**Telethons: Connecting the Means to the ends**

By Ken Lumb

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**Telethons** are a way that charities working with disabled people raise money.

A **Telethon** is when famous people go on television for a day, and tell everyone else to donate to the charity.

Telethons do two things to make people want to give money.

First, they try to make the charity seem **fun**, by making jokes or doing silly things (like having a bath in baked beans).

Second, they try to show that the charity is doing **good work**.

They do this by showing disabled people as being miserable if the charity doesn’t help them.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, Telethons were popular in the USA and parts of Europe.

Disabled people in those countries have said that Telethons make things worse.

Some disabled people who were put on these Telethons when they were children say they were talked down to by the people who run them.

Some of these people have said telethons should be taken off television.

In the late 1980s, Telethons became more popular in Britain.

Ken Lumb thinks there are three big problems with Telethons.

**First**, Telethons make it look like disabled people are getting lots of support when they aren’t.

The TV shows in Telethons show lots of disabled people getting lots of help, but most disabled people don’t get much help at all.

This means people don’t worry much about whether disabled people are getting the things they need.

**Second**, Telethons treat disabled people as lots of individual people rather than a group.

This makes it harder to talk about all disabled people’s situation at the same time.

If disabled people are seen as just unlucky individuals, it’s difficult to talk about them getting together and deciding things for themselves.

**Third**, Telethons show disabled people as helpless, and not as people who are able to make decisions for themselves.

This is because charities make more money if the people they work with as seen as totally helpless.

The idea that disabled people can’t do things for themselves is common, but Telethons push this idea for hours at a time on national television.

This makes it harder for disabled people to show the world they can organise things for themselves.

For these reasons, Ken Lumb argues that all disabled people should fight to stop Telethons getting on television.

Some disabled people think about Telethons differently, and Ken Lumb wants to deal with what they say and do.

Some disabled people have realised Telethons can help them personally.

These include some disabled actors and celebrities who want to get on television.

There are also some disabled people who can get money by working for the charities that run Telethons.

Ken Lumb thinks these people are just out for themselves.

There are also groups of disabled people who are given money by the charities who run Telethons.

Often, they don’t like Telethons, but they do like the money.

Some of them argue that you can take money from charities, but then use it to campaign against them.

Ken Lum says this is a mistaken idea.

When disabled people take money from charities, the charities can say all disabled people support them.

Charities can then accuse disabled people of being two-faced when they criticise Telethons.

This makes disabled people’s groups look like they’re being dishonest.

People who’d like to support disabled people’s groups get put off by this.

Even though he thinks it’s wrong to take money from charities, Ken Lumb thinks disabled people have good reasons to try and get that money.

Disabled people’s groups and organisations have a lot of work they want to do to give disabled people more control over their lives.

It’s very difficult for them to get the money they need to do this work.

Ken Lumb admits that he’s been in groups that have taken money from charities before now.

This is because they felt like they didn’t have any other choice.

Ken Lumb says that all disabled people’s groups need to do two things to get around this kind of problem.

**First**, they need to look at how they can share money and jobs with each other, so that less groups get stuck without the money or help they need.

**Second**, they need to have a much bigger conversation about where they take money from.

If everyone around the country decides where they will and won’t take money from, they will find it easier to trust each other and get the change they want.