

H.E.W. Finds That Equal Access for Handicapped Begins at Home

By ROBERT REINHOLD

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 4 — They agreed to lower the elevator controls so that a person in a wheelchair could reach the emergency button. They agreed to lower the urinals, lower some of the pay telephones by six inches, reduce the pressure needed to open doors to eight pounds or less and even redesign the condiment counter in the cafeteria to make it accessible to the handicapped.

But the Government's housekeepers put their foot down when asked to install a new passenger elevator so that the handicapped would not have to use

the freight elevator to get to the gymnasium and television studio on the second floor of the new Hubert H. Humphrey Building, the headquarters of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

The embarrassing result is that H.E.W., the Federal department charged with protecting the handicapped against discrimination, has been formally cited for maintaining illegal barriers in its own office building on Independence Avenue here.

The citation was issued by a new, little-known agency, the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, which has been trying to get

Federal officials throughout the country to comply with new laws requiring equal access to Federal facilities for crippled, blind, deaf and other handicapped persons.

Cost Put at \$200,000

The General Services Administration, which maintains the H.E.W. building and was also cited by the compliance board, argued in one of a series of memorandums over the issue that it was "not pertinent" to build a new passenger elevator, estimated to cost \$200,000, "to overcome the slight inconvenience of using a freight elevator."

"That's not dignified; it's really the

building or how many wanted access to the gym.

Some Seek a Compromise

True to the ways of Washington, a compromise is being sought. Some department officials are understood to be working on "options" for opening the gym and studio to wheelchair traffic without building the new elevator.

If this fails, the compliance board's citation will have to be adjudicated by a Federal administrative law judge.

The board acted on the complaint of a handicapped person, not identified by the panel, who is one of 1,567 persons assigned to the building. Board officials said they did not know how many handicapped persons worked in the

back door," retorted Charles Goldman, general counsel of the compliance board. "The idea is to get the handicapped into the mainstream of society."

Officials in the G.S.A. have drawn the battle lines. "We don't plan to fix it right away," said Ted Leininger, director of building operators for the agency's Region 3, which includes Washington.

He said that the agency had a "solemn" commitment to make all other requested modifications in the building by the year's end, but added: "This is such a expensive thing, we'd like to

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