

VINLAND NATIONAL CENTER, MINNEAPOLIS.

Tale ved offisielle åpning av Vinland Chalet.

Governor, Mr. chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

As you know, the Vinland idea formally was introduced to the United States in July of 1976, when His Royal Highness Crown Prince Harald presented a cheque in the amount of one million kroner to then president Gerald Ford. However the real bi-centennial gift was an idea born 12 years earlier in the Valdres mountains of Norway. Perhaps it would be even more accurate to say that it was born in the mind of Erling Stordahl, who founded the Beitostølen helsesportsenter and with that

the concept of health sports activities with the handicapped

The Stordahl conference center here was dedicated almost exactly two years ago. Since that time, several hundred persons with handicaps have benefitted from Vinland's services and indeed the center has received wide recognition in The United States as well as abroad. It is gratifying that the private and the public sectors have jointly contributed to Vinland's funding and I note with particular interest, Mr. Governor, that your leadership during your first term as governor resulted in a state of Minnesota grant matching Norway's bi-centennial contribution.

Quite naturally, the funding of volunteer organizations on a permanent and continuous basis is a difficult task even in the best of times. Given the world-wide economic situation, it is remarkable that Vinland has

been so successful in raising operating funds.

I believe this success attests to the strength of the concept upon which Vinland, like Beitostølen, is built. In your country as in mine, health care systems are undergoing systematic changes. It appears that Vinland is on the leading edge of innovative services when it comes to working with people who have handicapping conditions.

I emphasize: with the handicapped. Not for the handicapped. I am impressed with the amount of talent and resources which can be released through the Vinland approach to working with the handicapped. And I am pleased that Norwegians have been able to make a significant contribution to the well-being of many Americans through

the transfer of Beitostølen's technology to the Vinland national center.

I recognize that Vinland's clients come from all 50 states of the Union, but it is fitting that the Center should be geographically located here, in the center of your country and in the center of Norwegian-America as well. Having a strong grassroots support is of immeasurable value and I believe that Vinland is very fortunate in this regard.

I also find it very appropriate that we are standing here on the shores of Lake Independence; a stronger symbolism for the Vinland concept would be hard to find.

Governor Perpich, I am impressed with the similarities

between your state and my country: The terrain, the climate, the people are similar in so many ways, but also the way in which your state strives to promote the best available health care to all segments of society. I compliment Minnesota on its initiative and its success and I congratulate you, Mr. Governor, for your personal involvement and direction.

In many ways, this new building symbolizes the Vinland national center well: It is new and innovative, a symbol of progress.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to declare the Vinland chalet opened, and may it serve its clientele well. Thank you.