transportation system. Because CIL has so successfully met the needs of the disabled in Berkeley, the city has become a mecca for the disabled from all over the country.

►504 just another step.

Forcing implementation of 504 is just another step. “Getting it signed is one thing; getting it enforced is another,” Donney Johnson said.

Johnson's doubts were seconded by San Francisco Supervisor John Molinari who, during his address at the April 30 victory rally in front of City Hall, warned that local bureaucrats are already complaining about how difficult it would be for the city to follow the regulations.

Part of the San Francisco contingent is staying in Washington to insure that the disabled are represented as HEW and Congress thrash out how to implement the new regulations that could cost \$2.4 billion.

Beyond 504, the San Francisco Coalition plans to continue to fight for the rights of the disabled in all areas of life. Dusty Irvine said, “The Coalition will stay together as long as there are disabilities in the world, and that will be forever.”

Elizabeth Metzger and Ken McEldowney are freelance journalists in the Bay area.

IN THE WORLD

LATIN AMERICA

Brazil's military will not let up

By Sherry Keith

When Gen. Ernesto Geisel, President of Brazil, closed the federal Congress temporarily on March 30, hopes of following the gradual path back to democracy from military dictatorship were drowned for the present.

In spite of his public policy of political liberalization, since 1974 Geisel has run the country as autocratically as his predecessors. The former president of Brazil's largest state-owned enterprise, Petrobras, Geisel knows how to anticipate and appease pressure from the extreme right of the military and often does so with doses of political repression.

The immediate crisis, however, is without doubt the most serious for the military government since it took power in 1964. While Geisel has managed to draw the ranks of the generals behind him with his crack-down on party politics, he may be unable to quell the rising tide of anti-government sentiments coming from sectors of Brazilian society that have been government stalwarts in the past.

►The domestic pressure-cooker.

The regime has faced severe pressure both domestically and internationally since last year. Internally, the government has been unable to muster the political support needed to offset its loss of credibility. Always of questionable political legitimacy, the dictatorship possessed a certain managerial *savoir faire* in the eyes of Brazilian and international entrepreneurs. The military was viewed by these groups as the only force capable of organizing and promoting the Brazilian economy. Its policies were reputed to have created "the Brazilian miracle" in the late 1960s with annual GNP growth-rates of 10 and 11 percent.

The benefits of this miracle have been restricted, however, to international business and a narrowing circle of Brazilian capitalists. Over the past year many national producers began to seriously question whether they benefit from the miraculous growth and from the government's political policies. With the forced resignation of Severo Gomes, former Minister of Trade and Industry in January, their allegiance to the military fell to an all-time low.

Gomes was the gadfly of the Geisel cabinet—the only minister who consistently represented their interests. He clashed frequently with other powerful



The Brazilian dictatorship staked its reputation on the "Brazilian Miracle" of the 1960s, but in the last few years the economy has slowed and inflation has risen 50 percent. In the face of growing opposition, the dictatorship has abandoned its liberalization plans.

ministers who supported the open-door policy to international capital upon which the Brazilian miracle has been predicated.

In spite of the government's repressive policies on wages and ban on strikes, it was unable to check the rampant inflation that neared 50 percent in 1976. This situation has also hurt local capital, which finds credit too expensive and costs rising too quickly, while the multinationals in agribusiness and mining have continued to have high rates of profit.

Crying out in protest against the economic squeeze, some Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro businessmen called for a restoration of democracy, asserting that the military could no longer be relied upon to create the necessary conditions for promoting their interests. Geisel responded, promising that he would try to loosen credit and decontrol prices. This will further pauperize workers whose real wages will go down.

Intellectuals and students also continue to oppose the regime. In early April students called demonstrations at three of Brazil's largest universities. In Rio Grande do Sul, 1,000 students gathered in spite of the presence of military police to protest "arbitrary political imprisonments, the closing of the federal Congress, censorship of the press and to demand amnesty for all Brazilians imprisoned or exiled for political reasons."

The government also lost face in March when it had to abandon midstream a new surtax and rationing scheme for gasoline which was already selling at more than \$2 per gallon. Not only did civilian consumers protest the scheme, but junior officers in the army and airforce pilots began to complain bitterly. Plans had to be scrapped after millions of coupons had been delivered to banks throughout the country.

Fuel has been a continual source of problems for Brazil. Massive oil imports have driven the international debt up astronomically since 1974. This plight has pushed Brazil to be more aggressive internationally. Brazil's booming armaments industry has begun to export highly sophisticated armored cars to the Near East in direct exchange for oil. Brazil also quickly recognized the MPLA government in Angola in hopes of building ties that would give it access to Angolan oil and outlets for military products as well as consumer durables.

►The opposition party gains.

The biggest political headache for Geisel has been the growing popularity of the moderate opposition party, the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB). In the municipal elections of late 1976 the government's party ARENA won a numerical victory, but the MDB swept the major urban areas. While insignificant in

terms of power, these municipal elections showed the handwriting on the wall.

The MDB's strong urban support indicates that if state gubernatorial and legislative elections were to take place as planned in 1978, it would gain control of the most important states in the country: Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul. One of the first measures taken by Geisel when he suspended the Congress was to decree that the rules for the 1978 election would be changed. These elections will now be indirect by way of an electoral college rather than a direct plebiscite, eliminating the possibility of an MDB victory.

Along with hamstringing the opposition on the electoral front, Geisel decreed that constitutional amendments could now be made by a simple majority. This measure prevents the MDB, which has over one-third of the seats in Congress, from stopping constitutional legislation, as they did with recently proposed judicial reforms. More stringent press censorship stands were also promised, an apparent swipe at Brazilian newspapers and magazines that became quite bold in their criticism of the government during the past few months.

With flagging civilian support the military hoped to play at least one of its trump cards by denouncing U.S. pressures to break Brazil's nuclear agreement with West Germany. Clearly wanting to stir up nationalist sentiments, the issue was hotly played with the military portrayed as the protagonist against the North American dragon. Indications are that while the dictatorship has succeeded in alarming Washington about the possibility of a real deterioration of U.S.-Brazilian relations, the well publicized controversy has had little impact on national unity within Brazil.

The crack in U.S.-Brazilian relations could present the dictatorship with another worry. Brazil is highly dependent on the U.S. for international credit. The Brazilian Minister of Finance was recently in Washington attempting to renegotiate the \$28 billion trade deficit whose interest payments are seriously threatening the country's current balance of payments situation. While the Brazilians would like to exercise their growing political muscle as the police force of the Southern Hemisphere, Brazil's autonomy is still restricted.

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By Eric Perlman
Pacific News Service

Commercial whaling, long a target of environmental protests from around the world, will be dead by 1980—the victim not so much of world opinion as of its own greed. There are simply not enough whales left. The Japanese and Russians—who together take the great bulk of the world's annual allowed whale quota—could not even find enough sperm whales to fill their 1976 quotas.

As a result of depletion caused by over-harvesting, the Japanese Whaling Union recently called for an end to whaling. Two years ago the six major whaling companies of Japan consolidated into one, firing half their employees. This year, half the remaining employees will be fired. Japanese whaling ships are dilapidated and rusting. No capital is available to perpetuate a terminal industry.

Whale meat, long an inexpensive staple of the Japanese diet, has nearly tripled in price since 1963, its consumption down more than half. Whale meat currently provides less than three percent of Japan's national protein intake, according to Dr. Yutaka Hirasawa, a professor at Tokyo Fisheries University.

THE OCEANS

No more whales, no more whaling

"The environmentalist outcry certainly helped push the whaling industry, but it was their own mismanagement and greed that has caused its death."

Mark Lavelle, spokesman for the Miami-based environmentalist group Dolphin Project, considers the Japanese acknowledgment of whaling's end only a "partial victory" for his ranks. "The environmentalist outcry certainly helped push them," he says, "but it was their own mismanagement and greed that has caused the death of the whaling industry."

Environmentalists believe that when the Japanese stop whaling, the Russians will follow suit, despite conflicting official statements. "The Russians are letting their [whaling] ships go to hell," says Gary Zimmerman, president of the environ-

mentalist group Greenpeace America, which confronted the Russian whalers on the high seas last year. "They're milking the whales for the last drop of blood before the whole fleet turns to scrap," he says.

Last year, Moscow denied a widely publicized statement by its charges d'affaires in Canada that the Soviets would cease whaling within two years because it had become such a sensitive diplomatic issue. Moscow even recalled the diplomat to answer for his unauthorized statements.

Recent communiques from the Soviet government stoutly defend their whaling operations.

The Russians don't even eat whale meat, which they sell to Japan. Their main target is the precious oil in the brain casings of the sperm whale, which lubricates superbly under high temperatures and pressures. The Russians use the oil primarily for greasing the guts of their guided missiles and high-speed war planes.

Meanwhile, even species that have been protected by the International Whaling Commission are on the verge of extinction.

The now-protected blue whale, the largest creature who ever lived, once coursed the world's oceans by the tens of thousands. A recent census estimates that less than 2,000 are left. They breed so slowly that it will take more than a century for them to significantly recoup their losses.

Fin whales and the singing humpback are also near extinction though protected. Right whales, so named because they were the "right" whales to kill, are so few that scientists are uncertain if the species can survive. Only a few hundred remain in the entire North Atlantic.

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