

TELLY SPECIAL

February 1989

# coalition

NEWS

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**'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

Sometimes more than others it seems like you're banging your head against a brick wall. Opening the mail and seeing a job advert from the Arts Council for an "Assistant Planning Officer" relating to the Arts Council's Code of Practice on Arts and Disability should have been an encouraging experience. Perhaps, at last, the Arts Council are taking disabled peoples' issues seriously and have finally decided to blow the dust off that toothless Code of Practice. Perhaps they are heralding a new dawn in recognising the right of disabled people to have control of their own arts projects and their own budget to work with, the right to have the deciding vote in policies affecting them, the right to have the same access to arts facilities as anyone else?

No such luck, I'm afraid! The Arts Council compounded the appalling gaff they made in appointing a non-disabled disability arts worker (Dr Linda Moss) a year ago with a job advert that contains no invitation for disabled people to apply and no access details about the workplace.

This arrives in the same week as the Arts Council apply for an exemption certificate so that they don't have to employ 3%

disabled people!

The Arts Council really will have to change its ways; or it may find that the fury directed at the Carnegie Council's "Artability" conference two years ago might, justifiably, be rekindled in a mass demonstration against them!

Thankfully, not all on the horizon is doom and gloom. A splendid response to the Information Sheet questionnaires and to the recently mailed-out posters provides a lot of hope and encouragement. The posters, particularly, appear to have reached a whole new group of people, and the number of contacts made as a result has been enormous.

So what else has the Coalition been up to since our last edition?

Well, we've:

*\* waved a tearful farewell to former Chair Judith Holman, who flew off to Belize to do Voluntary Work Overseas*

---

*\* elected new officers as a result of Judith's leaving. Kevin Hyett takes over as Chair, Cathy Avison as Vice Chair, and Neville*

Strowger as Secretary

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\* appointed a second research worker to lay the foundations for a Disability Awareness Training project

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\* received a grant of £15,000 from Granada's Telethon Trust to fund a Co-ordinator to see the above project safely through it's first 12 months

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\* been closely involved in the recruitment and selection of North West Shape's new Disability Field Worker. Two GMCDP Executive Council members are now directors of Shape

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\* continued to provide support and close involvement in a transport conference being organised by Rochdale & District Disability Action Group

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\* been involved with Manchester Open Col-

lege Federation in looking at their accreditation process for their courses, and suggesting how to make their courses more accessible to disabled people

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\* offered advice and help to a group of disabled people in Calderdale who are hoping to set up a Coalition

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\* attended the Naidex exhibition in London, and the accompanying RADAR Transport Conference. This was only a small part of GMCDP's heavy involvement in transport issues (see Lorraine Gradwell's report inside)

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\* been invited to exhibit at this year's Northern Naidex

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\* agreed to make a £1.50 per copy charge non-members who wish to receive "Coalition News"

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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**

Apologies to John Mason, who provided the excellent photos of the BCODP demo for the last edition of Coalition News and didn't get a credit.

# PAGEL ON THE BOX!

*Martin Pagel, GMCDP Executive Council member, has had several brushes with television programmes recently, some closer than others. In this article, which we hope will herald the birth of a regular feature, Martin examines how television treats disabled people.....*

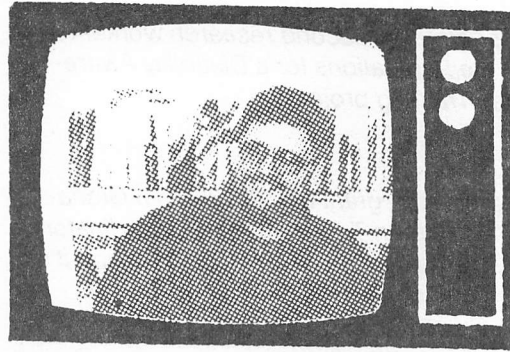
## Mastermind

For some time now I have been wanting to raise the subject of disabled people and television, but have never bothered to sit down and actually write anything. However, a recent edition of Mastermind, and the Link programme that was made in Manchester, have managed to wind me up enough to get around to producing this article.

Lets start by looking at Mastermind, and in particular the programme shown in January which featured a disabled contestant. The contest opened in the usual way with the introduction of the participants, so far so good. The first three people were asked, in turn, to take their place in the famous "black chair", in order to answer questions on their specialist subjects. Still nothing unusual enough to cause me to pay anymore than a passing interest in the programme - you see I've never been able to answer any questions in the first part of the show, I'm more interested in the general knowledge round.

And then it happened! The lights went up, and the cameras switched to Magnus. We were then told that the fourth contestant would be making a piece of history by being the first person NOT to sit in the black chair; the reason being that the woman "is confined to a wheelchair". Instead of asking her to take her place, Magnus proceeded to call the Floor Manager to "wheel her into position". There was absolutely no need for this, apart from to present the individual in a position of dependency.

This appears to be typical of the treatment that disabled people face when ap-



*Martin Pagel*

pearing on "mainstream" programmes. Every effort seems to be made to portray us as being weak and dependent on others. Instead of speaking directly to us, the "does s/he take sugar" syndrome comes into play.

It may be that Magnus wanted to make the point that very few disabled people appear on television, or that he was providing a service to visually impaired listeners; but (call me a cynic if you like) I don't think that is likely, and even if it was there were better ways of doing it.

The last laugh, however, goes to the disabled contestant, who not only won, she also equalled the record for the highest score ever achieved on the programme! This at least went some way to redress the appallingly, patronising treatment that she had been subjected to. (You'll also be pleased to know that I managed to answer quite a few of the general knowledge questions).

## Link

Now for a look at the other side of television, our own "magazine" programmes. You know the ones: Link, Same Difference, 1 in 4, and all the others I have missed out.

My main criticism of these programmes is that they tend to be very, very BORING! I

would like to know who is responsible for the rubbish that we are forced to endure. Are these programmes produced for our benefit, or merely to line the pockets of the production companies? To what extent are disabled people involved in the design and production of programmes? How relevant are they, and does anyone ever watch them? Answers please to Coalition News.

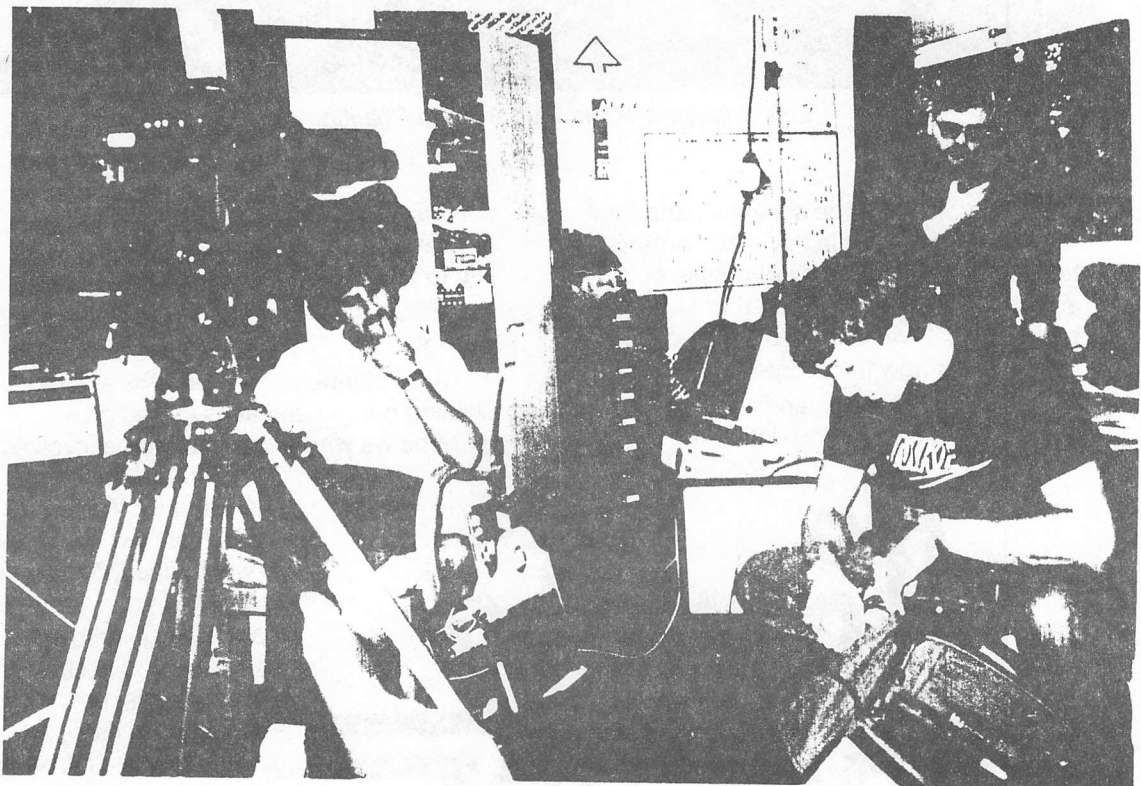
Again, I would like to concentrate on one programme in particular. I have chosen to highlight the programme made by Link on how Manchester has become regarded as "Access City". Now, the way in which disabled people have organised and campaigned for good access within this City is not a boring subject, (I know because I've been involved for the last five years, and I don't like doing boring things!) at least not until it has been featured on television!

It was intended that the programme should emphasise how organisations controlled by disabled people and the City Council had managed to work together in order to achieve tremendous improvements in access. Central to this partnership was the recognition that the Authority had the resources, and that disabled people had the knowledge and commitment to fight for change.

Interviews were recorded with many of the people who had played an active role in the access campaign. We wanted to ensure that the programme involved as many people as possible to highlight the fact that the success which we had achieved had been as a result of collective action - and also to make it more interesting for the viewer.

Above all, we wanted the programme to

*It's a hard life - Link's camera crew prepare to film*





*"Link" interview Martin Pagel in the Coalition office*

show what can be achieved, and for it to be used as example that other organisations controlled by disabled people could adopt/adapt to enable them to make the progress that we have enjoyed. Unfortunately, this is not how the programme ended up.

After spending two and a half days in luxurious hotel accommodation the produc-

tion crew left Manchester to return to London and begin the process of editing the film to produce the final programme.

This is where things went disastrously wrong!

After planning the interviews and explaining our general aims for the programme we were not invited to be involved in the editing (a lesson that will be learnt for the future). As a result we did not know what would finally appear on the screen.

What was eventually screened bore very little resemblance to the programme that we had originally envisaged. Instead of being the content of one whole programme (as had

# link

been agreed) we were given less than ten minutes at the end of a very tedious article on holiday centres which accepted disabled children. Instead of being a programme that highlighted collective action, we were presented with what appeared to be a discussion between the Leader of the Council and a Council employee. Instead of being interesting the whole programme was bloody boring!

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## "Link" managed to anger many of us and further our disillusionment with the media

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All that the programme managed to achieve was to anger many of us who had been involved, and to further our disillusionment with the media.

Where do we go from here?

How can we ensure that television programme producers stop wasting money (in the case of the BBC OUR money) on rubbish?

Is there anyone involved in the production of programmes that we can trust?

Is the solution the formation of our production company owned and controlled by us?

*If you have any comments on any of the issues raised above please send them to Coalition News. I would be particularly interested in receiving the comments of anyone directly involved in the making of television programmes. I've had my say now it's your turn...*

### OPEN AIR?

This article is being written on Tuesday 31 January, immediately after an Open Air

programme which was supposed to feature representatives of the Coalition. I have included this introduction to try and give an insight into why I am so very, very angry, irate, livid and generally annoyed (do you get the impression that I am not happy?)

Last week we were approached by a researcher from the BBC asking if it would be possible to include people from the Coalition in a programme being made for Open Air, on the subject of the media's presentation of disabled people in news and current affairs and also looking at the role of specialist disabled people's programmes (particularly *Same Difference*). The plan was to send an outside broadcast team to the Coalition to provide a live link-up with the programme.

By the end of the week we were informed that the programme would now be examining the subject of Adult Training Centres as well as the issues mentioned above. Another change that was revealed was that the Coalition would not be used for a live link-up, but we were asked to nominate a representative to appear live in the studio. We were given until Monday to decide who would be representing us.



After much discussion it was felt that we would be at a disadvantage having only one representative in the studio (given that we would be up against people who make their living out of appearing on the box), and we were therefore going to ask for two people to represent us. On Monday morning the BBC called to say that the emphasis of the

programme had been changed again (!) and that we would not be required to appear on the programme at all - apparently the studio would be too full with us there - the live link-up would now be coming from Selnec and the Coalition would be involved via a telephone link.

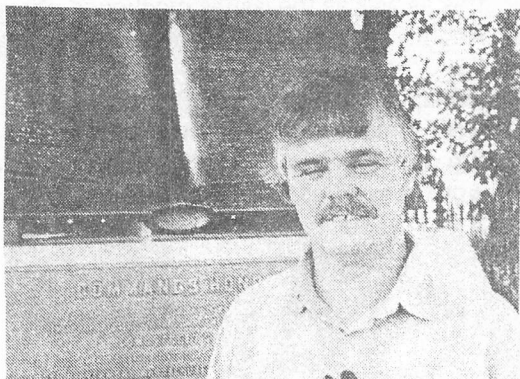
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## We were being messed around! Worse was to come

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If you are still following this, you would, perhaps, have come to the conclusion that we were being messed around! Worse was still to come...

We have now reached Tuesday morn-  
*Peter White, presenter of "Same  
Difference".....*



*.....and Martin Duffy, producer and free-fall  
parachutist*



ing and the programme will soon be going out. The first instalment at nine o'clock came live from Selnec, and included an interview with the manager (able-bodied of course), and included a question from a deaf worker asking why both Open Air and

*".....waitin' for somebody to call"*



Same Difference failed to provide a signer or subtitles (interesting to note that this question was not answered until much later on).

Whilst this was going on the Beeb rang the Coalition to make sure that myself and Lorraine had interesting questions to ask Peter White (presenter of Same Difference) and Martin Duffy (programme producer from the Ideas Factory and part-time free fall parachutist). We were then informed that we would be called back at the start of the discussion in order to put our questions.

From 11.30 to a little before 12 o'clock we patiently sat listening to the programme, via the telephone, awaiting the opportunity to participate. And then the programme ended! We had wasted all morning hanging on the phone and they never even took our questions!

As the programme was ending a person at the BBC came on to apologise for not including us, explaining that the discussions had been so interesting that they had overrun. (The programme did, however, find time to include people who had rung after the programme had started.)

So, why am I so angry?

I think it may have something to do with



the fact that I have just wasted a whole morning of my life doing nothing. It is also because of the way in which the media seems to believe that it can treat us as little puppets, waiting for them to pull our strings.

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**"You can't trust the media to make accurate and reflective programmes"**

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More importantly, is that a programme which was supposed to be examining why disabled people are excluded from television, then proceeded to exclude us, after going to so much trouble to contact us in the first place. What we ended up with was two professional television personalities speaking on behalf of the disabled peoples' movement, which I feel is quite disgraceful.

I can only hope that the BBC will note the comments which were made to them immediately after the programme, and will now arrange our 'right to reply'. If the media are really interested in including disabled people then let's see them arrange a programme which highlights the campaigns and issues raised by organisations controlled by disabled people.

I'll end with a quote from Peter White, which was used to explain why the Same Difference programme exists,

"You can't trust the media to make accurate and reflective programmes".

Lets not forget, though, that Peter is a part of the Institution that he is attacking.

*(A copy of this article is to be sent to the BBC, I await their reply with interest).*

Martin Pagel.

## **THE LIGHTER SIDE**

Anyone with sharp eyes reading a transcript of a memo submitted by the RNID to the Select Committee on the Televising of the House of Commons will notice that Hansard has done less than an efficient job at proof reading.....

A small allocation of extra resources will be needed, but the cost must be borne if dead people are to be allowed to take their part in democratic proceedings.

.....that's real democracy!

# RIGHTS AND WRONGS

*(based on an interview with Brian Abell)*

Brian Abell lives in a flat in Manchester, which he shares with a ferocious looking Dobermann. He's been living there for two years now, and during this time he's had a more or less harmonious relationship with the local Social Services department which provides him with personal care on a 24-hour basis. On the face of it, Brian is living independently and in complete control of his own life, but all is not as it seems. The truth is that Brian is in control just as long as the decisions he makes are considered "safe" by the City Council's legal advisors.

This state of affairs was highlighted by a recent incident. Brian, like most of us, is partial to the odd drink now and again. He's also on prescribed medication. For the past fourteen and a half years this hasn't caused any problems - Brian has judged for himself whether or not to take his medicine after alcohol and has never come to any harm through it.

On this particular occasion, however, Brian (after drinking alcohol) asked his carer to dispense his medication. The carer had spotted the instruction "Not to be taken with alcohol" on the bottles and judged it potentially dangerous to enable Brian to take the drugs, but reluctantly agreed to do so.

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**.....the matter was passed from one person to another until it finally came to rest with the council's lawyers**

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Brian was annoyed by what he considered an infringement of his right to make his own decisions (whatever the risk to himself) and took the matter up with his care organiser and social worker.

In classic bureaucratic style, the matter

was passed on from one person to another until it finally came to rest with the council's lawyers. Not a group of people renowned for their radicalism (where social services are concerned, anyway) they advised that should any harm come to Brian through combining alcohol with prescribed drugs then the person who had enabled him to take them (and the social services department) would be liable. In other words, they could be sued by either Brian or his family for being negligent when they could "reasonably" have foreseen a harmful outcome to their actions.

Brian's own lawyer confirmed that this was the case.

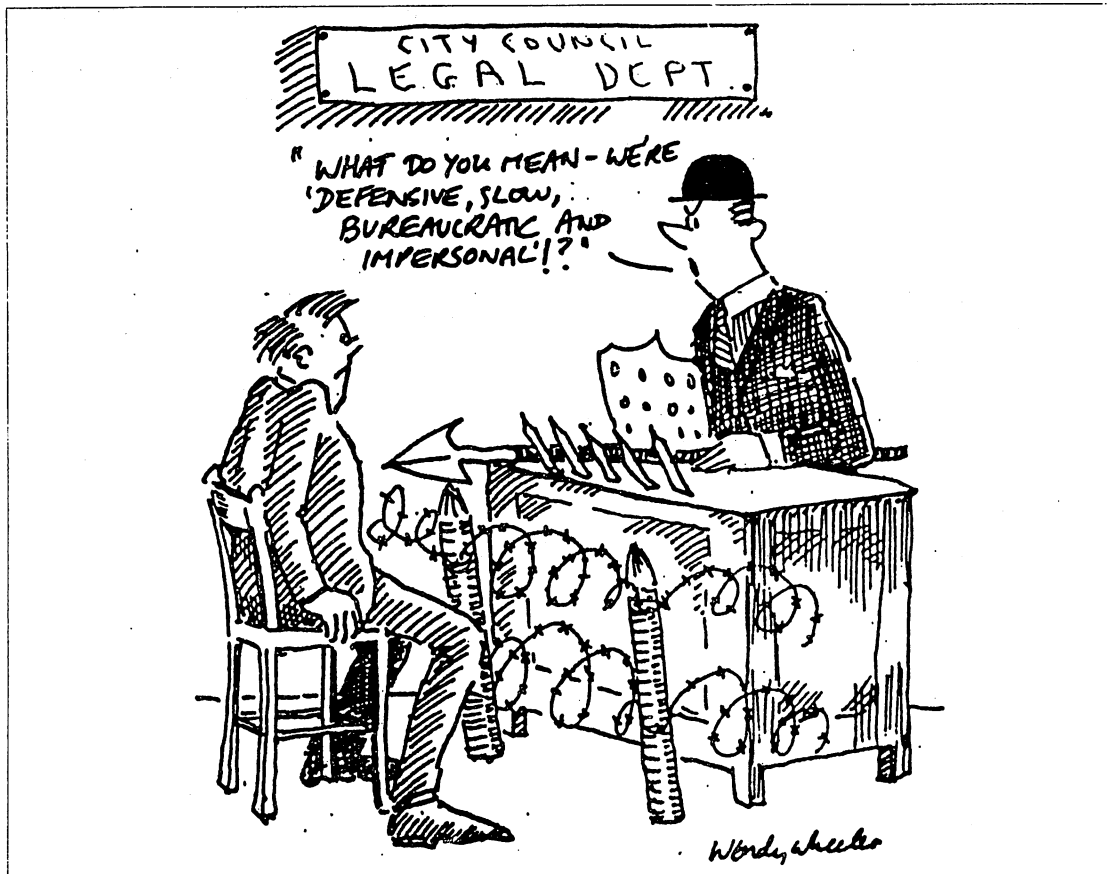
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**Councillors must make a decision about how much control they want disabled people to have over their own lives.**

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Having gone this far there was no turning back. Brian and his carers were in a position where the carers, not Brian himself, must judge how much risk he may take. Even though it is highly unlikely that Brian or his family would sue anyone if any harm came to him as a result of one of his own decisions, he was still dependent on the good will of his carers to accept this. Who could blame them for deciding not to take that risk knowing they could be liable?

In order to try to remedy the situation, Brian has offered to sign an indemnity - i.e. a document stating that he will take full responsibility for his own decisions, and will not hold anyone else liable for any harm that may come to him as a result. At present no-one in social services will draw up such a document, and there is some doubt about whether it would stand up in a court of law



(i.e. his carers could still be liable).

Brian is also asking the council to indemnify its workers so that if anything did happen to him they would not be individually liable.

Councillors must make a decision about how much control they really want disabled people to have over their own lives. Brian's opinion is that the root of his problem lies in the fact that no-one in this country actually has any rights because we don't have a written Constitution, and is thinking of getting involved with a campaign for a Bill of Rights (Charter '88).

Most of the time, of course, individuals and their carers will work out the ground rules of their relationship for themselves, and disabled people living independently will be able to take risks. However, as long as assistance is needed from another per-

son then the final decision is taken out of the hands of the disabled person and this is supported passively by the law.

Brian's situation raises some interesting questions:

How can we be sure of controlling our own care support?

Would disabled people be better served if we had rights in law?

How far should we expect our carers to go to enable us to take risks? What is our responsibility to them?

*I'd be interested in the thoughts of Coalition members about these questions, and any other issues raised in this article.*

Kathy Avison  
Vice Chair, GMCDP.

# The Sting!



## Major Problem

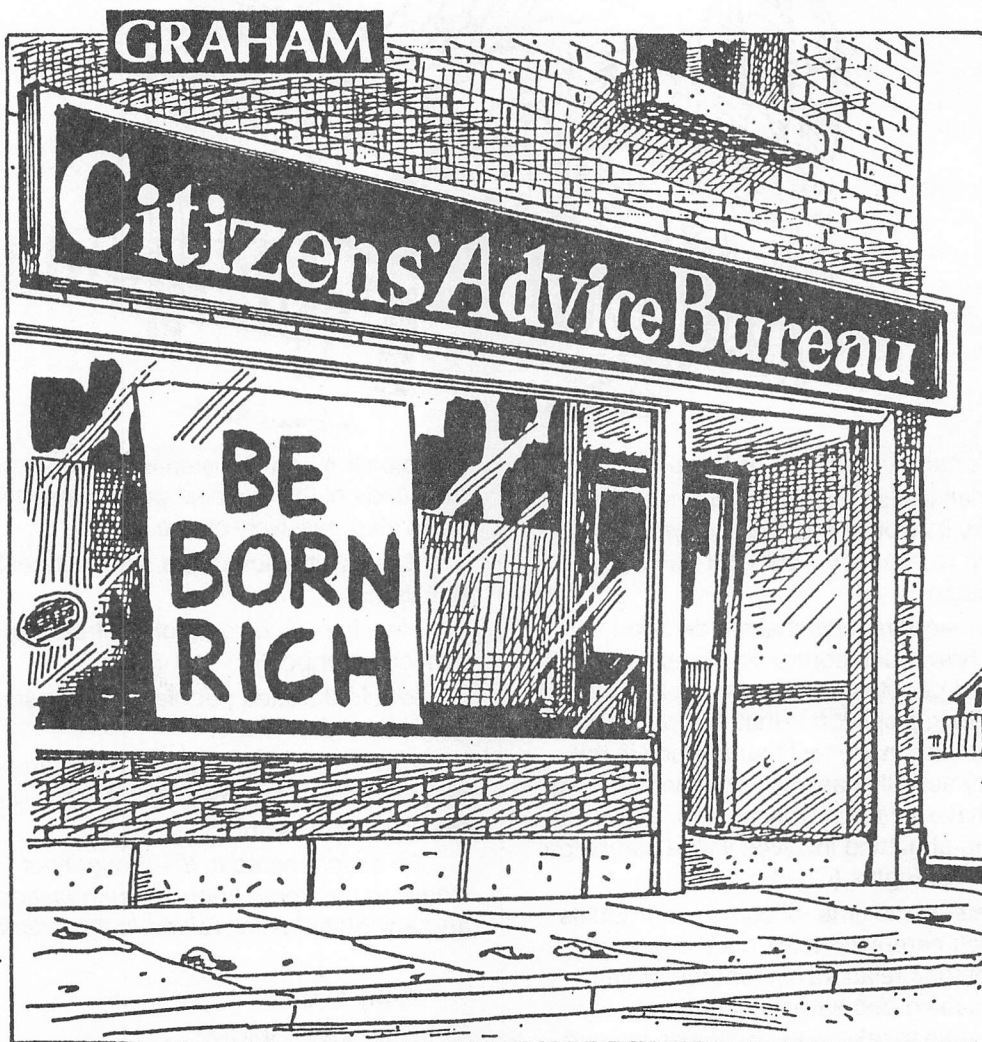
One could be forgiven for thinking that the Chancellor's budget this Spring might be full of good news for disabled people. This optimism arises from the news that Mr Lawson is being advised this time by Mr John Major, former Minister for the Disabled.

But hold on! Wasn't this the bright spark who claimed that the most regular complaint he heard from disabled people

was that they were paying too much tax? At the same time as a report was published which showed that two-thirds of all disabled people in this country were living below the poverty line!

It's hard to believe that someone living in a damp flat in central Manchester, surviving on Income support and worrying how they'll cope when the poll tax is introduced, is also up in arms at the prospect of a 40% tax bill on last year's hard earned millions.

Maybe this just shows what kind of disabled people a Minister for the Disabled



meets - *RICH ONES!*

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### British Fail - AGAIN!

You may remember that, in the last edition of *Coalition News*, Scorpio highlighted the complicated route which needed to be negotiated in order to obtain a Disabled Persons Railcard? Well, here comes more news of British Rail's shortcomings....

These forward-thinking people have re-introduced 3rd Class travel (though one might reasonably say that disabled people have been travelling 3rd class all along on the many routes where they must travel in the guard's van!).

On certain peak period services between Manchester and London, the following travel options are available:

1st Class - for holders of 1st Class tickets; offers full waiter/waitress service.

Silver Standard - for holders of standard (2nd Class) tickets, without use of railcards; offers a complimentary light breakfast or tea and biccies.

Standard - for holders of standard class tickets who use railcards (3rd Class) who get NONE of these mouth-watering (?) extras.

On Inter-City trains there are two seats reserved for disabled people - one in the 1st Class compartment which can be removed, and one other for those who do not need a seat to be removed. If you ask for assistance when you make your seat reservation, British Rail should automatically issue seat "01-D" in carriage "F", the seat reserved for disabled passengers. Unfortunately, carriage "F" is designated as Silver Standard - i.e. for the use of passengers without railcards - and, as one passenger found out, rules are rules!

On trying to take up the specified "disabled seat" (the one automatically issued to

them when they booked) our intrepid traveller was told in no uncertain terms that, because they'd used a railcard, they would not be allowed to use the seat that British Rail had booked for them!

The train left in 3 minutes..... a seat had to be found..... the train was full..... at last, with the train thundering towards Stockport, a seat appeared and sanctuary was assured.

This is just another example of B.R.'s ineptitude. If their own staff don't understand B.R.'s rules, what chance does the ordinary passenger have?

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### Grim-sby Town

A recent report on "Sport on 4", the Saturday sports programme from BBC Radio 4, highlighted the existence of the Grimsby Town Disabled Supporters Club.

These brave souls not only attend all home matches, but follow their football team to away games as well. This takes them from as far north as Darlington to as far south as Torquay.

The team's form this season hardly inspires any kind of fanatical support: played 27, won 8! Their position in Division 4? 17th out of 24 teams!

The reporter, not surprisingly, focussed his attention on how "brave" these supporters were, facing up to adversity in the face of their impairments etc etc etc. One can't help feeling that it requires much more bravery and strength in the face of adversity to be a Grimsby Town supporter than it does to be disabled!

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*Scorpio will be back in our next edition. In the meantime -*

**"WATCH YER BOOTS!"**



# Scorpio

# THE TRANSPORT DEBATE CONTINUES.....

*It seems that scarcely a day goes by without some new development in the saga of public "Special Needs" transport in Greater Manchester. Lorraine Gradwell, GMCDP Development Worker, outlines recent events:*

## **What's happening?- officially**

The PTA Disabled People's Working Group has been meeting now since late summer 1987, during which time I have chaired that group through some "lively" meetings. It is felt by the Executive Committee of GMCDP that 18 months is quite long enough, and I must admit that I agree. On the 13th February the group elected a new chair, Ron Goulden, who is the Manchester Disability Forum (MDF) representative to the Working Group; I was elected as vice-chair and will continue to attend meetings as the GMCDP representative.

I think it is probably true to say that most of the people involved in the business of the Working Group have learnt a lot in these last eighteen months, PTA officers and Councillors as well as disabled people and others from the voluntary sector.

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## **...many members feel we are only being told half a story by the PTA**

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The Group is currently in the process of delivering its response to the PTA's Policy Review, a most important document which outlines the future planned for us by the PTA in terms of public transport. The role of the Working Group has not been easy, many members feeling that we were only ever being told half a story by the PTA, and that that was 100% more than we were ever told by the PTE.

As I may have said before, the Policy

Review was approved by the PTA's Policy Committee on the 28th October, and several of its recommendations have actually been carried out. This sits rather uneasily alongside the fact that the deadline for responses to that same document is now the end of February. So, for example, plans are well advanced in many districts of Greater Manchester for the setting up of local "Consultative Committees" to deal with local introduction of Ring-and-Ride schemes, indeed many have actually met several times, even though the PTA have only just received the comments on that initiative from their OWN Working Group.

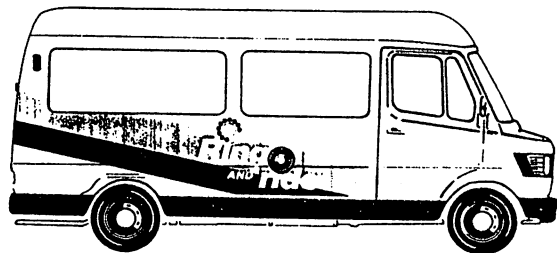
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## **...the PTA only listen when we say what they want to hear**

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Feelings are high among many Working Group members that the PTA only listen when we say what they want to hear. How are we to deal with this when our very valid comments are ignored and unanswered?

Which comments? you might say. - A few examples; we do not think that enough research is being done into alternatives in transport provision, we do not think enough notice is taken of community transport providers, we are not of the opinion that the PTA's policy on door-to-door transport should consist solely of Ring- and-Ride, we do not think the right vehicles are being used by the PTA, and we do not consider



that the PTA are doing enough to promote accessibility on mainstream services.

The Group has also had comments to make about the consultation processes, and about the kindest comment that CAN be made is that the PTA have not handled it well.

### What's happening? - unofficially

So, where are we up to? Plans to extend Ring-and-Ride into Salford, Trafford, and Oldham are rumbling on, albeit "in principle", which means that it IS happening but it isn't happening OFFICIALLY. It can't happen OFFICIALLY because it is still the subject of consultation.

Do you see?

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### These items seem pretty official to me!

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The agenda for the February "Consultative Committee" meeting in Trafford, which,

remember, is not OFFICIALLY convened, contained such items as "Appointment of Chairman to Local Consultative Group and review of membership" and "Consideration of Draft job description and advert for position of Controller designate."

Now these items seem pretty official to me.

So, for example, (bear with me because this pretty complicated, not to mention tedious) there are plans to appoint a controller in Trafford for a scheme planned by the PTA - but the PTA do not yet know whether or not their Working Group approve the scheme in the FIRST place!

Now, what if the Working Group say that they do NOT think it a good idea? What then?

And what if the local representatives who attend the local consultative meeting say that they do not want exactly what is on offer, but something similar? What then?

But that last one was a trick question - we know the answer because it already happened. At the Trafford meeting the five disabled people present, all of them well versed in the issues, said they wanted some-



thing different to what was on offer, and all were told in no uncertain terms by a local PTA councillor that they should take what they were offered.

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### **...disabled people were told it was "Ring & Ride" or nothing by a PTA councillor**

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Indeed, the disabled people voted AGAINST a "Ring-and-Ride"-type operating zone whilst the other people present (apparently able-bodied) voted in FAVOUR of an operating zone, those in favour including two Trafford Councillors and one ex-councillor!

And at an Oldham meeting disabled people were told that it was "Ring-and-Ride" or nothing by a PTA councillor.

Democracy rules! .....Okay?

These are only two instances, two out of the ten districts which make up Greater Manchester: no doubt there are others.

### **Rochdale conference - what if.....?**

Two of the Greater Manchester districts, Stockport and Rochdale, are to have door-to-door schemes by October 1989, and are also to have semi-fixed accessible routes established - subject to consultation of course.

Now in Rochdale people are not so sure that this proposed scheme is what they want, and they are organising a conference for

local people so that they can hopefully be well informed about what is proposed and what is possible. They are also considering commissioning research of their own, from independent transport consultants, as to what are feasible transport options for disabled people in Rochdale.

If people at the conference say that they want something other than what is on offer, will the PTA take note?

### **Other considerations**

Other considerations in the PTA's Policy Review include taxis. In London now, ALL new taxis (black cabs) must be capable of carrying a wheelchair (plus occupant of course), and by the year 2000 ALL taxis on the road in London must be wheelchair accessible. If it's good enough for London.....!

Carbodies, the firm who produce the original "London Taxi" recently launched their "Fairway", a production line accessible model, developed more as a competitive reaction to the "Metrocab" than out of any re-



*...with apologies to Ivor Wood*





guard for improving transport options for disabled people, cynics might say.

Nevertheless, new black cabs will ALL be accessible from February 1989 onwards. When you are looking along the taxi rank, watch out for the new registrations!

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**...this is an area where  
real progress could be made**

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Recommendation 16 of the PTA's Policy Review is "That the Authority write to individual districts to ascertain taxi licencing policies". This is an area where real progress could be made in improving MAIN-

STREAM provision, but no, instead we have proposals for disabled people to only be able to book a black cab through a "Mobility Centre" (read Ring-and-Ride office).

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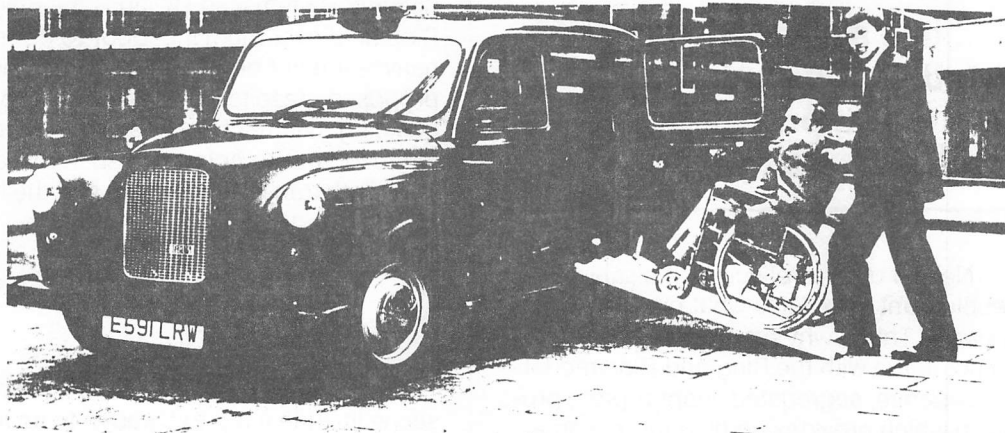
**Do we REALLY want to  
have to book our taxis  
through a centre, of which  
we have to be a member?**

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Do we REALLY want to have to book our taxis through a centre, of which we have to be a member? Will there be enough taxis left over for people who prefer to book them independently, as the rest of the public do? And do we REALLY want to cross Greater Manchester in a series of short journeys from centre to centre across the county? .....Door-to-door-to-door-to-door, as it were!

And is it true that no-one amongst the planners had realised that these mobility centres would have to be accessible, until it was pointed out to them?

The appointment of staff for the new schemes would also seem a dubious process - will an Equal Opportunities policy operate, are disabled people happy with the



*new black cabs will all be accessible from 1989*

job descriptions, are there positive moves to EMPLOY disabled people?

The very fact that these questions have to be asked shows that the whole exercise is NOT being carried out in a spirit of co-operation on the part of the PTA/E.

### More door-to-door

Back to the vexing subject of door-to-door transport. I must admit that I was rather crestfallen a couple of months ago when a senior policy officer from the PTA asked me WHY people didn't like the Ring-and-Ride model. Had we really not made ourselves clear?

A full answer as to why planners are so keen on Ring-and-Ride can no doubt be had from the National Advisory Unit on Community Transport who promote the Ring-and-Ride model heavily, but the following features are the main ones that make it so irresistible for them - a claimed low trip cost, cost-effectiveness, a high technology operating system, small operating area.

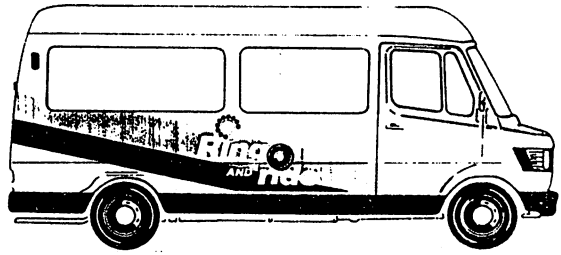
A pity all these criteria cannot be applied to public transport in general! But it can't be, because it does not reflect what the travelling public wants.

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### **...it is separate, segregated, inappropriate provision which provides nothing more than a stop-gap**

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Neither does it reflect what disabled people want - it reflects what planners SAY we want. This is why many disabled people do not agree with the Ring-and-Ride model - it is separate, segregated, inappropriate provision which provides nothing more than a stop-gap service for a minority of disabled



people.

When reading the background to the Policy Review the image created of the average disabled person needing transport is one of someone who is poor, elderly, nervous of going out. Someone who finds it difficult to put on their coat, rarely travels more than three miles, and only ever goes out to visit friends, the local shops, or to play bingo; and what they really want is a friendly, escorted, door-to-door service staffed by drivers who are well on the way to being qualified doctors!

This is the transport planners' "special needs" equivalent of the fit, healthy, white, male, thirty-year-old, and unencumbered by either small children or large shopping bags. Average public transport user? No, - they are both a statisticians' invention, albeit a minority part of the travelling public.

What is hard to imagine is how local transport planners will be convinced to try different systems, so strong is the Ring-and-Ride hold over them that door-to-door alternatives are not being either researched or proposed, despite many disabled people requesting that that happens. And where are the resources to commit to such research? Why, with transport planners and the NAU.

Still, we live and learn.

### Other developments

Other developments on the transport scene include a trip to Sweden to an international conference on transport for elderly and/or disabled people. About this time last

year when details of the conference first came to the GMCDP office I passed it on to the PTA with the suggestion that they fund a delegation from the Disabled People's and the Elderly Person's Working Groups. This they have agreed to, but only ONE representative from each group, plus two councillors, and an as yet unspecified number of officers (employees) of the PTA/E. Late approaches have been made by the PTA to conference organisers to present a paper on PTA's proposed "integrated" transport system, which would mean of course that the officers presenting the paper would have all expenses met: neat, eh?

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### **Could the PTA be worried about a little criticism?**

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If this approach were to be successful, then the PTA could afford to send more Working Group representatives..... Couldn't it?

Oh yes, one more thing, it was pointed out to me by a PTA policy officer that the Working Group representatives who DO go will be representing the PTA, not the Working Group. Could the PTA be worried about a little criticism? ..... Surely not!

#### **Metrolink**

Plans for the Metrolink Light Rapid Transit system are gathering momentum, firms have now submitted tenders to operate the system, GM Buses amongst them, and the sifting out process is about to begin. Many people have expressed concern that although the PTA have committed themselves to full accessibility of the system and its infrastructure (stations, etc), will they be able to enforce accessibility throughout the tendering process?

The co-ordinator of Manchester Disability Forum recently wrote to the Clerk to

the PTA, Howard Bernstein, about these worries, and had a most reassuring reply to the effect that the provisions in the tendering invitations were explicit and binding, and offering to arrange a meeting to discuss the concerns. Most reassuring.

#### **Happy Ending?**

It's not an easy thing to do in these transport articles, but for once I find myself in the position of being able to end on a happy note. In County Durham the first mainstream tendered bus services are now operating using the CVE Omni bus, seen by some Working Group members at the Naidex exhibition at Alexandra Palace at the end of last year.

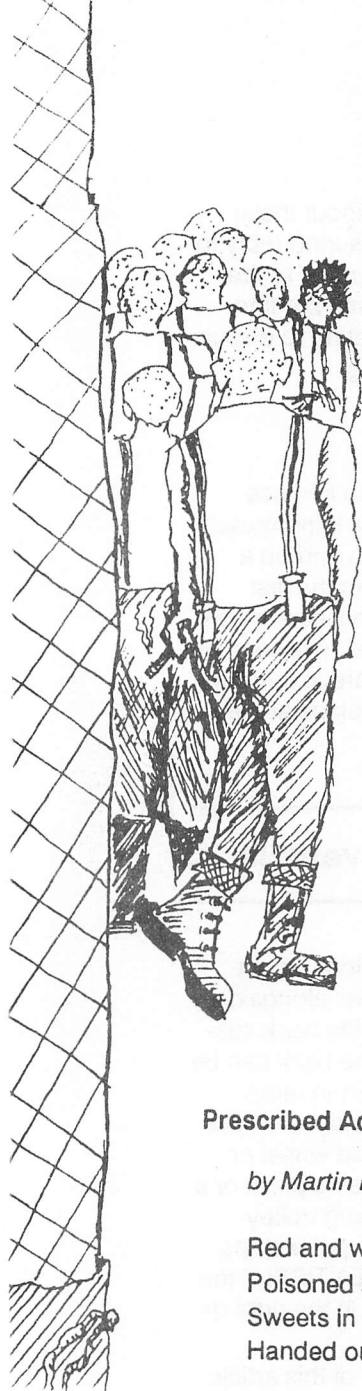
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### **Such a sensible vehicle.....**

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This bus has such a low floor height that the entrance is almost level alongside a pavement. It also has adjustable back suspension, so that the floor at the back can be lowered still further, plus a built-in ramp which slides out easily from under the floor at the back. Imagine, you could wheel or walk straight in, you could push a pram or a buggy straight in, your shopping trolley would not have to be lugged up the steps. Such a sensible vehicle - not ENTIRELY the right answer, but a huge step in the right direction.

As I said at the beginning of this article, I will no longer be chairing the Working Group but will continue to be a member, representing GMCDP. I wish the new chair the best of luck for what is an exacting task, and only hope that they remember that the Working Group is well placed to have considerable influence on future transport provision for disabled people, and to my mind that means continuing to challenge the PTA to rise to the occasion.



## Football Hooligan

by Martin Pagel

It's Saturday, t' big match is near,  
Get out my rattle, practice m' cheer,  
"Come on ya blues" is what I yell,  
"Get that defender, kick him to hell!".

I'm a tough nut, I'll never crack,  
Bottle is something the others lack.  
All of the lads look up t' me,  
And I protect them - for a small fee.

Pull on m' boots, pick up m' hat,  
Now is the time to end idle chat.  
Run down the stairs, into my foe.....  
Oh! Come on mummy, please let me  
go.....



# arts fOculus

## Prescribed Addiction

by Martin Pagel

Red and white and black and blue,  
Poisoned smarties just for you,  
Sweets in colour and in taste,  
Handed out with undue haste.

Pills to help you sleep and rest,  
Pills to make you feel your best,  
Pills for slightly runny nose,  
Pills to take hair off your toes.

Doctors give them to save time,  
Taking people past their prime,  
As they never get too close,  
They don't see the overdose.

Slowly wasting until death  
Draws in a last painful breath,  
They will soon have kicked the craze,  
Lowered into their fresh graves.



## The Switch

by Margaret Shaw

Hidden deep inside me  
Is a switch,  
So deep that no-one knows.  
Somehow..... YOU knew!  
You came and switched me on.

Nothing looked the same.  
From living in life's shade,  
Miraculously I came  
Into intoxicating light,  
I was absorbed and inflamed  
As I shone all through the day  
And long into the night for you.

The world seemed crystal clear,  
Until you'd had enough.  
Then you turned and switched me off.

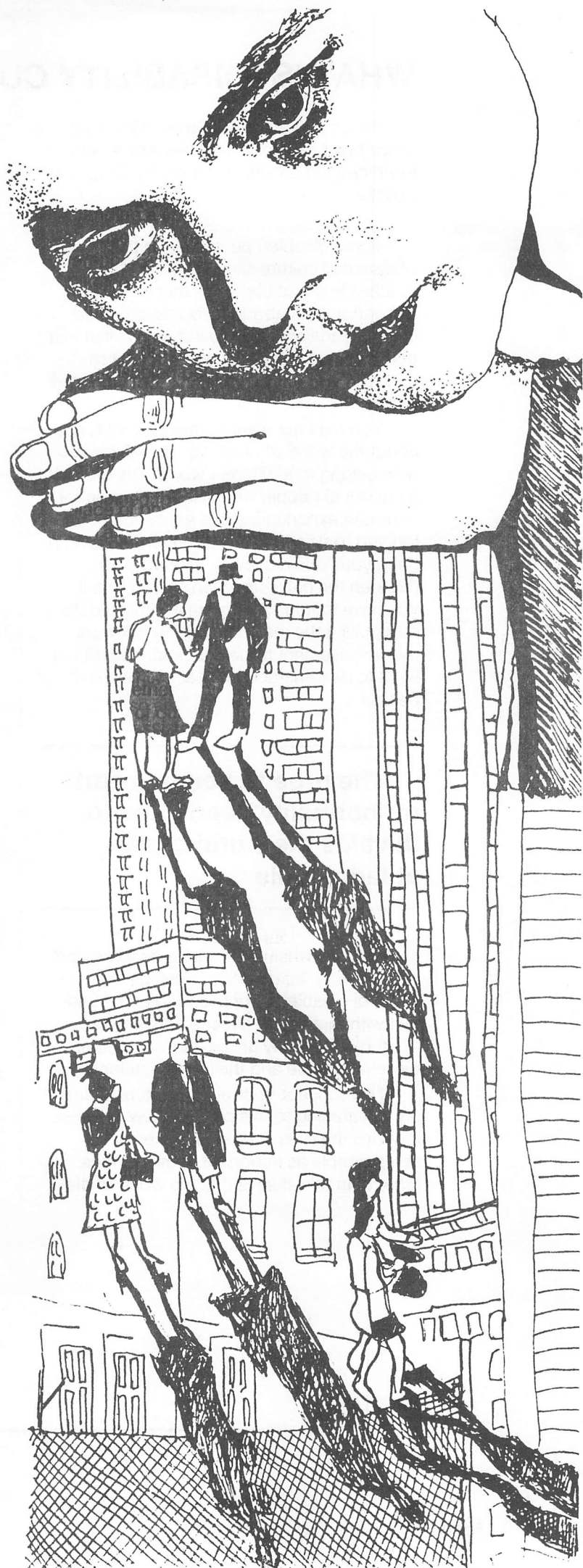
## Alone

by Margaret Shaw

In the massive monster city,  
On roller-coaster escalators  
I see nameless moving faces,  
But the thing that most astounds me,  
No-one knows what each one's thinking,  
While inside myself I'm shrinking,  
I am alone.

At the merry Christmas party,  
With friends who couldn't care less,  
They don't even scratch my surface.  
With their minds so superficial  
And their thoughts so prejudicial,  
They don't care what I am thinking,  
While inside myself I'm shrinking,  
I am alone.

In our home we sit together,  
And our life looks so complete,  
But now our love is obsolete.  
We are in dual isolation,  
Marriage can't be my vocation,  
You don't know what I am thinking,  
Or that inside myself I'm shrinking,  
I am alone.



## WHAT IS "DISABILITY CULTURE"?

*Simon Brisenden is a well-known disabled poet and activist. In this article Simon examines the issues surrounding "Disability Culture":*

Some disabled people avoid the issues of disability culture simply because it touches areas of their lives that they would rather not think about. If you have carved out a life against all the odds as an alien in a non-disabled world, you do not want to think too hard about the price you have had to pay.

You may not want to think, for instance, about the world of disabled people, for you now belong to a different world. The idea of a culture of people with disabilities, a set of common experiences and aspirations belonging to us all, seems to undermine everything you have achieved. It seems to threaten the basis upon which you live. If you have fought to become assimilated, to merge with the majority, you do not want this achievement to be knocked, you do not want to be reminded of what you have left behind.

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### **The urge to become part of "normality" leads one to devalue the world of disabled people**

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The overwhelming urge to become part of "normality" leads one to devalue the world of disabled people and to avoid contact with that world. It leads one to avoid like the plague any association with other disabled people and their organisations.

The concept of disability culture is deeply threatening to this point of view because it values the lives and experiences of disabled people as important in themselves. More than this, it says that the world of dis-

abled people should be valued on a par with the world of "disability".

The idea of disability culture begins with the recognition that we are valuable people in ourselves, and that we need not avoid each other or hide behind a cloak of false integration. We no longer need to build our lives on a denial and devaluing of our background and the experiences of pain and triumph, sadness and joy, which form the reality of our upbringing. Disability culture is being built upon a ruthless honesty about the people we are and the role we play in society.

Out of the recognition of our value comes the ability to organise ourselves, to put on events, to mobilise our forces, to produce works of art, to run workshops and

Simon Brisenden



newsletters and generally get together and share the common language of our experiences. Only people who value themselves, and listen carefully to their own voices have a culture of their own, rather than a second-hand culture gifted to them as the price of a silent acquiescence to unthinking "normality".

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**It is the things we cannot forget as well as the things we want to remember**

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So what is disability culture? It is, in general terms, that which is common to our lives and which informs our thoughts and activities. It is our aspirations and our dreams as well as our struggles and our nightmares. It is the things we cannot forget as well as the things we want to remember. It is the schools we went to, the day centres we inhabit, but it is also the art we produce and the organisation we have built. It is so many things but it is no one particular thing.

Many of us have found the idea of disability culture extremely valuable because it has given us the opportunity to share experiences, to come out of the shell of private confusion and into the public world of politics and performance art. Speaking as a poet it has given me the one thing I wanted above all else - an audience I could identify with. This is true for other artists too, who have been given strength and encouragement by the realisation that the subjects they struggle with are not isolated incidents but have a deeper cultural significance.

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**.....we can create a form of politics that is born out of our uniqueness...**

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We now live in a multicultural society and we must proudly take our place alongside other cultures and lifestyles that are demanding a space to communicate and be themselves. We must learn to relish our differences and not disguise them. We must take control of our lives and our organisations so that we can create a form of politics that is born out of our uniqueness, and which is not led by professionals or other non-disabled people.

The culture of disability comes out of our ghettos as a form of defiance just as it comes out of the ghettos of women, black people and ethnic minority people, gay men and lesbian women. A ghetto is not only a place of physical degradation, a slum, but can also be a spiritual dungeon, a psychological prison in which the mind is chained and tortured. So it is not just a question of closing down the special schools and the day centres but of opening up our minds to the value of our existence. We can only work against these mental ghettos by getting together and sharing the common themes of our lives. It can be a thrilling and liberating experience.

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**...it is not just a question of closing down the special schools and day-centres but of opening up our minds...**

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The culture of disability is the web that binds us together on the basis of what is common but leaves us room to move and grow. It is built upon appreciating and valuing many things, including things that may have been patronised or ignored in the past. For instance, an important element of our culture is our history. We should not wait for the academics to decide this is important, but we must begin charting it ourselves by listening to and recording the reminiscen-

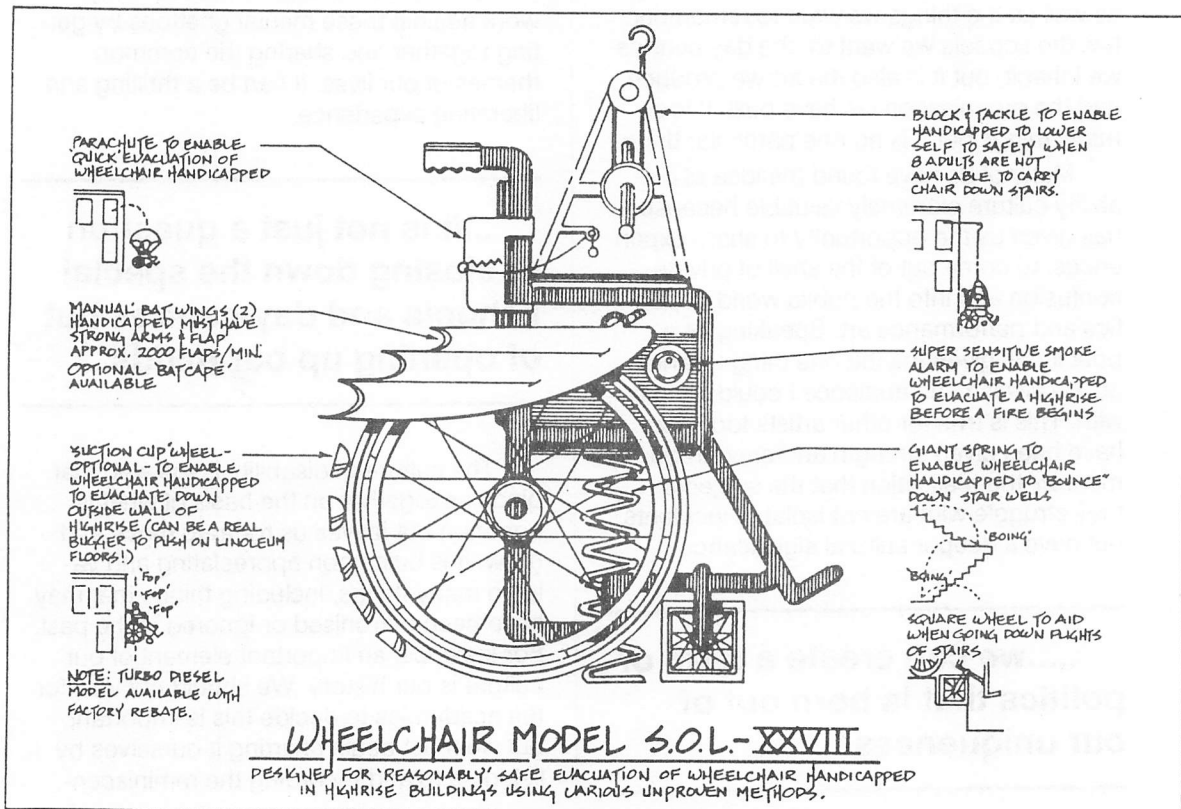
ces of older disabled people. Their stories are our lost history, a central element of the culture we belong to.

But a disability culture is not only rooted in the proper appreciation of the past, it must also celebrate the present and the future. This sense of celebration and freedom has been strongly in evidence at some of the artistic events that have taken place up and down the country, where audiences and artists have merged together and participated in a collective event arising out of a desire to express themselves. Disability cul-

ture is about expressing ourselves in whatever way comes naturally, and about realising that these expressions are valuable.

It is not a question of shutting ourselves off from society, as some people seem to think. On the contrary, we must take our place in society fortified and empowered by the knowledge that we do not need to discard our cultural identity as the price of integration.

Simon Brisenden





# The Good Theatre Guide

*Ian Stanton moves away from theatres and concentrates on the Green Room arts centre, in the latest in his series on accessible entertainment.....*

The Green Room, opened some two years ago in a renovated railway arch, is an arts venue which has demonstrated a commitment to including disabled people in its activities. Former Green Room Community Liaison Officer Adrian Mealing offered valuable support to the planning group who organised last year's Manchester Arts Conference, and the venue has put on productions by deaf dancers Common Ground, Graeae's theatre company of disabled actors, and Nabil Shaban's highly acclaimed "Hamlet" - not enough, maybe, to shout about, but a damn sight more than can be said for other local theatres.

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## there are areas where you simply have to say "could do better"

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Efforts HAVE been made to ensure access to people in wheelchairs, but there are undoubtedly areas where you simply have to say "could do better". And a recent addition, forced onto the Green Room's management courtesy of one of our beloved Fire Safety Officers, actively discriminates against anyone in a wheelchair, but more about that later - think positive for the moment.

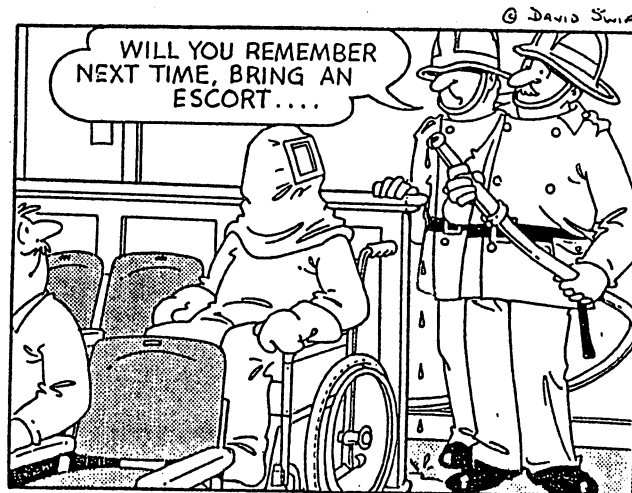
Parking close to the Green Room SHOULD be easy for the orange badge-holder. Double yellow lines outside the front entrance ought to give a disabled person the kind of lift needed when visiting a city-centre venue; unfortunately, non-disabled drivers have already

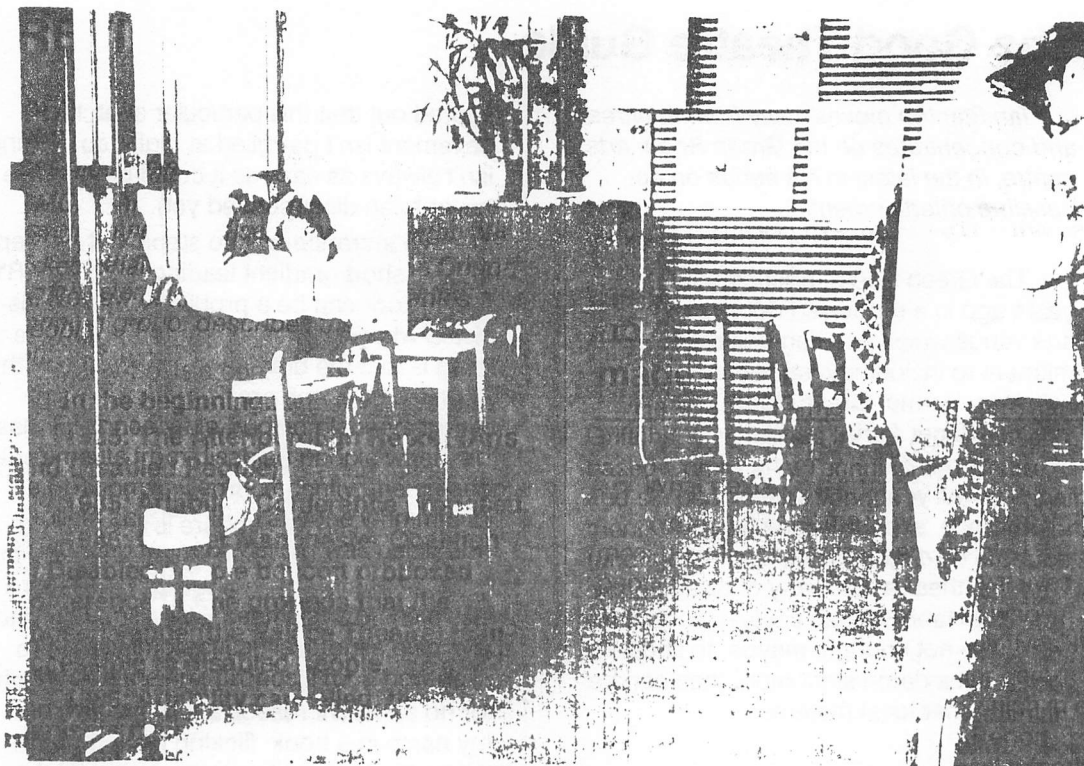
figured out that this particular stretch of pavement isn't patrolled at night, so parking isn't always as easy as it could be (but I've never been disappointed yet).

The entrance has no steps, but a steep though short gradient leading up to a VERY heavy door can be a problem for the unassisted wheelchair user. However, the nice thing is that the box office actually faces the door, and the staff are quick to help and friendly too. The siting of the box office has the added advantage of being able to book tickets etc from the comfort of your car!

Inside, the atmosphere is informal, to say the least, and far from luxurious, but the combined foyer/bar/lounge certainly has a lot of character, with an easy mix of all kinds of people (for instance, I got chatting to a woman - the archetypal "little old lady" - who for no apparent reason asked me to sign my name in a book; flicking back through the pages I saw autographs dating back to 1922).

Double doors lead into the auditorium, and these are a REAL problem to manage without assistance. Opening one side of these doors doesn't provide a wide enough gap to allow a wheelchair through, and the springs are so heavy that it's virtually impossible to jam one open while you pull on the other. It's even more frustrating because





*Metal barriers - courtesy of our beloved Fire Safety Officer*

of the need to negotiate these doors to get from the bar to the excellently adapted (though not at all well sign-posted) wheelchair loo.

Inside the auditorium the raked seating at least has a bench at floor level, which means that you can actually sit next to the person you're with (providing there aren't more than 2 wheelchair users there on the same night). Still, raked seating can be even more difficult, as the next article in this series will show.

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**.....tables are rendered unusable thanks to....cast-iron metal crash barriers**

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Back to the bar.....(no, I'm NOT an alcoholic - not quite!). This used to be un-

usually accommodating for the wheelchair user, being perfectly flat and uncarpetted. Now, 4 out of the Green Room's 10 tables are rendered unusable to the wheelchair user, thanks to the installation of cast-iron metal crash barriers (reminiscent of the ones on football terraces). I was, to say the least, a bit put out about this (I enjoy my regular visits there), so I did speak to the Green Room management about this. They were apologetic and explained that a Fire Safety Officer had inspected the premises and instructed them to either install fixed seating or to partition these window seats off from the main foyer area. They were given the choice between accepting one of these options or being closed down! The Green Room's financial situation made the decision for them (fixed seating is very expensive and the Green Room's budget very limited).

Is this state of affairs really so bad? After all, there are still 6 tables to go at,

aren't there? Well, the 6 unobstructed tables are usually the ones which are occupied first - they're out of the draught and closer to the bar. If you arrange to meet someone, and they, without thinking, sit at the window tables, the subsequent disruption, as I discovered on my most recent visit, is quite considerable and decidedly embarrassing. But most of all it's quite simply discriminatory to deny access to any section of the building that is designated as open to the public.

Still, having said all of the above, it must

be stressed that the Green Room offers a really good evening out, and the problems outlined aren't of such a scale as to spoil MY enjoyment. The staff are friendly and helpful and the whole aura of the place is a really welcoming one. As with the Royal Exchange, featured in the last edition, what I've tried to do is take an honest look at access for disabled people, particularly people in wheelchairs, and point out areas where improvements could be made. Don't let it put you off!

## Farewell and Bon Voyage

Judith Holman, who has been a member of the GMCDP Executive Council for the last five years, including 2 years as Vice Chair and 18 months as Chair, left Manchester in February to do Voluntary Work Overseas in Belize.

Judith said her official goodbyes at a party at the West Indian Centre in Moss Side in February, and the occasion was symbolic of the great affection in which Judith is held, both within the Disabled People's Movement in Manchester and for her role in community education.

Good luck, Judith. We'll miss you.



## REVIEWS

### "AFTER ATTENBOROUGH"

*Brian Hilton is a disabled artist and GMCDP member, currently employed in a temporary role with North-West Shape. We asked Brian to review The Carnegie Council Review of arts provision for disabled people:*

In the beginning.....

**1985: The Attenborough Report (Arts and Disabled People).**

**1985: Artability Conference proposed.**

**1986: Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People boycott proposed conference on the grounds that the chosen venue (the Palace Theatre) is inaccessible to disabled people.**

**1986: Artability cancelled, though organisers maintain that the Palace was the ideal venue precisely because it was inaccessible!**

**Please read on.....**

Basically the "Attenborough Report" is made up of recommendations, and "After Attenborough" is reporting on how or if the recommendations have been implemented.

"After Attenborough" is wide-ranging and must be seen as a good source of reference, but reading this report I felt that in certain instances the Carnegie Council were being a bit smug, particularly the preface by Sir Kenneth Robinson, who seemed very pleased with the initiatives brought about by the Council, yet gave little credence to the role of, as he put it, "a small but vocal minority of disabled people".

Yet I think the report has been beneficial and to a large extent served its purpose. It's sad, though, to see only lip service being paid to some of the Attenborough Report recommendations. Prime example being that of the Arts Council's Code of Conduct on Arts and Disability, which on the face of it seemed great until you discover that the Arts Council, in its infinite wisdom,

decided not to make it obligatory. To my mind that's like having a gentleman's agreement with Jesse James!

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### **It's no good, and makes no sense, for decisions to be made on our behalf**

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What next?

We've come some way, but the real measure of success is when disabled people can take control of their own lives, and disabled people are the ones who make the decisions that affect their lives. It's no good, and makes no sense, for decisions to be made on our behalf, which in essence is what the Attenborough Report does. It's up to that small but vocal minority of disabled people, together with the large but silent majority of disabled people, to fight together for better access and for better representation; and not just in the arts.

Richard Attenborough said that "It lies within the power of our generation to transform the lives of disabled people". If Sir Richard doesn't mind, shouldn't it read "It lies within the power of disabled people to transform the lives of disabled people"?

*An article which appeared in the January edition of Disability Arts in London echoes many of Brian's comments on "After Attenborough". Its author, Bemelza Sharpe, attended the launch of the report, and sends us the following observations:*

At the launch of the book (where the high turn-out of wheelchair-users had to do some nifty manoeuvring to squeeze into the gangway around the stage area), Sir Kenneth Robinson identified the two key areas of success since the "Attenborough Report" as the Hospital Arts project with Peter Senior and the implementation of the Arts Coun-

cil's Code of Practice. The response to both these assertions from a number of Disabled People has been "What? Who? Whaaat?" in that order.

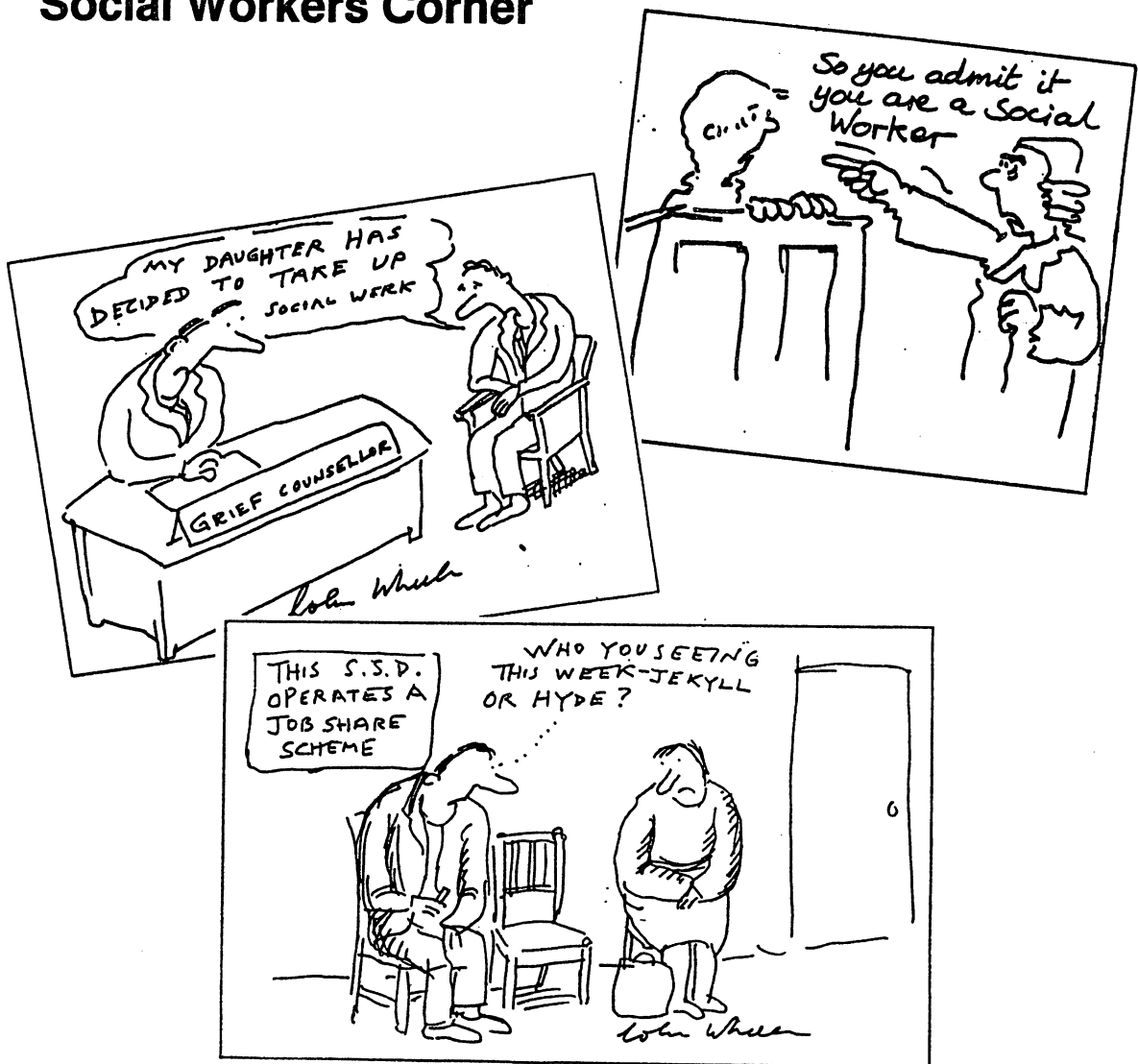
Neither of those areas have been initiated by disabled people, and I'd question how much change has come about as a result of them.....

After the Chairperson had given his official opening speech, he introduced Sir Richard Attenborough with the utmost dignity

and then announced "we have invited two disabled friends here to make a comment" (one of the "disabled friends" was a wheelchair-user who had to be hoisted up onto the inaccessible stage!). The Council's thinking seems to go so far then stops.

"After Attenborough", the review is here. It is essentially the voice of non-disabled people. Let us hope the non-disabled people in charge of arts funding in Britain find it a useful enough report to act upon.

## Social Workers Corner



# LOOKING FOR GOOD DESIGN

*Consultations between local disabled people and an architect over plans for accessible toilets resulted in a design which, it is hoped, will prove convenient to both disabled and non-disabled users. Anne Miller, secretary of the Association of Greater Manchester DIALs and a member of the planning group, describes the collaboration:*

For once, able-bodied planners invited comments from disabled people when, at the St Thomas Centre recently, the creation of toilets accessible to anyone who might be working there or visiting was being considered.

You may have seen plans of the existing (totally impractical) lavatories displayed alongside the first proposal for a new design, with a request for comments from interested parties. Copies were also distributed amongst organisations of disabled people, some of whose members felt that the initial idea was inadequate.

John O'Shaughnessy, the centre manager, was determined to get it right. Before his time at St Thomas', a lift had been installed which subsequently had to be altered at no mean expense simply because it proved dimensionally wrong for wheelchair

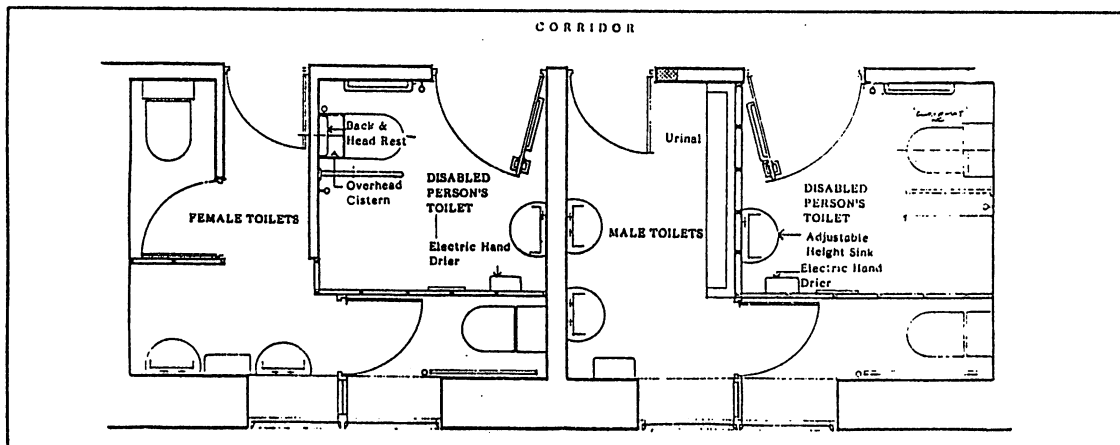
users. He wasn't going to let that happen again.

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## Together they discussed the options (and the drains)...

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He arranged a meeting between Shaun Griffiths, an architect from the Manchester-based Community Technical Aid Centre, and six people with various physical impairments. Together they discussed the options (and the drains!) in an attempt to produce a design that would cater for any situation. Do we plump for two single sex toilets, or would two unisex ones provide better scope? Bear in mind the wheelchair user who can only transfer from one particular side of the w.c. (and bear in mind the drains!). Remember there are those who, although they may be ambulant, need some extra space behind the lavatory seat to accommodate a stiff back. Some people need high loos, some need low. Some could do with a padded seat when they want to go! The ideas came tumbling in from round that table, from extra low switches, mirror and hand drier through electric bidet type w.c.



*Plans of new layout*



to electric hoist, alarm and headrest.

Having revised their plans, John and Shaun set up a mock-up for a trial by people using several types of wheelchair. It was agreed that two unisex toilets would, hopefully, obviate long queues, and could be designed to cope with wheelchair approach from opposite sides of the loo (and bearing in mind the drains!).

Present able-bodied people will be surrendering a lot of space in the existing toilets, so they will also be using these new ones. Expectations are fairly high that funds will be granted to include a washbasin which can be varied in height so that no-one need get backache.

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**.....he replied that he had never had in-depth discussions on disabled toilets before.....**

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I asked Shaun whether he had found it helpful to include disabled people at this early stage of planning. He replied enthusiastically in the affirmative, and commented

that he had never had in-depth discussions on disabled toilets before, having assumed, quite naturally, that the standard specifications would suffice. Also he had never received any complaints from disabled people. However, he tells me that it is very much CTAC's policy to liaise strongly with their clients.

There are still one or two loose ends to tie up, such as discussing the possibility of colour coding to help partially-sighted people. Final plans should be ready for an access grants committee meeting at the end of February, after which there will be the anxious wait to discover what funding is allocated. Anyone wishing to view these plans are welcome to apply to the St Thomas Centre.

It will be interesting at a future date to hear feedback from both disabled and non-disabled users. One hopes it will not be a long list of complaints!

Hats off, I say, to two able-bodied people who had the vision and foresight to liaise with disabled people when designing for.....disabled people.

*Anne Miller*

*(Member of the disabled panel).*

# MAR-Y-SOL

*Mar-y-Sol is a new holiday complex which is being publicised widely through outlets associated with disabled people. Lorraine Gradwell, for instance, booked HER holiday at the London NAIDEX exhibition. So is Mar-y-Sol every disabled person's dream holiday?*

Mar-y-Sol is a complex of apartments and studios in Los Cristianos on the south of Tenerife, one of the Canary Islands.

The complex is built around three pools, one of which is heated to around 90 and has a poolside hoist. The pools all have what are called "water games", which means that at certain times of the day water spouts, waterfalls, and streams of jacuzzi-like bubbles appear in parts of the pool as if by magic!

The apartments and studios are grouped in "houses" or "Casas" around the central pool area, and there are lifts to all floors. The pool access is from the first floor, the pools being almost on a level with the second floor of the Casas.

A series of long but reasonably gentle ramps leads to the pool area where there is a poolside cafe which opened for business while we were staying at Mar-y-Sol. If your idea of a holiday is to lie in the sun with a book and a personal stereo, with the occasional swim followed by a cup of coffee, then this is it.

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## **fully accessible? a claim with which I would take issue**

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The promotional literature describes the complex as being fully accessible, a claim with which I would take issue. However, it is probably true to say that it has better access than the vast majority of other "off the peg" holidays available.

My friend and I stayed in a "studio" - a

sort of large bed-sit with its own bathroom and patio. The kitchen area was very small and basic, with all the units being at standard height and very difficult to reach from a sitting position. Everything seemed unused, which led us to the conclusion that we were the first people to occupy that particular studio.

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## **no shower-seat - that was an extra £8 per week!**

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The bathroom was large; it had a shower but no bath - and no shower seat, that was an extra at £8 per week! This is where necessity prompts initiative, and you move one of the patio chairs into the shower!

Other items which would have been handy were a shower curtain, a shelf by the washbasin, and a few clothes hooks on the wall, though whether these were missing because our studio had not been fully finished we never actually found out.

The apartments are bigger than the studios, having a separate bedroom and therefore sleeping four people. They also have the benefit of a bath in the bathroom! The apartments and studios were attractively decorated and furnished and, apart from the points already mentioned, reasonably accessible both inside and out.

Studios and apartments at Mar-y-Sol can be either rented or bought; the 1988 price to rent a studio in January was £185 per week, with a reduction of 20% because of the unfinished building work. In the complex next to Mar-y-Sol an apartment can be had for about £120 a week, as we learnt from a couple who owned an apartment "next door" in Victoria Court but who paid a daily charge to come on the Mar-y-Sol complex and use the heated pool! They have an ice-cream making business and close down



for three months every winter which they spend in Tenerife. Well, you would, wouldn't you? But I digress. To buy a Mar-y-Sol studio costs about £36,000 and an apartment is £59,000; in comparison studios are being sold elsewhere in Los Cristianos from about £20,000 - access doesn't come cheap!

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**Mar-y-Sol can be recognised from a distance by the orange crane towering above the complex**

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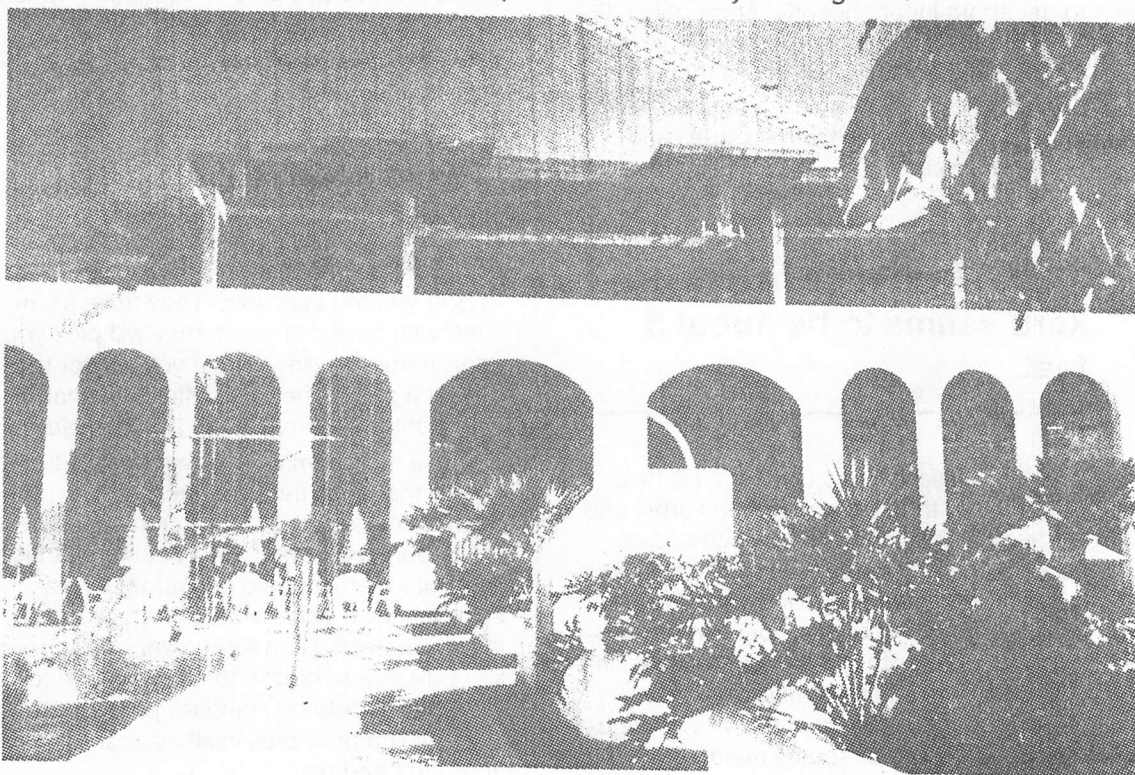
Mar-y-Sol is about halfway finished, and can be recognised from a distance by the orange crane towering above the complex!

There are rumours that Mar-y-Sol is taking such a long time to complete because of cash-flow problems due to the "bottom falling out" of the tourism explosion in the Canaries; or of the developers, Kurt Konrad CIA, having over-reached themselves and are having to let the existing apartments to fund the building of those remaining. Kurt Konrad however are large developers with many complexes on the island currently being built by them, so this seems unlikely. A supervisor overseeing the opening of the poolside cafe blamed strikes at the island's main port for holding up deliveries of materials and preventing work from being completed.

Whatever the reason, it seems unlikely to the untrained (but highly critical!) eye that Mar-y-Sol will be finished this year.

Included in the final plans for the com-

*Huge crane and incomplete roof behind idyllic foreground*



plex are a sports hall, restaurant and cafe, chemists, gift shops, a supermarket, and an underground car park. At the moment there is no onsite shopping (the essential supermercado!); this is a great drawback because the Mar-y-Sol studios and apartments are self-catering and the poolside cafe is relatively expensive. There is a reasonable supermarket about two hundred yards away - so far so good. However the access road to May-y-Sol itself is unfinished and unlit; this means that not only is it very rough and bumpy through the day, but also you can't see the potholes at night! Oh yes, I nearly forgot, Mar-y-Sol is built on the side of a rather steep hill: down to the supermarket, down to the beach, the restaurants, the bank, down to everywhere in fact - but always UP to Mar-y-Sol.

Still, enterprise will out, and the flagging wheelchair occupant, and valiant companion, can always hire an electric wheelchair to get about independently. At roughly £25 for three days it doesn't come cheaply, but if you want to see the local area then it really **is** the best way - unless your companion is a cross between Geoff Capes and Daley Thompson!

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### **...the average height of a kerb seems to be about 3 feet.**

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Los Cristianos was built on a hill before anyone ever thought of dropped kerbs, and the average height of a kerb seems to be about three feet. Finding your way around is a little like playing dungeons and dragons - there are places you can't reach in an electric wheelchair without a great deal of initiative and a little "lateral thinking". We had planned to make a map of the village, highlighting the complex routes needed to reach some places - and sell it to the guy who

hired the chairs out, or at least trade it for a few free days! Somehow, though, it seemed too much like work.

(If you want to get around the island you really need to hire a car, £45 will hire a Panda - without a sunroof! - for three days, and petrol is cheap at 25p per litre.)

Also on the broad subject of access, rumour has it that there is a prize for the first sighting of an accessible toilet on the south of the island! The knack, we found, consists of entering the poshest hotel you can find, trying to look as if you are staying there, and looking around nonchalantly for the public toilets. Even this tactic, though, failed to identify a toilet which would admit a Meyra - its not easy to look blase coming backwards out of the loo, especially when you haven't even been!

On the subject of hiring equipment, when you book your holiday at Mar-y-Sol you are sent a price list of equipment which can be supplied by the "Le-Ro" agency based on the complex, and which consists of three people, all German, two of them trained nurses. (as well as your Spanish phrase book, a German phrase book could be an asset!) In addition to electric wheelchairs they will hire you anything from the above-mentioned shower seat to a bedpan, or sell you syringes and then you pay them to give you the injection! They drive a van fitted with ramps in which they will pick you up from the airport or take you out for the day, at a price. They also offer personal care during your holiday at £100 per day.

If all this seems a **little** expensive, it seems that such items of necessary expenditure can be reclaimed through the equivalent of our NHS in many Euroean countries, therefore many people can afford to pay such prices. It could also be argued, however, that items such as shower seats, "monkey poles", and blocks to raise the bed for example, should be standard provision in a place which promotes itself as accessible and purpose-built.

Also, whilst on the subject of standard

provision, I had the distinct feeling, as I sat on a sunbed by the pool with the temperature in the 80's, my regulation issue DHSS wheelchair beside me, that I was the poor relation in the wheelchair league. I could have left my chair anywhere on the complex in the sure knowledge that it was safe from theft - it was the worst wheelchair there! Other European countries definitely seem to be more advanced in their attitude to supplying wheelchairs.

Back to Mar-y-Sol - a little background is always interesting, and as far as I could find out from talking to people there, Mar-y-Sol was the brainchild of a German doctor who visited Tenerife with his wife, who had multiple sclerosis, several years ago. He was impressed with the remission of her symptoms and put it down to the beneficial climate of the Canaries.

Together with two other doctors, one German and one Norwegian, they came up with the idea of a "Health and Fitness Centre" for people with a whole range of "conditions", and approached a property developer on the island to build the complex, or so the story went.

Mar-y-Sol is publicised as a "high class Fitness and Physiotherapy centre, SO-LARMED, offering saunas (with daily temperatures in the 80's, for goodness sake!), gyms, massages, and other wonderful treatments. Thankfully they are not compulsory, though they **are** expensive extras to your holiday bill if you choose to try them.

Is it a good place to go for a holiday? Well, that depends on what you want. For a lazing, sunbathing holiday, it's pretty good; the south of the island is ten degrees hotter than the north on average, but there **are** drawbacks as I already mentioned.

But is it worth it? At the moment the 20% reduction brings the price to a reasonable level, however the full prices are really a little over the top. It seems as though the Mar-y-Sol management feel they have a "captive" market who are willing to pay over the odds to be guaranteed the relevant facilities. It doesn't matter how you look at it, it still costs to be disabled!

*Further info? Susan Abbott - 123 Coppermill Road, Wraysbury, Staines, Middlesex, TW19 5NX. Tel. 0753-685718*



## Right to Reply

*The last edition of Coalition News prompted two responses to articles which appeared, and this in turn persuaded us to open a new feature, which gives readers the right to reply to points made. Anyone wishing to make their views known can do so by writing to Ian Stanton at the GMCDP office.*

### **Disability Terminology Debate - a reply, for an open debate.**

Birmingham Disability Rights Group is an organisation of and for people with disabilities and was established to struggle against the type of social oppression we face, and to combat discrimination and what we call "handicappism". We use the term "people with disabilities" for political reasons which are based on our analysis of "disability" and, of course, different from the one employed by GMCDP and BCODP. Sadly, having read both Anne Rae's contributions to the November issue of "Coalition News", it is clear that many people within the Disability Movement assume that there is "one correct political line" on disability, and anyone who disagrees is either a traitor or wants to be "normal/able bodied". Unfortunately, such a view only serves to produce sectarianism and, ultimately, holds back the struggle for our liberation. Real and important differences do exist, but only through open and honest debate will we be able to progress and, hopefully, build unity in action.

It is impossible in the space available to develop all our arguments and to outline the basis of our analysis of disability and where it differs from your own. What we have tried to do is to explain some of the false assumptions flying around and highlight major differences that exist as far as terminology goes. May we state quite clearly, we are not trying to speak for all organisations who use the term "people with disabilities", any more than we would hold you responsible for all

those who use the term "disabled people"; what we are doing is offering our politics.

Anne writes: "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." BDRG would never put forward a case like this! Yes, the importance of being recognised as people in our own "right" - not as our conditions or as dehumanising labels such as "the disabled" - is part of our politics but within the context of a political challenge to the dominant ideologies of disability, not for any wishy washy liberal reason. Putting the person first relates to self-pride, self-image and to state that "disability" does not belong to us, nor is it part of us! It is oppressively imposed on people by the ways in which they are seen and treated.

Because we see "disability" as imposed, no way could we conflate our conditions into disability. We reject all current definitions of impairment/disability/handicap because they tend to reinforce able-bodied notions of normality/abnormality. Why see ourselves as "impaired"? The term implies a "flaw" which means the creation of negative images via able-bodied notions of what is "whole" or "normal". BDRG uses the term "condition" instead, and by this we mean a state of being. For us, disability is the result of evaluations of our conditions, the values of given societies, the treatment imposed on us and the implications all of this has on us both as individuals and for specific segments of our social group. Disability is often experienced differently from one segment of our group to another. Its complexity is not adequately articulated with our Movement which means, in our opinion, most approaches to disability are too crude and over-generalised.

The strength of the ideological purchase of the dominant ideology of disability (tragedy model) means that it is easy for society to impose values and expectations on us. Because "disability" is seen as 'our fault'

due to 'functional inability' it is very hard to confront the perceptions of "disabled" the majority of society has. Whilst understanding the way in which GMCDP/BCODP uses the term, "disabled people" - disabled by society - I think it fails to really state any confront the perceptions of "disabled" the majority of society has. Whilst understanding the way in which GMCDP/BCODP uses the term, "disabled people" - disabled by society - I think it fails to really state anything more than a truism. However, for most able-bodied people, the term means we are "disabled" by our conditions and because this is their view, they operate from within the existing oppressive status quo. Everything becomes read through their understanding and meaning of "disabled", not yours! The politics of being "disabled people" at best becomes distorted and at worst, basically, meaningless! It is not possible to develop the argument here, but we believe Vic Finkelstein's analysis of disability is badly flawed because its focus is on structural forms of oppression through forms of segregation and we see this as but one aspect of how society imposes disability on us.

We may disagree with the usefulness of using the term "disabled people", but we acknowledge your political right to use it, and apart from "people with disabilities", it is the only term we acknowledge. We share, then, Anne Rae's view that terminology, such as "physically challenged" must be opposed as reactionary and dangerous.

Our own reasons for using "people with disabilities" are many. Disabilities are not ours (belonging to us) but are socially imposed by how we come to experience the differential treatment society dishes out to us. To us, the experience we have can vary greatly, but the recognition of what is 'common to us all' - the differential treatment - is the basis of seeing us as an oppressed minority group. Historically, for example, "disability" wasn't a medical concept but a legal one - when John Stuart Mill spoke of the

subjugation of women, he actually identified them as "women with disabilities". This indicated the lack of "legal rights, social worth and status etc" they were facing in a male-dominated society. It is, perhaps, an apt way of seeing the politics of "disability".

What adds to our concern about the notion of "disabled people" is that a contradiction appears to exist in the current thinking of Finkelstein and BCODP. If "disability" is social oppression, then our task is to overthrow it - so how can it be that we are seeing arguments which suggest that we should 'take pride' in ourselves as "disabled people" or that we need to identify a "disability culture"? It is correct to take pride in ourselves and to build positive self-images around our own social identity, but the idea that "disabled" can be politically re-articulated in the same way as "black" has been is highly suspect. Our Movement should study some of the political writings of the Black Consciousness Movement because it is very clear on why certain forms of language and imagery can or cannot be used.

This piece has only touched the surface of the debate. What is important is to recognise that there is a debate there to be had for the Movement's sake.

Yours sincerely

Bob Findlay.

*Editor's note: One thing on which Anne, Bob, and the Coalition are agreed is that this debate is a healthy one. GMCDP held the same debate at some length in our early days, and the decision to adopt the term "disabled people" (as opposed to "people with disabilities") was arrived at democratically and after informed discussion. The term "Disabled People" is also used by our national organisation (the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People) and by our international organisation (Disabled People's International).*

# Right to Reply

*continued*

## **Joint Care Planning Team: Stockport**

We were interested to read Kevin Hyett's article in your November edition which we discussed at our recent meeting.

The team was first set up in 1985 in a traditional way with representation from the Local Authority and the District Health Authority. It was soon recognised that to continue discussions without the involvement of people who either had a disability or were from organisations representing disabled people was not acceptable. Eleven organisations, including the Greater Manchester Coalition, were therefore approached and by Autumn 1986 we were able to proceed with equal representation from the three parts of the team (later joined by the Family Practitioner Committee).

When Kevin Hyett was nominated by the Coalition he immediately had to withdraw temporarily because of work commitments and we willingly co-operated with having a replacement for that period. When he was able to join the team an early decision was to move meetings to 6 p.m. to enable Kevin to take part as he was the only member of the team who could not be available until then. We recognised that his involvement in the work of the sub-group would be very limited and agreed that this did affect his contribution to the team. Fortunately, the other members of the team who represent disabled people were able, and have, played a full part on those sub-groups.

By the end of 1987 we were able to put together a series of proposals to the Joint Consultative Committee (to which we report). Kevin Hyett, on behalf of the Coalition, was unable to support one part of one

of those proposals and was not alone in expressing this view. Our thinking has, however, moved on since then, as Kevin recognises in his article. The Coalition expressed their wish to withdraw in the light of the residential care proposal. We discussed this at our February 1988 meeting when we also noted that Kevin had found it possible to be at only two of the last six meetings. We therefore, decided to move the time of the meetings to 5 p.m. but agreed to reconsider this if Kevin Hyett returned.

We were pleased to see that Kevin's article did recognise the progress we have made. There are now 13 members of the team and we all feel that we have made significant steps forward in discussing, planning, and implementing services. Progress has been slower than we would have wished, particularly in attracting additional resources, and we recognise how much more needs to be done.

We all feel that we have an equal share in both the successes and frustrations of the team and have worked hard to listen carefully to what each of us has had to say. The complexity of both the Health and Local Authorities are difficult to understand but none of us feel unable to press for issues to be discussed. Our representative status is a problem for us all but we try to seek the views of a wider group particularly amongst people who have a disability.

We look forward to the next year of working together with considerable optimism and enthusiasm. We are sad that Kevin feels the way he does, but hope that the Coalition will find a way to talk with us again.

Yours sincerely,

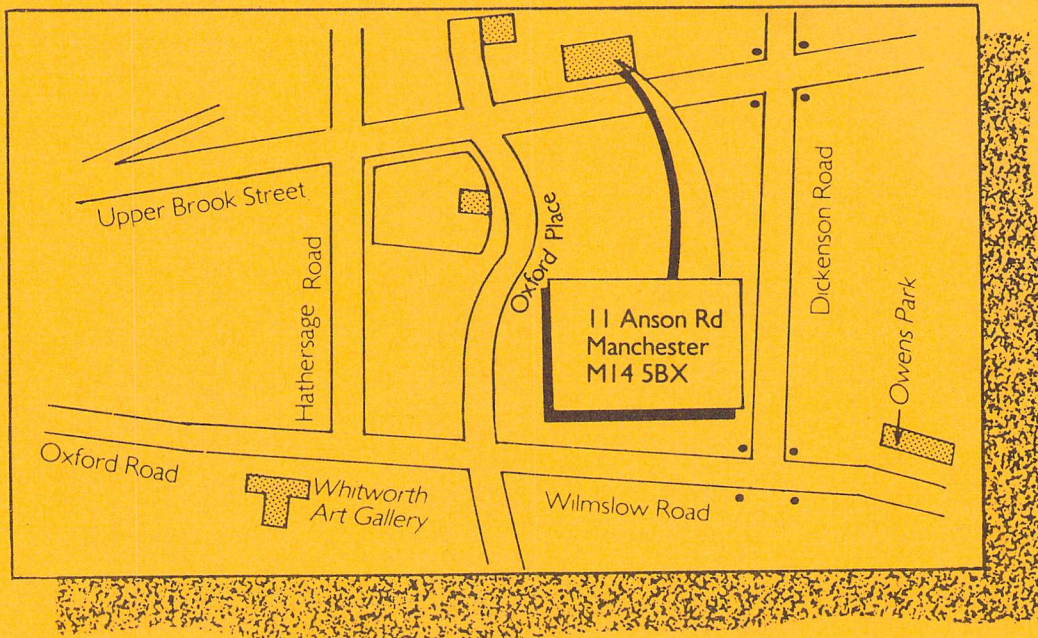
Members of the Joint Care Planning  
Team

The Bishop of Doncaster, who sits on the Church of England's Commission for Non-Sexist Language, might win the prize for the most appropriate name. His name is the Rt Reverend William Persson!

Throwing good money after bad, H M Government has paid a grant to a Nottinghamshire craftsman to make chastity belts. Come back Emily Pankhurst, we need you!

How many social workers in a Labour local authority does it take to change a light-bulb?

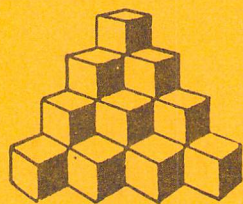
Why, three, of course: one to change the bulb, another to take the minutes, and a third to monitor the equal opportunities!



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