

Andrea Schein

Audio transcript: On issues regarding the disabled student center at University of Massachusetts and centers across the country

Date: June 23, 2003

Interviewer: Fred Pelka

Note: Transcripts have been lightly edited; therefore there may be slight discrepancies with audio clips.

Pelka:

How about, if you have a regret, or you see a failure of the center. What would that be?

Schein:

[pause] That's a harder question; I don't know. I think there were a lot of times I thought that I—we weren't doing everything we could. But I think we tried really, really hard. I think that we really were very serious about the disabled students as being the determiners of the services that they needed and how the services were provided and stuff like that. So I can kind of regret that things have gone quite the other direction, in terms of the center at UMass, and centers all over the country that I hear about, where they've turned much more into service centers and guardians of scarce resources, where, I think, a lot of the resources that we provided for each other were not scarce. They're just not scarce, you know. Supporting each other, helping each other read, and helping each other get lunch is not a scarce resource, and there's no reason why anything like that needs to be rationed. So I'm sorry that things have changed so much in the other direction.

I was just reading a new monograph [*Freedom for the Blind: The Secret is Empowerment*] that came out from NFB [National Federation of the Blind], James Omgig, where he talks about the disabled student centers as doing for the blind, and making them more dependent. And how 504 and ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] are really detrimental in that way, because they make the students dependent on the services. You know, in some ways he's got a point, but it doesn't have to be that way. People do need to be mutually dependent; we need to help each other. And everybody can help each other some way. So you don't—it doesn't have to be a subject/object relationship where the student is the object of services provided by the provider.

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