

Coalition News

November 1988



	Page
Coalition Update...	2
Conversation at the Kiosk...	4
BCODP Day of Action...	6
Disability Terminology Debate - Revisited...	17
JCPTs - Consultation or Tokenism...	23
Arts Focus...	30
The Good Theatre Guide...	32
The Sting...	36
Public Transport and Disabled People...	42
Reviews...	49



"We intend to take control of our own lives."

'Coalition News' - the official newsletter of the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People. For further information on items appearing in this newsletter, or to submit articles for inclusion in future issues, please contact: Ian Stanton (Information/Publicity Worker) on 061-224 2722.

Note: The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent official policies of the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People.

Coalition Update

Welcome to the first issue of "Coalition News" to be produced entirely on a Desktop Publishing computer programme. Our last edition received such praise from such a wide variety of people that it seems a hard act to follow, but we hope that this current edition will live up to the high standards set.

Of particular interest to readers may be the report, from an "on-the-spot-reporter" of the BCODP demonstration in London. The demo received precious little coverage elsewhere, so we've tried to compensate with an extended article detailing the events of the day and the issues involved.

It sometimes seems that the Coalition has so many involvements that it's almost impossible to pick out those most newsworthy. Some are included inside this magazine, others are listed below.

Since the last edition of "Coalition News", the Coalition has...

* staged its Annual General Meeting at the Wythenshawe Forum. Over 60 people attended, and gave British Rail's Disablement Advisor Bill Buchannan, the guest speaker, a heated reception. Mr Buchannan's complacent presentation was virtually guaranteed to arouse the anger of the disabled people attending.

* elected Executive Council officers for the coming year. Judith Holman and Kevin Hyett continue as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively, Paul Mittler remains as Treasurer, and Cathy Avison takes over as Secretary.

* supported Rochdale & District Disability Action Group in planning a one day conference, due to take place in March, to discuss transport in the borough.

* held further discussions with North West Shape over the appointment of a Disability Arts Field Worker. GMCDP have been instrumental in drawing up a suitable job description, and in ensuring that the appointee receives ample support from other disabled people.

* appointed a project worker to conduct research into disability awareness training. A further short-term worker is yet to be appointed.

* attended BCODP's AGM and the "Day of Action" demonstration in London (see inside for details).

* appeared in several radio and television debates.

* provided speakers, workshop leaders, advice and consultancy on events and issues literally to numerous to mention

"Conversation at the Kiosk" or "Fiddling with the Truth"

SCENE: A cinema in Anytown. flat entrance to foyer, stairs to auditorium.

ENTER: Two disabled people (or people with disabilities). One uses a wheelchair. One uses elbow crutches. Approaches ticket kiosk.

1st dp/pwd: Two please.

Cashier: So sorry - we cant have disabled people in here... too many stairs.

1st dp/pwd: Oh well, we're not disabled people, we're people with disabilities - right Jean?

2nd dp/pwd: Right. Pat!

Cashier: I seeee... funny you should say that - the staff here went on a... whatsitcalled ... erm, disability awareness training I think it was. Yes, that's right ... So you 're not disabled if we see you as people first - have I got it right?

Both dp/pwd: Got it!

Cashier: WELL, there's no doubt about it you really are people, I can see that. That means you're not disabled then?

Pat: Yes... er, no (bit confusedly).

Cashier: If you leave your disabilities in the cloakroom, we can let you in... there's a kennel out the back for guide dogs - can't let them in either specially if it's wet. They do tend to smell a bit with wet fur you know.

Pat to Jean: Shall we do that then?

Jean to Pat: 'Suppose we'll have to...

to cashier: O.K. then, we'll leave our disabilities down here.

Cashier: There is one snag... we have to charge. You see, disabilities take up more room than just coats.

Pat: (Taken aback) we hadn't reckoned on that had we Jean? Now much? (To cashier)

Cashier: It'll be £3 for the crutches, and £5.35 for the wheelchair.

Jean: (After pause) But that's £8.35! Just for storing our disabilities! That's a bit much!

Cashier: Rules are rules I'm afraid... we could knock off the 35p if you put the crutches in the wheelchair, seeing as there aren't any other disabilities in there today.

Jean: I dunno... what do you think Pat?

Pat: Makes me think it might be simpler to be disabled people and find an accessible cinema...

Jean: Do me a favour!

Pat: Oh. O.K. Let's go for it.

Cashier: Right that's £8 for Cloakroom tickets and £7 for two... £15 please... Which film?

Jean: "Fiddler on the Roof" please, and can you ask someone to carry us upstairs please?

Cashier: (patiently and kindly). But if you can't get up stairs on your own, you must be disabled. and I've already told you, we can't have disabled people in here...

- ENDS? -

Anne Rae

"1,200 DISABLED PEOPLE MARCH ON DHSS" - The Guardian, 29.7.88

"MINISTER DUCKS THE DISABLED" - The Sun, 29.7.88

"DISABLED PROTEST AT SOCIAL SECURITY CUTS" - The Times, 29.7.88

"DISABLED ACTIVISTS BLOCK HOLIDAY TRAFFIC TO DOVER" - The Daily Mail, 29.7.88

"SCANDAL OF BENEFIT CUTS FOR THE DISABLED - THOUSANDS LEFT PENNILESS" - The Mirror, 29.7.88

November 1988

6

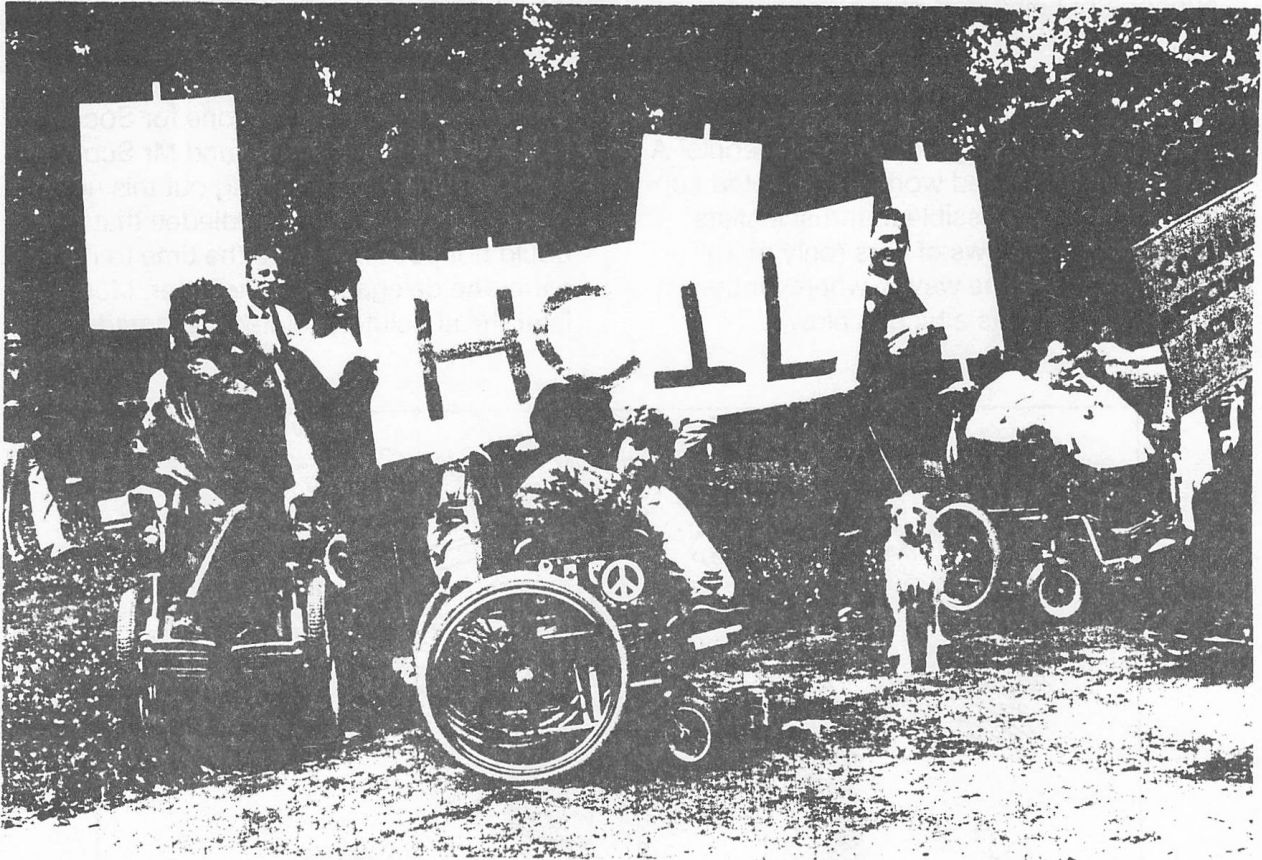
"Good evening, this is the nine o'clock news... today hundreds of disabled people marched through London to deliver a letter of protest at the headquarters of the Department of Health and Social Security. The Minister for the Disabled, Nicholas Scott, met a delegation from the marches, and an amicable and constructive exchange took place. Later, an obviously distressed spokesperson from the DHSS told our reporter that his department had no idea that disabled people in this country could be living such isolated, poverty-stricken lives. A public enquiry would be held immediately under the jurisdiction of Lord Henderson..."

- BBC, 28th July 1988.

Apart from the fact that over 1,200 disabled people did demonstrate in London as described above, the media quotes are pure fantasy.

The British Council of Organisations of Disabled People (BCODP) organised the event, and protesters gathered in Kennington Park to listen to speeches from Jack Ashley MP, Alf Morris MP, and Colin Lowe (Head of the London Boroughs Disability Resource Team but representing the National Federation of the Blind).

Messrs Morris and Ashley expressed much outrage at the plight of the disabled in society today, promising that that very afternoon they would leave the House of Commons in no doubt about the extent of the oppression of disabled people and the way it was perpetrated by the government. So vehement were they that we felt confident that at last the iron in Mrs Thatcher's soul would be smelted.



"...protesters gathered in Kensington Park..."

John Evans, Deputy Chairperson of BCODP, reminded the crowd that we were there not just to fight for justice for ourselves, but for the thousands of disabled people isolated at home who were unable, because of their poverty and lack of transport, to be with the demonstration.

Lucille Lyden, Welfare Rights Worker for the Islington Disablement Association, gave us a stirring insight into what a fine speaker she will soon be, and urged us to put our faith and energy into organising ourselves into continual protest, and not to leave our fate in the hands of politicians. Right on, Lucille!

It would almost be true to say that it was difficult to hear the speakers over the whirl of cameras - the press,

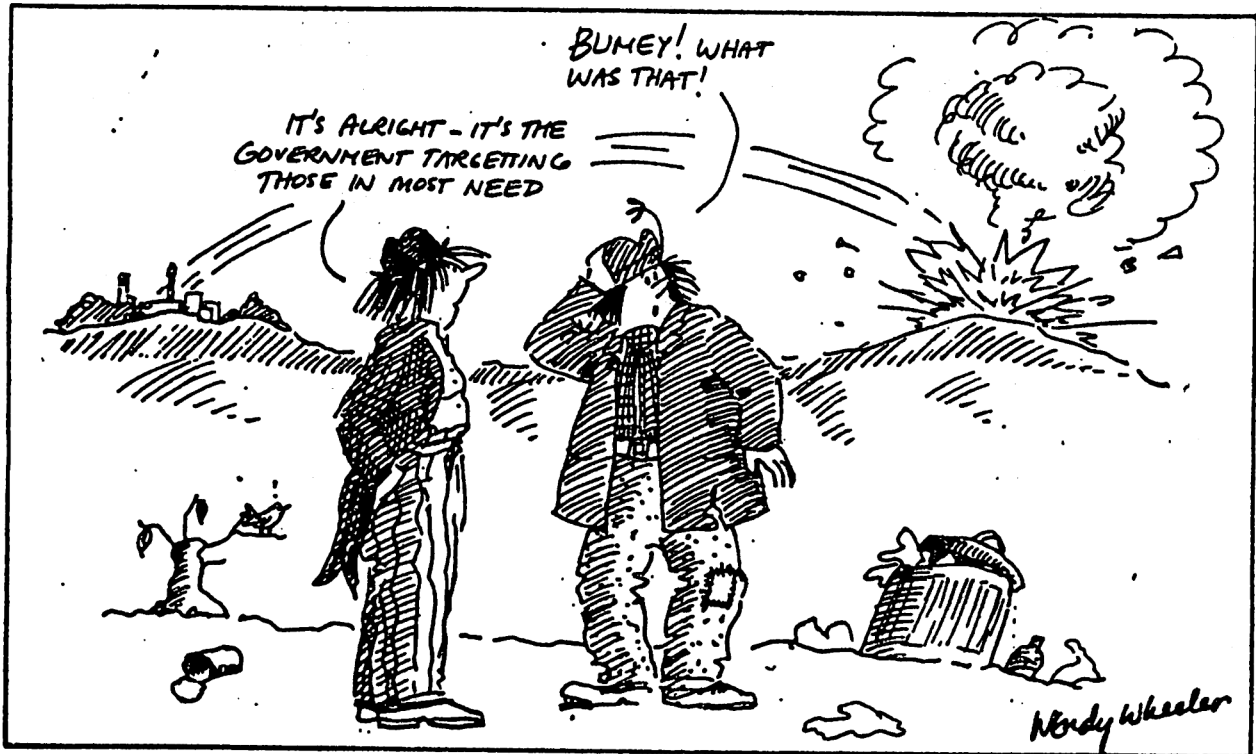
television, the amateur photographers were all having a field day in the park and along the route to the DHSS headquarters at the Elephant and Castle. Banners abounded, some so explicit in their messages to the policy makers that stewards were moved to request that they be furled - such a pity.

So, solidarity established, and with the euphoria of being part of positive action coursing through our veins, we threaded the mile to Alexander Fleming House. Far from the streets being thronged by incredulous spectators, they were bare of people! A few builders stopped work and shouted support, and it was possible to thrust leaflets through the windows of cars (only marginally held up on the way to wherever they were going). It was a bit of a blow, this... the route chosen was guaranteed to block London's traffic for miles, but the British bobbies are getting pretty good at minimising the effect of demonstrating disgruntled British citizens (In fact, with a bit of help from the media, it's possible for them to make the fact of a big demonstration become a mere memory in the minds of the participants).

A group of six had been delegated by the BCODP to hand to the Minister for the Disabled, Nicholas Scott, a letter detailing BCODP's grave concern on the cuts in benefits to disabled people implemented by the new Social Security Act.

Unfortunately, the Government had just decided to split the DHSS into two Ministries (to reflect the state of the nation?) and to appoint two Ministers - one for Social Security and one for Health, and Mr Scott was going to be so busy sorting out this new set of Tweedledum and Tweedledee

that he could not possibly spare the time to receive either the delegation or the letter. Much later, he absolutely refuted the contents of the letter, but be that as it may, the letter was received and whisked through the tinted glass doors of the massive DHSS building by old Nick's subordinate.



Quite a few of the demonstrators were rather angry about this desultory treatment, and sat down at the Elephant and Castle roundabout. The sitters were a little anxious, but defiant. The police were a little anxious, but stoical. A black and tan mongrel was a little anxious, but in good voice as he joined in with the protest songs. One self-appointed marshal! was very anxious indeed, and making like a sheepdog attempted to harry the errant breakaways into joining the main flock trailing back to the park.

Then the police got much more anxious; time was passing, traffic was building up - something HAD TO BE DONE, AND

SEEN TO BE DONE, like justice. So they fidgetted and mumbled behind their chinstraps; they asked pushers to move the pushed. The pushers wouldn't do so without a request from the pushed, and the pushed feigned incomprehension; the dog was barking it's head off and the word "arrest" was thrown through the air - but the bobbies didn't want to actually DO it! So they simply disappeared, an impression of their chinstraps hanging in the air like the Cheshire cat's smile.



"The police were a little anxious, but stoical."

Well, after a while, the sitters felt a bit bereft of their massive blue-clad audience, so rather disconsolately got up and wended their way after the rest of the (better behaved) demonstrators.

The departure point was the meeting point, and it looked as desolate as the ground after the fair has gone. Banners were limp, and people were tired and getting into transport. Some went on to the Battersea Arts Centre to enjoy the cabaret of disabled artists arranged by the London Disability Arts Forum. It is possible that those there will never forget Rikki Jodelco and Keith Armstrong's wonderful, long, exhilarating improvisation in blues time on the theme of charity - the room was ecstatic. All the performers were great, but Rikki and Keith caught the essence of the day and took us all with them.



Outside the Elephant & Castle

A reporter was heard to say that the demo was not newsworthy because it had been staged too long after the benefit changes had taken place. This point has been

debated by BCODP, and its validity is arguable. Before the details of the new Social Security Act were released, the Government insisted that disability related benefits would not be adversely affected, and that no final decisions would be made until after the findings of the OPCS survey on disabled people had been assessed. To demonstrate without information would have left BCODP open to ridicule.

The positive results of this initiative have been that we now know that disabled people can be motivated and mobilised; we know that the cost of mounting such a demo is not prohibitive; and through the specialist disability programmes via television and radio, disabled people with no access to local groups will now have the knowledge that there is a disability movement in this country, one which is actively struggling for basic human rights.

PICTURE SPECIAL - on the march...



...and how "The Times" saw it...

Disabled march against cutbacks



Among disabled demonstrators protesting in London yesterday at cutbacks in benefit payments were (left) Mr Bob Kinder from Southampton who broke his neck in a diving

accident, being cuddled by his daughter Sarah, aged 6, and (right) Mrs Kay Kain, a volunteer from a centre for the disabled in Waltham Forest, east London, with Eileen Naylor.



More than 2,000 protestors took to the streets and traffic was brought to a standstill as they marched to the DHSS headquarters at the Elephant and Castle. The march was organised

by the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People. A letter was delivered to Mr John Moore, the Secretary of State for Social Services. (Photographs: Chris Harris).

An
ha
So
cra
To
fro
As
sur
riz
hal
low
wa
anc
smi
spo
t
res
Sor
the
fres
"W
pas
ing
tha
qui
A
just
He,
visi
wa
SD
a n
old
Shi
she
in
out
shu
the
As
the
De
l
apr
tim
ma
"
the
"wl
unc
jor
inv
car
pea
and
eac
"co
l
"co
squ
see
aro
pro

Ashdown victory | ITV chiefs attack levy plan

Text from the newspaper cutting:

Among disabled demonstrators protesting in London yesterday at cutbacks in benefit payments were (left) Mr Rob Kinder from Southampton who broke his neck in a diving accident, being cuddled by his daughter Sarah, aged 6, and (right) Mrs Kay Kain, a volunteer from a centre for the disabled in Waltham Forest, east London, with Eileen Naylor.

6, and (right) Mrs Kay Kain, a volunteer from a centre for the disabled in Waltham Forest, east London, with Eileen Naylor. More than 2,000 protestors took to the streets and traffic was brought to a standstill as they marched to the DHSS headquarters at the Elephant and Castle. The march was organised by the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People. A letter was delivered to Mr John Moore, the Secretary of State for Social Services. (Photographs: Chris Harris.)

"The Times" was one of the few national newspapers to give the demonstration any coverage at all, but sadly the above article typifies the way in which the Media usually deals with disability issues.

Does the cutting give the impression of angry and determined disabled people, marching to protest about the poverty being inflicted upon them by cruel and uncaring legislation?

Disability Terminology Debate - Revisited

Anne Rae is Development Worker (Southern Region) with the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People.



Anne Rae, BCODP Development Worker

As yet another spate of suggested terms for disabled people assaults our senses and sensitivities, Anne examines the issue of terminology ...

For new readers - there is an ongoing argument within the Disability Movement revolving around how we, disabled people/people with disabilities, should be referred to. Briefly, the debate is based on two trains of thought:

"People with disabilities" argue that we are people first, and that our disabilities (impairments) have nothing to do with who or what we are, or what we can or cannot do.

People who identify themselves as "disabled people" argue that we are disabled more by environmental and economic barriers to full participation in society than by our physical/sensory impairments, and that the term "disabled people" allows full exploration of what we are disabled by.

I am a disabled person. This is a healthy debate for us to be engaged in, because establishing the fundamental

principles of disability issues is vital for understanding our position in societal structures, and, by understanding, effectively confront them. What is not helpful is new, convoluted terminology for disability which can only cloud the issues, but need them or not, new 'right on' phrases for disability issues are being bandied about which need -to be looked at, considered and, as far as I'm concerned, rejected.

The new terminology would seem to be floating across the Atlantic from the USA. There is evidence that for disabled Americans, participation and integration in their society is much more of a reality for them than us - they have an Anti-Discrimination Act for Americans with Disabilities progressing through Congress now - therefore experimenting with language around the oppression of disability is a luxury they can, perhaps, afford.

Here is a glossary of phrases which I find at the very least confusing, and at worst dangerous for the reasons given:

"Physically Inconvenienced"

This trivialises the problems being confronted by disabled people to the point of being quite offensive. Those of us unable to move around our own homes, or out of them, are not "inconvenienced", we are prisoners. Those of us unable to use public transport, or get into public buildings are not "inconvenienced", we are discriminated against. Those of us denied full access to educational and training programmes are not "inconvenienced", we are denied the right to knowledge, and reaching our own intellectual potential. Those of us unable to work for all these contributory

reasons are not "inconvenienced", we are living below the poverty line. We are not "inconvenienced" because as disabled' people we are perceived as asexual, we suffer identity loss, and the denial of sexual fulfilment.

"Physically Challenged"

This certainly has a good ring to it. It brings to mind all those heart-warming tales of derring-do; of disabled people who climb mountains, cross the Steppes of Russia without water for days on end, who get lionised (patronisingly) for being literary geniuses in spite of their 'severe disabilities'. Quite a lot of them go to Buckingham Palace and get awards... and they are burdened by becoming role-models for us all. Or is it the overwhelming majority of us, who are struggling to live from day to day just to exist, who are burdened by having these role-models to live up to? Too many of us have had articles about these super-achievers thrust under our tired noses and tired eyes, or poured into our tired ears, accompanied by gee-up noises like "look what YOU could do if you really tried". A really menacing snarl would be a legitimate response to this.

The point is that being physically challenged, for able-bodied or disabled people, should be a matter of choice for the individual. There is an element in this phrase which smacks of failure for those of us not being perceived as responding to 'physical challenges', but who is defining what physical challenges are? Quentin Crisp (The Naked Civil Servant) once asked on "Wogan": "What's wrong with being a failure?" and nearly got a standing ovation. There are value judgements implicit in this phrase which fail to excite

this writer; rather, it makes me feel that it could soon be another weapon used against us.

"Differently Abled"

Well, isn't everybody? In an attempt to be positive, it has to be said that able-bodied people often latch on to this in their early attempts to understand our oppression, and there certainly are not enough of those about. Apart from its superficiality, it also feeds into the myth that we are somehow compensated by nature (?)with extraordinary cheerfulness, courage, an extra 'sense'. Disabled people who use it are also contributing to this myth, but much more consciously, wanting to advocate that we are indeed 'special people', with a special perspective on life which is more enlightened than that of able-bodied people. Of course we often have a different perspective - our segregation from mainstream life ensures that. But the conclusions we arrive at from this perspective should be no different to those of able-bodied people aware of the injustices heaped upon minority groups who are so disadvantaged by those injustices and the discriminatory social structure.

"Temporarily Able-Bodied (TAB)"

This was introduced into the UK from the USA by Judy Heumann, founder of the 'World Institute on Disability', during her whistle-stop tour of Europe. Somebody telephoned me the other day and introduced himself as a 'tap'. Well, that's what I thought he said. "A what?" I asked. "A TAB.... T.A.B." Memory came to the rescue before I had

time to say "What the heck is that?". Judy has a lot of good things to say, but this is not one of her better thoughts, if indeed it does originate from her. Earlier this year, in an interview on "LINK", she observed, with great perspicacity I thought, that we are the only minority group to which anybody could belong, and she thought able-bodied people felt threatened by that and, therefore, by us.

Why then should we use a phrase which will remind people that they can become what they most fear, if our very existence does that already. It will do our cause no good in this context. Reminding planners, architects and policy makers that access for all is morally right and economic sense is one thing. Wagging our fingers at people, metaphorically, saying "Wait until you're disabled" is another; akin to those awful threatening phrases like "you wait until you grow up/you get married/you have kids of your own/you're old" etc. Finger waggings are not endearing people, and I'm not entirely sure that able-bodied people who refer to themselves as TABs are either.

One thing's for sure, we're all 'TAPs' -Temporarily Alive People but do we want to be reminded of this too often? I'll run there's somebody out there who will say 'yes'. Hey ho.

Social Workers Corner





JCPTs - Consultation or Tokenism?

Some time ago GMCDP was approached by Stockport Social Services Dept with a request to provide a representative on the area's Joint Care Planning Team. As a county-wide organisation, it was unusual for us to receive this kind of request, but it was felt that this may be a useful avenue by which to influence service planners.



Kevin Hyett, GMCDP Vice Chair

Coalition Vice-Chair, Kevin Hyett, was nominated and appointed as our representative, and here reports on what has been a turbulent experience, which has, perhaps, raised more questions than it has answered.

For about a year I have been the Coalition's representative on Stockport's Joint Care Planning Team (Physical Handicap). In January, Stockport JCPT produced its end of year report to the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) which described the team's progress and proposals for future development in Stockport. The Council of GMCDP have already discussed this report and it now seems an appropriate time to widen the discussion.

The purpose of this article is twofold. Firstly, to share my experience of attending Stockport JCPT meetings with other Coalition members, some of whom may be attending JCPT meetings in other districts. Secondly, to try and raise some issues about JCPTs which I feel need greater discussion.

What is a J.C.P.T.?

Joint Care Planning Teams are made up of representatives from the local authority, the district health authority, the voluntary sector and the family practitioner committee. There are different JCPTs for each 'client' group, e.g. elderly people or people with a mental disability. I will just be dealing with the JCPT for 'Physical Handicap' but many of the points will also be relevant for the other teams.

The role of JCPTs is mainly an advisory one. They provide their Joint Consultative Committee with information and

recommendations on policy. They cover health care issues across organisational boundaries in order to find a joint approach to problems.

My experience in Stockport

When the Coalition was invited to join the team, the terms of reference had already been drawn up.

It was decided that more could be accomplished if the team set up subgroups which reported to the JCPT's monthly meetings. One of the team's members had attended a seminar led by Ken Davies of the Derbyshire Centre for Integrated Living, where seven areas were listed as important to integrated living (Coalition members may remember Ken giving a similar talk at one of our general meetings). This list of seven areas was felt to be a suitable guide to setting up subgroups, therefore the following five groups were created:

Information and Counselling.

Housing and Residential Care.

Coalition News

Technical aids/equipment and personal health.

Transport.

Employment.

I was unable to attend any of the subgroups because they met during the daytime while I was at work. Although some of the subgroup members made an effort to include me by post or telephone my only real way to make a contribution

was at the monthly JCPT meetings when the subgroups reported back. I think this had the effect of devaluing my contribution, if only subconsciously, because I appeared to be always negative.

All the subgroups started by collecting information about what was provided at the current time in Stockport. As this takes time very few subgroups had concrete proposals by the time their report had to be prepared for the JCC, and most of those proposals were non-controversial. There was, naturally, one major exception.

The housing and residential care subgroup saw a need for four kinds of provision:

Standard housing with adaptations or provision of technical aids.

Sheltered housing with staff support.

Support Services Team.

Residential Care.

Stockport local authority do not run an institution at the moment, although there is an institution in Stockport run by a charity. I felt this was a position of strength, not being lumbered with an expensive institution soaking up the funds which could otherwise be used to enable disabled people to live in the community. There was by no means undivided agreement on this issue, but the majority took the day and the JCPT recommended in it's report that Stockport should have it's own institution.

The final JCPT report carried a paragraph which stated my opposition, on behalf of GMCDP, to the plan. It was this report which was discussed at a Coalition Council meeting.

The GMCDP Council took the view that we cannot be associated with any proposal to build yet another institution in Greater Manchester. Therefore It was decided to cease our involvement with Stockport JCPT and send a letter explaining why I would not be attending any more meetings.

Before this letter could be sent, GMCDP heard that the JCPT was now thinking of some sort of supported tenancy facility rather than a residential home. The GMCDP Council felt that if this was the case then we should get involved with JCPT again, even though the Issue of a residential home may arise again, we can cross that bridge when we come to it. Who knows, we may be able to convince the other JCPT members we are right by then!

Since my attendance at JCPT meetings had ceased, the JCPT had changed the time of It's meetings to a time when I would not be able to attend. So, the GMCDP sent a letter asking for confirmation of the JCPT's position on the residential home and whether the time of the monthly meeting could be returned to it's previous slot. The reply confirmed that the current thinking was more towards a supported tenancy than a residential home, but before they could change the time of the JCPT meeting "the team would wish to be assured of a regular attendance". Oh, the subtle ways we are discriminated against, or not so subtle! Naturally, the GMCDP replied that this 'condition' is unacceptable: so at the time of writing this I still don't know whether I'm a member of the Stockport JCPT or not.

Should we be involved?

Participation in things like JCPT's takes plenty of time and energy, so It's important to make sure the effort is worthwhile. The member agencies of JCPTs have a lot of influence over Disabled Peoples lives, so involvement by Disabled People may influence their actions as well as the projects undertaken jointly through the JCPT. Disabled People can bring a perspective to the team which is essential if the resulting projects are to be of any real benefit to the Disabled community.

It may seem clear at first glance that it is vital that the Coalition and Disabled People as a whole become involved in consultation exercises like JCPTs, but many factors conspire to water down our contribution. The make-up of the team, lack of accountability, and access to meetings can all turn fruitful consultation into a frustrating experience!

Many of the team members are paid officers of the local authority or health authority and therefore used to working with each other in one capacity or another. Each authority is plagued with departmental politics which the voluntary members are ignorant of, but which make their presence felt during discussions. These can give rise to a feeling that there is a 'hidden' agenda, even when there isn't one, and that decisions have already been taken. The teams are structured so that the voluntary sector is in the minority, which means that, unlike the statutory bodies, they are unable to force an issue to be taken up.

Quite often, the voluntary sector representatives are 'Invited' to join the team, they are not chosen by the Disabled People

in the area they represent. So the voluntary representatives become only accountable to the organisations they belong to, if indeed they do belong to a Disabled organisation. This is not only unfair to the Disabled community at large, but it also puts a lot of pressure on the individual concerned if he/she cannot consult with their peers.

It goes without saying that access to all team meetings and subgroup meetings is vital if Disabled People are to fully participate and contribute to the proceedings. Many ideas are formed at little subgroup meetings, and it's an opportunity to quash those misconceptions that take up so much time in the main JCPT meetings.

Is there a way forward?

It may be that the problems faced by Disabled People when trying to get the most from JCPT meetings are just inherent in the system. If so, all we can do is co-operate with those authorities that are forward looking and welcome a real contribution from Disabled People. I don't share that pessimistic view which again implies we are in the hands of well meaning able bodied people. We need to be more organised. There should be greater co-operation between the voluntary representatives that are members of a particular JCPT, and voluntary representatives from an over the County should have the chance to exchange ideas with each other and learn from each others mistakes and successes.

There must be many Disabled people reading this who are members of a JCPT in the County, and that is valuable

experience. What do you think? Is this a field the Coalition and Disabled People should concentrate on more?, or are JCPTs a waste of our time?

Arts Focus



Keith Stephens is a member of GMCDP. He says: "This poem was written some time ago (early '80s). Black people In general have no difficulty In coming to terms with who they are and where they are from. The difficulties and barriers that black people must surmount are put up consciously or otherwise by the 'white' world.

For me this poem says, implicitly, "Check us out. We laugh, cry, and go to the toilet like anyone else. Give us our due... "

We survive

We survive from day to day,
Our yesterday and tomorrow are the same.
Hopes and desires like logs on a fire turn to ashes,
No fire burns within.
We are strangers in your land,
Used and abused we cling to each other.
Like lovers in each other
We find wells of contentment
A fire that smoulders and smoulders,
Refusing to go out.

We survive from day to day,
The future looks dim and uncertain,
Without a solid foundation
Hopes and desires crumble.
We will not be forever
Strangers in your land,
The scapegoat of your conscience,
The under-nourished fire
That smoulders and smoulders.

We survive from day to day.
Past glories are nowhere recorded,
No fire burns within.
The hope of tomorrow,
Checked and erased by the prejudice of today.
The fires that smoulder and smoulder,
Nowhere burst into flame.

Steadfastly we hold on to the belief
That one day like the phoenix
The cold ashes will kindle a flame
That will warm the soul and set us free.
Our yesterday will be a thing of the past
Never to be as our tomorrow.
The glow of the fire within
Make of us all one people.

Sue Napolitano is a member of the Coalition. She says: "I wrote this poem shortly before moving to a house with a lift! The rest of it speaks for itself'.

On Moving House

Earthbound no more, I choose the sky,
My dreams need the space to fly,
My thoughts the twiggy treetops to wrestle with,
My soul the starry depths to breathe...

I will escape the weight of rooms above,
Pinning me ever closer down,
I will expose the ancient lie,
That the right place for me is on the ground -
I choose the sky.

Earthbound no more I choose the earth,
My feet solid on its floor,
Draw sustenance from its rooted depths,
I am its prisoner no more.

The Good Theatre Guide

GMCDP Information Worker Ian Stanton continues his series on local theatres with a look at the Royal Exchange...

"Hello there, nasty bit of weather we're having..."

The kind of conversation opener you'd expect NOT to hear if you're a disabled person in the lift on the way up to the Royal Exchange Theatre. Chances are you'll have been sat out in the street sampling the nasty bit of weather at first hand, as you waited for the side-door to be unlocked to let you in!

It's a shame, really, that exterior access is such a problem at the Royal Exchange, because the main theatre concourse is spacious and flat. From the lift you are ushered through a set of fire-doors and into the foyer/concourse area.

(During the day the situation reverses itself - these fire doors are LOCKED but the side-entrance is UNLOCKED. Am I making myself clear??? Anyway, the end result is that you can't even get in to sample the accessible foyer shops, bars and restaurant/cafe during the day).

The concourse even boasts an adapted loo for disabled people, although the lock has been broken for the last 12 months (still, it does encourage you to learn how to whistle loudly). It also shares the fate of many such "small rooms" in that it does tend to become a repository for assorted cleaning equipment - not enough to deny access, but still...

If you're unable to climb stairs and want to visit the Royal Exchange, the process by which you gain access requires much attention to detail and an immaculate sense of timing if you are to avoid a drenching on a rainy night. Ideally you need to book well in advance, state your need of access via the side-entrance and lift, write to confirm, and be outside the side door precisely half an hour before the performance begins so that the attendant can let you in (and then hope that the person who's been assigned to let you in shares your sense of punctuality).

Even having achieved all this, it shouldn't be assumed that all will go swimmingly. Some time ago I had occasion to write to the theatre management (one of my more polite

letters of complaint) detailing some of the problems I'd encountered on my visits to the theatre:

On two occasions no-one had turned up to open the side-door, and my companion (who was disabled but ambulant) had to struggle up the steps to collar someone. On another occasion, although MY seat was reserved as arranged, my companion's seat had been sold to someone else - fortunately there was room to rearrange the seating. Twice the disabled loo had been out of order - I could probably have coped with this if I'd been informed of the situation on arrival. I would certainly have been more prudent with my choice of drink (two pints of bitter) if I'd known.

(This last incident led to quite an adventure; in my desperate red-faced state I was pushed, two minutes before the performance was due to begin, round to the loo used by the cast. Thus I was able to nod hello to several people in strange costumes as I pushed in front of them to use the loo. Great to have a chance to meet the cast - I could have thought of better circumstances in which to do so).

I did receive a very polite but negative response to my letter, which all but implied that I'd imagined all these things, but the practical response was more satisfactory, and I've had few problems since (whether this is as a result of my status as a known whinger or not is unclear). And it has to be said that when problems HAVE arisen the staff at the Royal Exchange have always dealt with them quickly, efficiently and with a minimum of fuss.

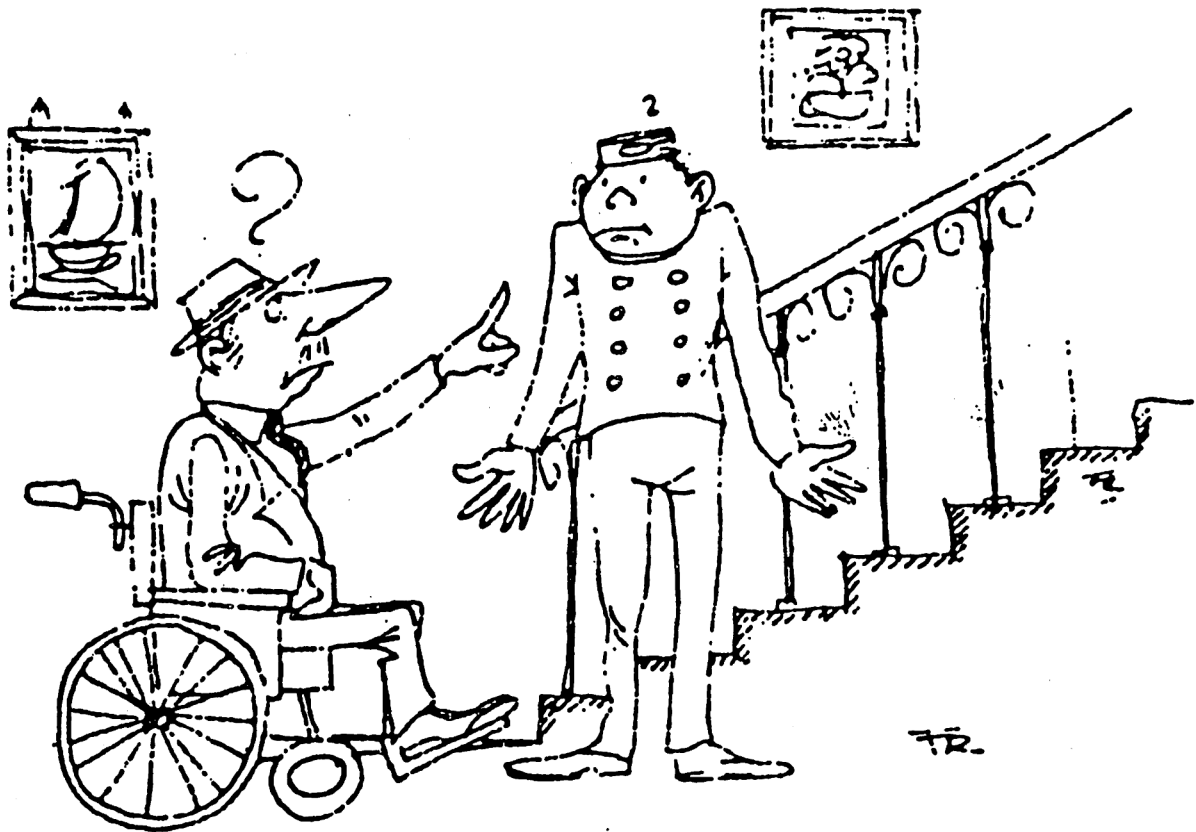
The Royal Exchange does appear to have a commitment to welcoming disabled people, and it's two-tickets-for-the-price-

of-one arrangement does compensate, to some extent, for the onus placed on the disabled person to take along a helper, and for the fact that the only seats available to disabled people are the most expensive ones (usually around £7 or £8).

Although the mountainous steps at each main entrance do form a seemingly impossible obstacle to full access, I do feel that some measures could be taken to allow disabled people something more akin to equal access. A platform-type chair-lift could provide another option, and funding for this expensive adaptation could be secured from the City Council's Access Grants Scheme. The fire-door mentioned earlier could be left open during the day, to enable disabled people to enjoy the daytime atmosphere of the foyer area. And whilst the side-entrance needs to be locked for security reasons (it also leads to the office complex) a buzzer connected to the inside of the theatre would certainly lessen the chances of getting soaked while waiting for someone to turn up to open it.

The Royal Exchange is, in my opinion, quite simply the best theatre I've been to in terms of atmosphere and quality of production - the fact that I seldom miss a production in spite of all the above is an indication that its good points far outweigh the bad.

I just hope that, when they read this article (which they most certainly will) they will look positively at the above suggestions. And, if they do decide to act on them, that they will do so in consultation with organisations of disabled people.



The Sting!



Disabled Living Surfaces

Disabled Living Services (DLS) are one of those local organisations which seem to come and go. One minute they are there annoying all disabled activists in sight, then they disappear for a while. One thing is for sure - they never go away altogether.

After much lobbying, this group changed its name to DLS from the highly offensive Cripples Help Society. One would hope that this change of name might inspire a change of practice.

Unfortunately no. Recently, a DLS worker paid a visit to a local hat-making business, explaining that some disabled "clients" might benefit from tuition in millinery - nice and patronising! This worker expected, after one afternoon's tuition, to become so skilled in making hats that she could pass this on to her disabled "clients".

One wonders whether disabled people actually asked for such a course to be put on (DLS's track record would suggest this to be unlikely). But if they did, one can be sure that they didn't see it as having the same purpose as the writers of the DLS leaflet entitled "Art and Craft for Disabled People". This august document says:

"Our classes do have therapeutic values. But the very best therapy, we think, is to successfully combat the frustration and depression sometimes caused by disability; to replace 'can't' with 'can'." (pass the sickbag!).

How about replacing DLS with a disabled controlled group?!

Access City?



The latest proposals from the City Council are to extend the access programme to include every house on a new housing estate. You would have thought that this scheme would have received the support of all groups/parties. Not so.

The Opposition Group deplored the scheme as a waste of money. In the words of one of the councillors present when this scheme was announced: "Why bother making council

houses accessible - disabled people never go out to visit non-disabled people!" (paraphrase).

It should be noted, however, that the scheme would be supported providing the estate could be used as a dumping-ground for disabled residents.

British Fail



British Rail is constantly telling us that it is "getting there". After years of cattle-truck provision, with wheelchair-users having to endure isolated and uncomfortable journeys in the guard's van, BR is slowly but surely making improvements.

A benefit which is open to the prospective disabled traveller is the Disabled Persons Railcard. This card is from the same stable as the Young Persons Railcard, Elderly Persons Railcard and the Family Railcard. For £12, on most journeys, the card-holder is entitled to one-third discount on the usual price.

That is where the similarity ends. The other cards can be bought at all mainline railway stations, over the counter on production of the appropriate proof and two passport-style photographs.

The Disabled Persons Railcard, however, is not so easy. To claim it, our intrepid traveller must:

1. Pick up a form from the station
2. Obtain proof of eligibility

3. Take the form to a main post-office
4. Then, after all this, the form plus cash has to be sent... to British Rail in YORK!

As if to add insult to injury, it takes a minimum of two weeks to receive this passport to Britain's infamous rail network.

Even when the card needs to be renewed, it is not made easy. Another form is required and it still has to be sent to York!

To promote all that they are doing FOR disabled people, BR have employed the services of a wheelchair-user, Bill Buchanan. This all-smiling, smooth-talking North American is convinced BR is heading in the right direction, and that eventually all will be rosy in the garden.

If this is so, then why can young able-bodied people pick up their railcard quickly, easily, and just before they want to travel, while disabled people have to overcome the seven trials of Hercules to obtain theirs?

I CAN'T



Invalid Children's Aid Nationwide (yuk!), otherwise known as I CAN, is 100 year's old this year. This little heard-of organisation is very much the Lord Lucan of the charity world, and many disabled people have been wondering what it has been doing during it's first century.

I CAN recently launched a Spastics Society-style campaign, using posters to boost its public image. These sickly looking things are covered in flowers and have emblazoned across the top the immortal words:

"Some children need a little help to blossom into individuals"!

This inference is unbelievably insulting to disabled people, suggesting that we are some other form of life, bereft of feelings, ideas and personality. What is even more incredible is the notion that I CAN (sic) are the ones to turn US into people fit to be in THEIR vision of a perfect world!

It would be better for everybody if they went back to the obscurity from whence they came!

Not! The Good Food Guide



That centre of educational excellence, the Birtles College, Wythenshawe, has recently begun cookery classes for blind and partially sighted people. This is part of their commitment to train disabled people to acquire those skills necessary for independent living and then the control over one's life we all crave.

All very commendable. So impressed were the workers in Central Library who provide services to the visually impaired, that they widely publicised the course. A number of people, on their recommendation, attended.

However, at this point the college's right-on image takes a dive. People arriving on the course were horrified to discover that the tutor would not allow any guide dogs to be brought into the class! This misguided fool, on being challenged about this ridiculous rule, took the matter to the college's Principal, who, displaying an appalling lack of awareness, promptly backed up the tutor and agreed to the ruling.

The Principal, Mr Ashurst, must be as backward in his thinking as his colleague, and does the image of Birtles College no favours at all. Disabled people demand fair treatment and we intend to get it, and people like these will not stop us.

Mr Ashurst, if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen!

Scorpio will be back in our next edition, in the meantime, "WATCH YOUR BOOTS!! "



Public Transport and Disabled People

The great transport debate goes on. Here GMCDP Development Worker Lorraine Gradwell, acting Chair of the Disabled Peoples Transport Working Group, looks at recent developments.

Consultation.

The 1985 Transport Act placed a duty on the Passenger Transport Authorities to formulate policies for the purpose of meeting the total public transport needs of the conurbation.



Lorraine Gradwell, Chair of the PTA Working Group

In its Public Transport Plan for Greater Manchester (1987) the PTA welcomed the "recognition of the importance of ensuring that public transport services are made available to users with impaired mobility". The Authority also committed itself to ensuring that its policies "take full account of the transport needs of women, and of the ethnic minorities."

To help them achieve these aims, the PTA decided to set up consultative mechanisms with four "disadvantaged" groups - namely, women, elderly people, ethnic minority people, and disabled people.

When the Disabled People's Working Party was set up it was clear from the beginning about the sort of issues it wanted to address, and how it wanted to address them - for example, a disabled person has chaired the group from the start and those people involved have been keen to have the group properly constituted, with at least half of the members being accountable to local organisations of disabled people.

Funding and support.

Another piece of recent legislation which has affected the way in which the PTA are taking account of the transport needs of disabled people has been the withdrawal of the 'Manpower Services' (now the Training Commission) Community Programme scheme.

This has affected local provision because until now the PTA have allocated practically ALL of its "special needs" budget to the support of "Ring and Ride" services. This particular form of door to door transport relied on MSC-CP funding, employing most of the driving and escort staff through the CP scheme.

On learning that the CP scheme was to end, and after consulting with Ring and Ride operators, the PTA proposed to take the existing Ring and Ride schemes on to mainstream funding, with a reduction of 50% in the escort cover provided by the service. This was approved by the Disabled People's Working Group with the proviso that escort cover should not be refused to anybody who needed/requested it.

However, one of the main concerns of some people on the Working Group is that the Ring and Ride operation covers only small parts of five of the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester, leaving the majority of disabled people with absolutely no access to public transport.

In fact, where Dial a Ride operations exist in Greater Manchester they generally receive no support from the PTA, and are often sucked into, or eased out by, the Ring and Ride system, which is distinguished by its limited operating area and its lack of planning input from disabled people.

Whilst agreeing that there will always be a need for some form of door-to-door service many disabled people's organisations (GMCDP included) are not satisfied with the Ring-and-Ride model because of the severe restrictions it places on the mobility of many disabled people - in refusing to cross boundaries, for example - and because on the whole it has been conceived, planned, developed, and is implemented by able-bodied people who typically think a wheelchair is a mobility handicap!

The Ring-and-Ride schemes DO have user-groups, but they do not deal with the planning of the service, rather with general issues arising from the day-to-day operation of a scheme which is already up and running. Naturally, those disabled people who represent Ring-and-Ride on the Working Group are, on the whole, going to defend the services they use - especially when their coordinator is sitting listening to what they are saying!

Some of the people who represent Ring-and-Ride user groups, however, DO take a wider view of the issues of

public, non-segregated, transport being made accessible to ALL disabled people and this is a welcome approach.

After the PTA's decision to "bail out" the Ring-and Ride system local papers proclaimed "PTA saves Dial-a-Ride schemes": in fact local Dial-a-Ride schemes were, on the whole, ignored by the PTA even though many of them were facing exactly the same staffing crisis as the Ring-and-Ride schemes.

Local papers were also proclaiming that the PTA planned to extend their Dial-a-Ride (read Ring-and-Ride) scheme into parts of three other boroughs of Greater Manchester. This is despite the fact that PTA has assured the Working Group that the planned expansion has been halted until their current policy review is finished, and until proper consultation in the boroughs has been carried out.

Even so, people "on the ground" are aware that contacts with local authorities are still being made by the PTE specifically in connection with expanding the Ring-and-Ride scheme, in fact one PTE officer was heard to say that expansion into Oldham, Salford, and Trafford was in an "advanced state in principle", with premises already identified.

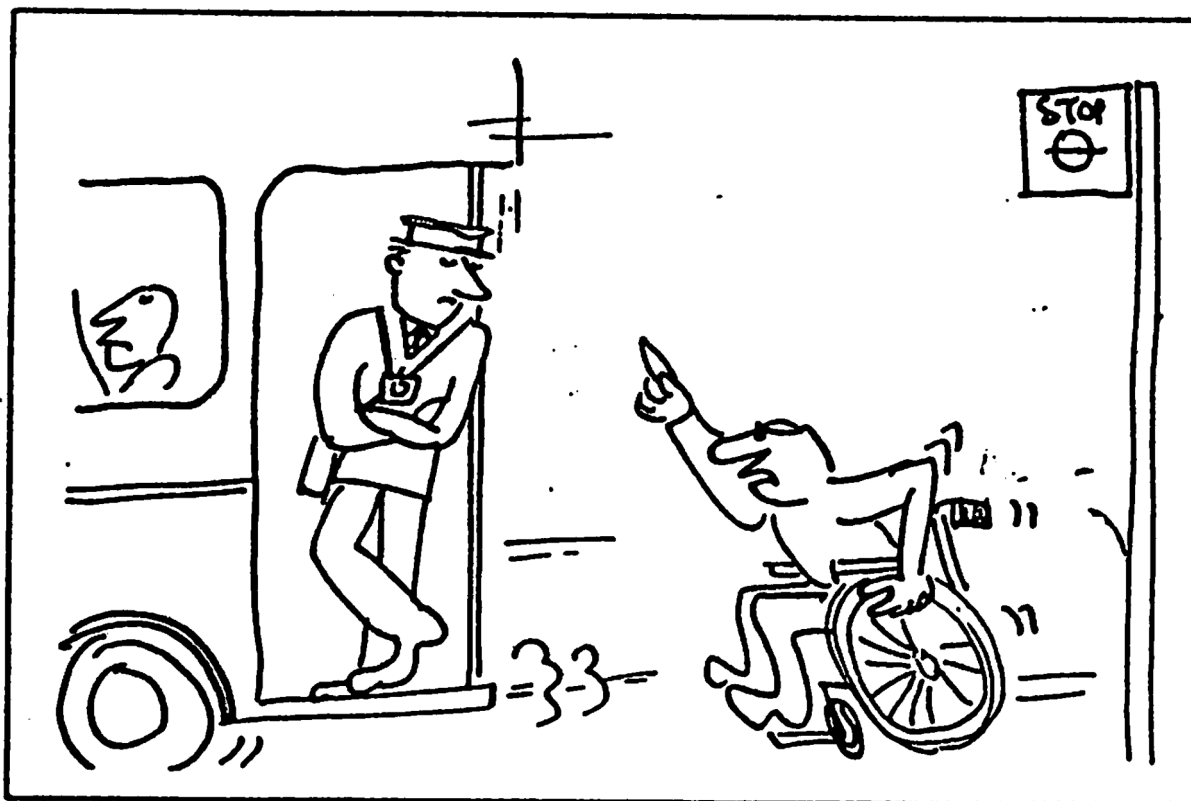
Policy review.

The Disabled People's Working Party elected three of its members in July to a sub-group, to contribute to the Policy Review on behalf of the Working Party. The "election" was held in haste at a special meeting of the group because the

PTA were anxious to get the review under way, they said. The Group which elected the three reps was unconstituted and uneven, and the whole process was dubious to say the least. This is not to undervalue the contributions made by those three reps, whose commitment has been total.

To date (mid-October) the sub-group has met three times, I am told that the first meeting was a "getting to know you" session; the second concentrated heavily on the new Light Rapid Transit system, in which the PTA have already committed themselves to accessibility, and the third is taking place as I write.

What I DO know is that the agendas for the sub-group do not seem to be following the agendas for the PTA's own officers group which is working on the very same subject - the policy review - and meeting weekly.



The PTA hope to have finished the policy review by the end of the year. The Working Group meets only four times a year, the next meeting to be in December. This means that the Group will not have been able to contribute - except through the three reps, who obviously cannot report back to a group which is not meeting!

This all adds up to a growing feeling, already made known to PTA councillors and officers, that the PTA is indulging in a cosmetic consultation exercise.

Representatives of the Working Group, including myself as chair, have already met once with PTA councillors and policy officers to express our concern at this state of affairs - it would seem to be time for yet another meeting. The PTA are not even honouring their OWN commitments to "take full account of the views and needs of public transport users and potential users", let alone the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9th December 1975, which states for example:

"Disabled persons are entitled to have their special needs taken into consideration at all stages of economic and social planning." and:

"Organisations of disabled persons may be usefully consulted in all matters regarding the rights of disabled persons."

Maybe the PTA know better?

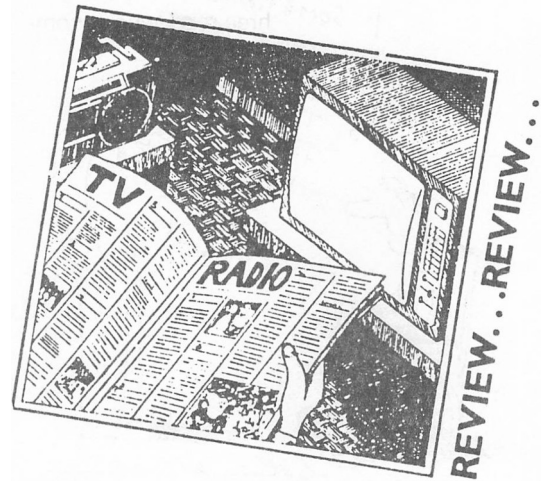
But how, then, is it that they have made such a mess of provision to date? Answer - by being totally influenced by operators and service providers rather than by potential users. The chance to make significant changes is slowly dwindling and the PTA seem happy to see that happen. It is up to disabled people to press for transport provision for all.

Disabled people, no matter whether they currently use Ring & Ride, taxis, their own private cars or whatever, must be mindful of the fact that there is STILL a majority of disabled people who do not have access to public transport, and who are virtual prisoners in their own home. Current members of the group need to be mindful of the fact that they have a collective responsibility towards ensuring the PTA takes full account of the needs of disabled people in the Greater Manchester area.

Reviews

"See You Thursday"

Last December, the Department of Transport produced its driver training video "See You Thursday".



For Pat Duncan, a Community Transport Association Committee member, it made disturbing viewing.

So, you never patronise "them". Never? Think again - it's easy; needs no practice.

Try this:

"How are we today, then?"

(We? who's "we"? I'm cheesed off. Can't speak for you!)

"Rotten weather for you, isn't it?"

(So it's not trickling down YOUR neck too?). Easy, isn't it?

Listen to this video. Listen hard.

"It makes their day. They're so cheerful, so grateful..."

There it goes. Special voice. Haloes hovering. Society's stereotype. Of course "they" will smile. It's expected. Who wants a grumpy old devil? Smile. Smile.

Grateful? What for? A bus? So, you're grateful to the driver of the No.9?

Listen to this video. Listen hard.

"It's Flo!"

(What's she going to do - cartwheels?).

The excitement mounts.

"Now it's Jenny's turn."

(More cartwheels?)

"The ramp fits snugly on the ground..."

(So cosy.)



*How would you feel?
Pat Duncan and the infamous 'Cripples'
CarCircle' demonstration bus.*

"How's this for teamwork - driver and passenger sharing... fosters confidence..."

"Yes, they'll be back because..."

Because there's no alternative! On and on ...

"Awareness is more than making sure Joe doesn't trip."

Listen hard to this video. Listen hard. Over the top, am I? It's not meant like that, you say. Accepted. It's hard to challenge the basic wish to help. The line between "natural kindness"

and "patronising" is a fine one. What do YOU want out of this act of kindness? It's nice to be thanked. Sure! Do you thank the driver of the number 9? It's hard work being grateful every time, I assure you. Challenge yourself. Awareness is more than making sure Joe doesn't trip. It's an attitude of mind. Pick the right mix of people and you have a tape that reinforces for everyone the image of the doddering dependent old person and the smiling uncomplaining disabled. Forget it. "They" are as sad, mad, sweet, bloody-minded as you or I. You know that? Good. "They" are people - living ordinary lives. Don't lump them together as "the elderly", "the disabled". People. People who've lost their mobility, not their marbles! Differently-abled people, maybe, but people.

A training video should be just that. Factual. Not a perpetuator (albeit unintentionally) of stereotypes. You're offended? Good. That way lies progress.

Remember - one day, YOU will be on the receiving end!

Listen to this video.
Listen hard.



PAT DUNCAN (One of "them")

(reprinted by kind permission of "Community transport Magazine")

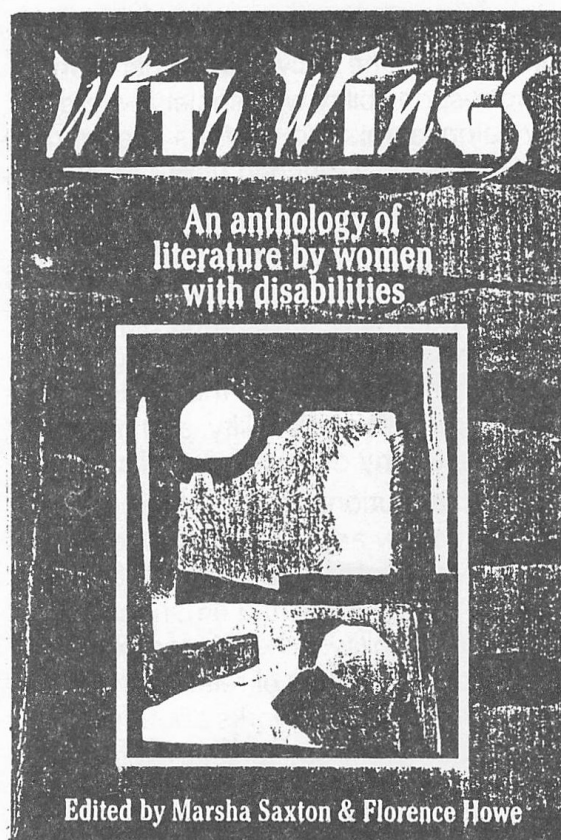
Further details of "See you Thursday" available from: The Disability Unit, Dept of Transport, Room S 10/21, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 3EB (Tel: 01-212 5257/4431).

WITH WINGS - "An anthology of literature by women with disabilities."

Mixed concepts; mixxd feelings

This is an American book published in this country by Virago Press and gives, according to the cover note, personal accounts of women's experience of physical disability. I have mixed reactions to this book; I identify with parts of it strongly, other parts only a little.

I also find that there is much that it leaves out, that it would have done well to include. The book makes these omissions I feel, because it tries to be many things to many disabled women, rather than "stepping



back" from the personal view and looking a little objectively at the social phenomenon of disability.

The parts of the book that I can identify with strongly are those such as the piece by Marsha Saxton, "The Something That Happened Before I Was Born", which deals with the child's perception of the power that the medical profession had over both her and her family, or Roberta Cepko's description of how her mother was a buffer, and at the same time a subtle bridge, between her and the realities of a world which was not ready to deal with her.

My reaction to "In Search of Liberation" by Debra Kent can be compared to my reaction to the book as a whole - I agree with much of it, even identify with a lot of it, but disagree in principle with the apparently muddled foundations of it; the mixing-up of concepts to do with self-acceptance, the "non-desirability" of disabled bodies, the struggle for the right to be an individual, with sidelong references to 'the struggle of disabled people' without trying to define that struggle in terms other than the personal.

"The struggle of disabled people" can often find parallels in other peoples' struggles. In the past I have often found more common ground with able-bodied women who have children of similar ages to mine, than with disabled women who do not have children. I have seen great similarities between the way the medical profession treats pregnant women and the way it treated me as a disabled child.

Debra Kent says that for "disabled women sex discrimination is a secondary issue" but surely this can not be so - to some disabled women it is the main issue to

others not; we all encounter discrimination both as women, and as disabled women, and as disabled people.

"20/20 With a Twist" by Deborah Kendrick is one of my favourites. It tells of a future struggle in which "blind children were no longer being educated at all, and blind adults had begun to cluster together frantically for survival." Having had access to literacy and freedom of movement in her teens, the storyteller says how, in those future "dark ages", her role "as revolutionary had never been a conscious decision. There had simply been no other logical alternative."

This story of the "visionary rebellion" places disability firmly as a socially-constructed phenomenon; and ultimately socially - eliminated. Oh happy day!

To return to the issues that I feel the book does not deal with adequately: the first is terminology - the issues behind terminology constantly threaten the foundations of the disabled people's movement in this country.

In her preface to the British edition, Merry Cross adopts the phrase "physically challenged", liking it for 'theoretical reasons" which she chooses to keep to herself, except to say that she feels it refers both to the "bodily reality, and to the barriers thrown up by society in our paths". I think it refers to neither, but sounds more like something to do with the olympic games!

Joking aside, the main reason that I do not agree with the term "physically challenged" is that once again the onus is thrown back at the individual, rather than placing responsibility with society where it firmly belongs; this is one

of the important issues which is only touched upon. As the editors themselves say in their introduction to part one, "The oppression is what's disabling about disability."

This leads me to the second big issue which I feel is not dealt with in enough detail, the distinction between the medical and the social models of disability, and how important it is to any discussion on disability.

The contributions to the anthology come from many and varied perspectives, and are divided into three sections: the first describes "the physical and emotional experience of disability."; the second places "disability in the context of relationships"; and the third "contains works about surmounting barriers, both societal and internal. and about reevaluating and challenging traditional concepts about being female and disabled."

All these categories are pretty personal. They do not really attempt to put a political analysis to why being a disabled woman is different to being an able-bodied woman, or to being a disabled man for that matter, or even whether (or how) disabled men oppress disabled women!

Disabled or chronically sick?

Another aspect of the book which clouds the issues is the assumed associations between disability and chronic illness, and the concentration on dealing with pain. Part of the trouble here is that although pain can be a part of a physical impairment, it isn't necessarily. To concentrate on the medical "model" of disability is to cloud the issue, and to

make it all the harder for us to get people to acknowledge that it is they who disable us, not our physical condition or pain.

The preface to the book states five "goals" which the editors had in mind when compiling the anthology. These goals cover the desire to combat educational discrimination against disabled women and girls by providing a "fine literary volume" exploring the experiences of disabled women, celebrating their talents, and presenting positive role-models of the disabled female as literary artist.

They also cover a challenge to the literary community to recognise works by disabled women, and an "encouragement" to readers to confront their own feelings about physical limitations, appearance, and standards of beauty, about dependence and vulnerability. The book meets all these goals in my opinion, although some better than others.

What is needed is a follow-up to this book to look at the social and political implications of being a disabled woman, to examine WHY disabled women are discriminated against in the ways described in the book, and preferably for it to come from disabled women in this country.

The GMCDP fortnightly information sheet offers up-to-the-minute news on:

- * LOCAL MEETINGS
- * EDUCATION
- * EMPLOYMENT
- * PROPERTY
- * JOBS
- * TRANSPORT
- * ARTS
- * HOLIDAYS
- * LEGISLATION
- * EVENTS

FREE TO MEMBERS

The Appeal of Open Learning

Polly Higgins is a member of GMCDP, and recently sent us this account of a home-based course, aimed at providing new skills to people who can't attend college or work on a regular basis.

By 1983 I was so affected by generalised osteo-arthritis that mobility was a serious problem and, apart from giving the occasional language lesson in my own home, I had resigned myself to early retirement. However, I continued to receive Executive Post - the newspaper of the Professional and Executive Register - as found it informative and stimulating and it cheered me to know what was happening in the work force. One day early in 1987, I came upon an

article which described an open learning course in Software Documentation Authorship, organised by a computer training and technical publications company in Derby (Eston Ltd) and funded by the MSC/Training Commission. The course was designed to meet the increasing demand, in the industry, for writers of computer and software instruction booklets.

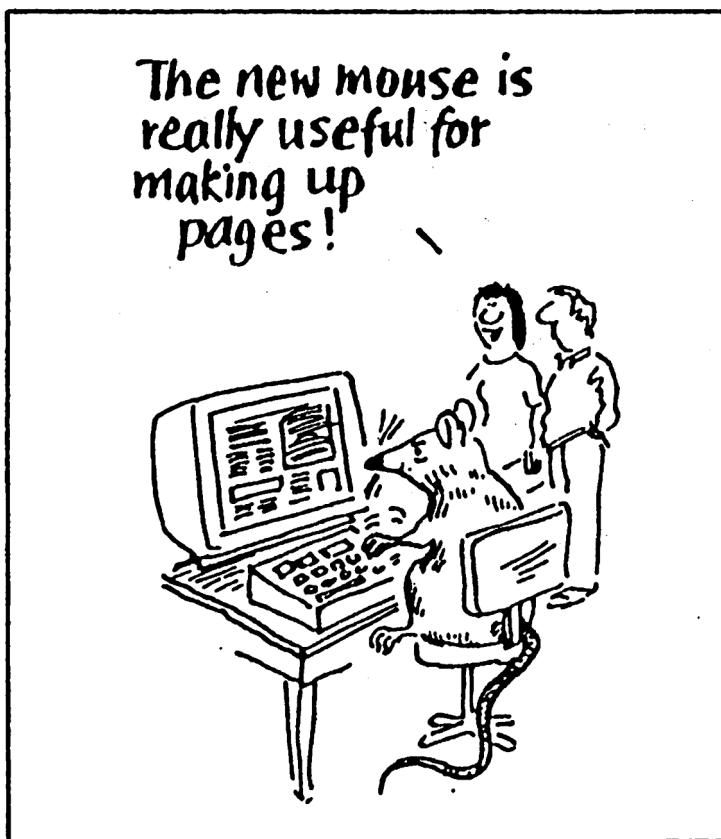
Polly Higgins at the keyboard of her PC



I phoned Eston Ltd immediately to see if my age, disability and total lack of computer experience were insuperable obstacles and on hearing that they were not, and that training people to work from home was a crucial aspect of the course, I applied with great enthusiasm. Within weeks I

had been accepted by Esten Ltd and the Training Commission, and had acquired, on loan for the duration of the course, and Amstrad PC, printer, training and computer appreciation programmes and word-processing software.

The course consisted of 14 modules, which arrived at fortnightly intervals, each with its own contents list, glossary and bibliography, lecture material, a self-assessed exercise to be compared on completion with the model answer provided and a tutor-assessed exercise to be sent to Eston for marking. Subjects



studied were effective writing and its disciplines, researching information, planning and producing first and final drafts, preparing camera-ready copy, printing and binding, text-producing technology, desktop publishing and management estimating and control. The final module was a software documentation writing project of 20-30 pages to accompany a Family History program. There was no specific timetable and this flexibility is keenly important to disabled students who may not be able to work a regular number of hours every day.

On completion of the course, Eston Ltd awards a diploma, based on the marks given for written assignments, and a

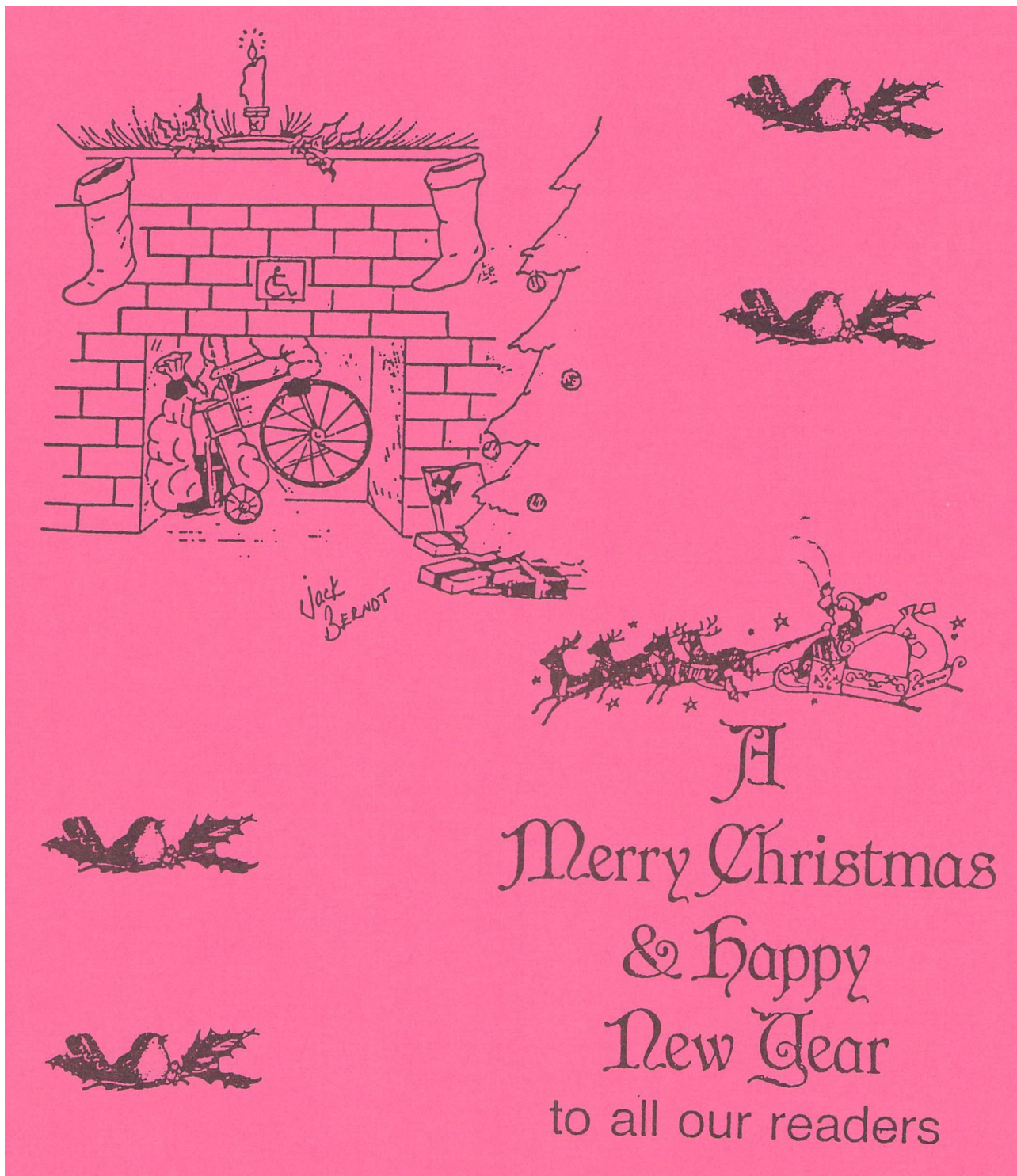
City and Guilds examination In Technical Communications Techniques 536-1 can be taken.

This course offers hope of employment to people who may be housebound but are still capable of work which is intellectually demanding and stimulating. The course in itself is a source of fulfilment and gives the sense of achievement that comes with attaining a specific goal, against the odds.

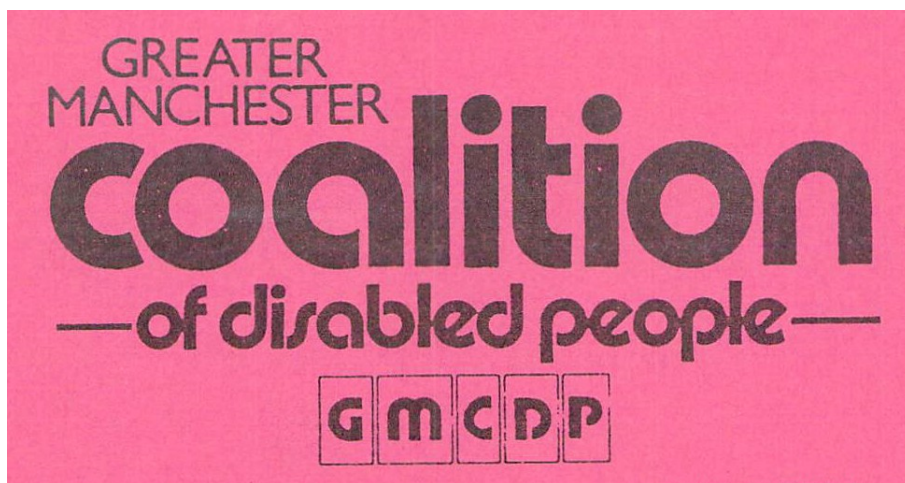
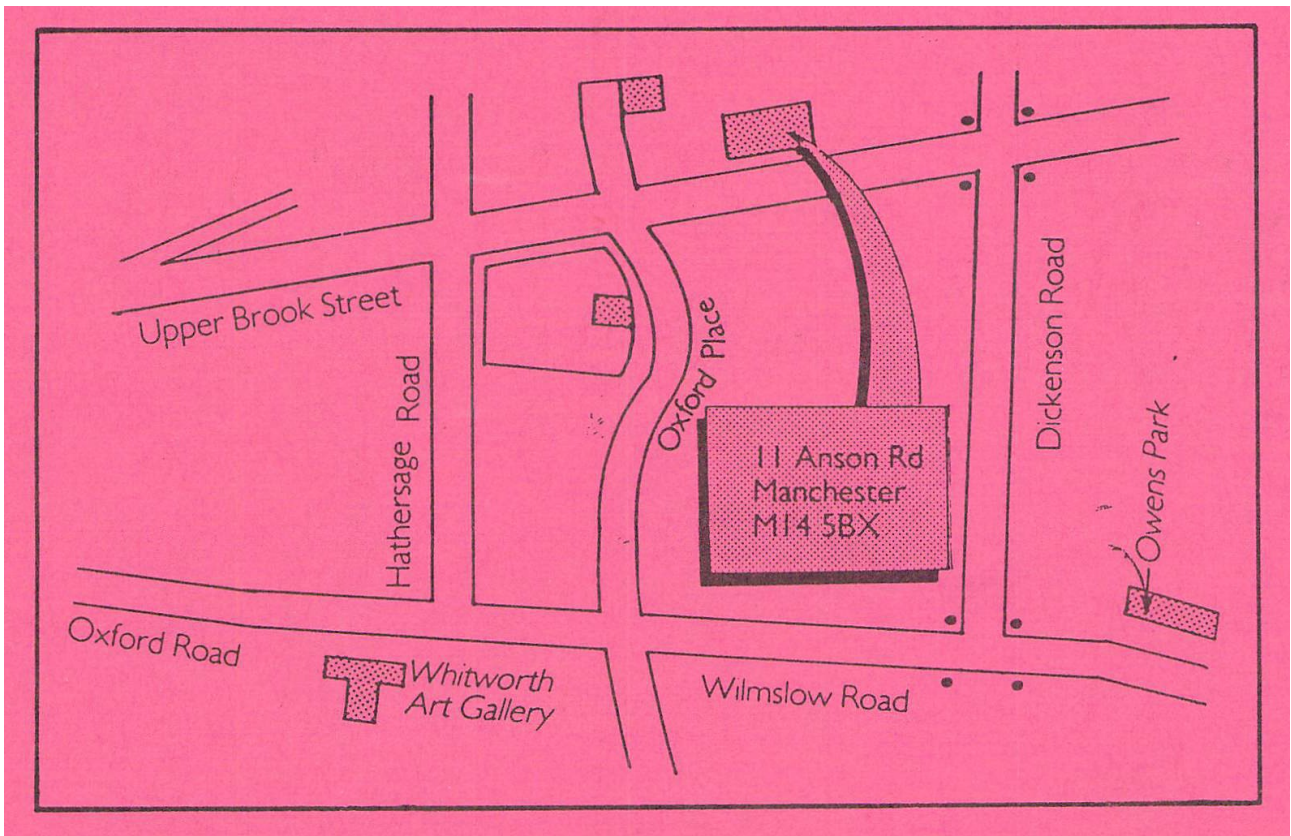
For details of the course (EDL3) contact: Eston Ltd, Training Division, Lynton Mill House, Lynton Street, Derby DE3 3RW.

Polly Higgins is compiling an anthology of disabled people's writing, and would be glad to receive poems, short stories, one-act plays, anecdotes etc. Please send contributions to Polly Higgins, 4 Wakefield Yard, Stricklandgate, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 4QH.

This will be the last edition of "Coalition News" to appear before Christmas, so we'd just like to say...



A Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to all our readers from Thelma, Lorraine and Ian, and all at the Coalition.



GMCDP
11 Anson Road, Manchester M14 5BY.
Telephone: 061-224 2722.