

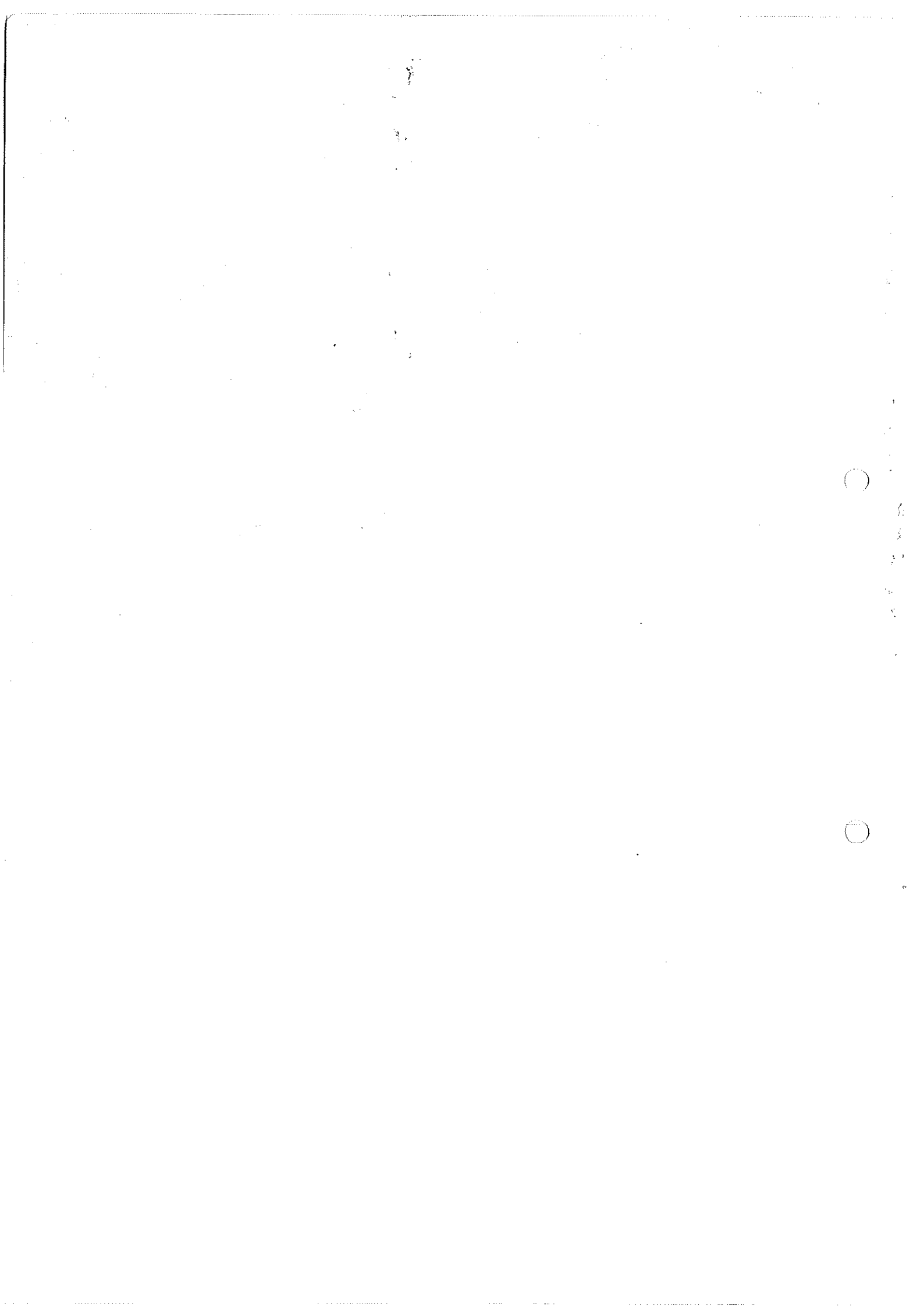
# Militant & Disabled

Price £2

## Includes:

- Direct Action
- Anti-Discrimination Legislation (ADL)
- Education
- Housing
- Employment
- Charity
- Surviving The System
- Socialism

A Militant Labour pamphlet

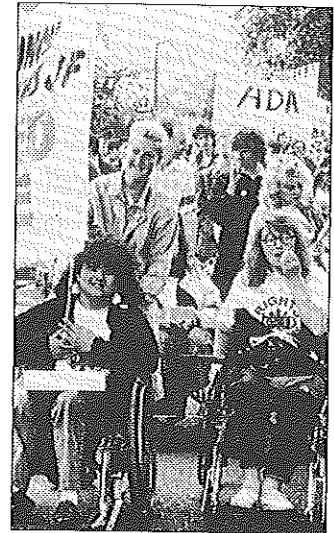


# Introduction

There are officially six and a half million of us in Britain. There are hundreds of millions of us around the world. We are one of the most discriminated against groups in society. Pubs and clubs ban us from their premises; transport companies refuse to let us ride on their buses and trains; the scientific world discusses whether we should be born at all; Tory ministers refuse us our civil rights; the education system bans us from most mainstream schools; capitalist owners of industry refuse us work and continually design homes we can't live in; psychiatric services tell us we've got chips on our shoulders; do-gooder charities patronise us with their begging bowls; self-proclaimed faith healers tell us we're paying for our sins; the so-called justice system continues to lock us away or dismiss our attempts to gain justice because they don't understand us and Hitler's Nazis and his followers today want us wiped out.

We are disabled people. We include in our great numbers blind and partially sighted people; deaf and hearing-impaired people; survivors of the mental health system; wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments; people with learning difficulties; people who are HIV positive or who have AIDS; many elderly people; people with invisible impairments like epilepsy, asthma, dyslexia and diabetes. These are just the most common impairments.

Some of us have been disabled since birth, others - through accident or illness - have become disabled at some point in our lives.



**There are  
lots of us**



**We are all  
different**



**We are part  
of the  
working  
class**

We are members of Militant Labour because we see the need to link up with other working-class people and discriminated-against groups. We have a common interest in the fight for jobs, against low pay and for better benefits, as well as to preserve and improve public-sector services. We are a sizeable and important section of the working class and are determined to play our part in the struggle for a better society.

Militant Labour believes that this must be a socialist society. The Labour leaders talk of justice, equality and civil rights but we know capitalist reality. That is why we oppose the ditching of socialism. We understand the need to take into public ownership, under the control of the working class, the major industries and banks, so production can be organised to provide for everyone's needs not the profits and greed of a few.

We have produced this pamphlet to highlight some of the main issues facing disabled people and to develop demands around which we can build a mass movement as part of the struggle to end the systematic segregation and discrimination we face.

## **Discrimination**

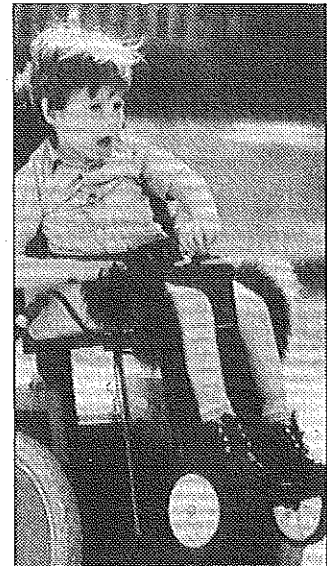
Disability does not equal illness. Throughout history, disabled people have been treated differently, according to what kind of society they lived in.

Disability has been surrounded by myths and superstitions, particularly in pre-industrial societies. In the 17th century, disabled women were burned as witches. Even in Britain today, faith healers still peddle the myth that disabled people are possessed by the devil. Religion especially has encouraged prejudice, linking disabled people with evil. The Bible goes to great lengths in describing "undesireables".

**We have to  
link up with  
each other**



**and fight for  
a better  
future**



**We are  
not ill**



**We just do  
some things  
differently**

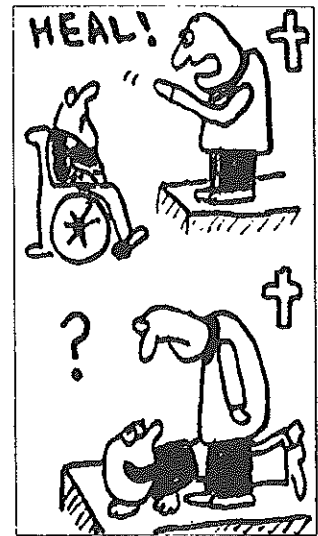
*"And the Lord said to Moses, none of your descendants throughout their generations who has a blemish shall draw near, a man blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long, or a man who has an injured foot or an injured hand, or a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man with defective sight or an itching disease or scabs or crushed testicles ...he may not profane my sanctuaries."*

In early societies, attitudes towards disabled people varied. In some rural, peasant societies disabled people were a valued part of the community. Work routines were adapted so that everyone played whatever part they could in community life.

It was really with the birth of the capitalist system that the development of widescale, institutionalised discrimination began. This system exists to make profits and that means employing millions of workers in repetitive, robotic jobs. You can't have a production line where one worker works at a different speed or in a different way to another! So disabled people were excluded and often locked up away from the rest of society. We were "unproductive".

Superstitions and prejudices might be understandable in societies with little scientific or social understanding but there is no excuse with the knowledge available to capitalism. Unfortunately, it isn't just a matter of scientific knowledge. Capitalism thrives on "divide and rule" setting black against white, discriminating against women, disabled people and on grounds of sexuality. In a modern, industrial society there is no lack of skills and expertise. After all scientists and designers have made rockets which take people to the moon. Surely we should be able to build ramps into buildings, buses fit for everyone to travel in and make information accessible to all. But this isn't done because capitalism is about making money not providing for people's needs.

Millions of people become disabled throughout the world, as a direct result of the economic and



**The system thinks we're useless**



**But we can do lots of things**



**Anyone can become disabled**

political policies of capitalism and are then thrown on the scrapheap by the system. Dangerous working conditions and bad living conditions also contribute to the occurrence of impairments. Wars are another major cause of impairment internationally. Think how many disabled people there must be in Bosnia today as a result of shelling of civilians.

At the start of the 1980s, there were 200 million disabled children; 100 million were disabled because of malnutrition. 14 million more are disabled every year. Yet enough food is produced every year to feed everyone. But it is only sold to make a profit so the poor starve.

The blindness of well over half the estimated 70 million blind people in the world could have been prevented by cheap dietary improvements and programmes of disease prevention. The non-white, poorest sections of the world (kept in poverty by the capitalist west) contains the vast majority of the world's 600 million disabled people.

It is society that disables us. We are not "invalid" or "handicapped" (the word comes directly from the term "cap-in-hand" and means "beggar"). We demand to play a full role in society alongside everyone else. The only thing stopping us is the way society is organised.

## **Disability and other forms of discrimination**

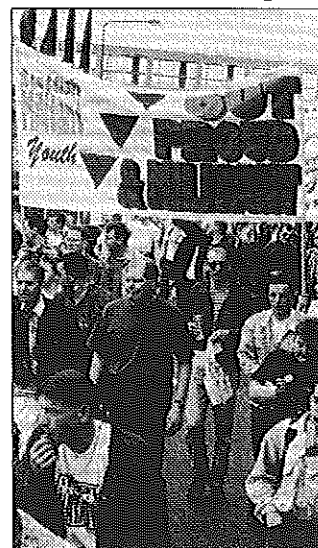
Disabled people who are black, or lesbian, gay or bisexual or who are women, face particular and often complex forms of discrimination. Black children often get taken out of their communities to be educated in segregated schools, leaving them open to racial abuse, without the support of their friends and families.

A disproportionate number of African-Caribbean people are diagnosed schizophrenic. The pressures

**lots of children are disabled in places like Africa and Asia because they don't have enough to eat**



**we should all control things, not just very rich white people**



**Black people, lesbians or gay disabled people are even more discriminated against**



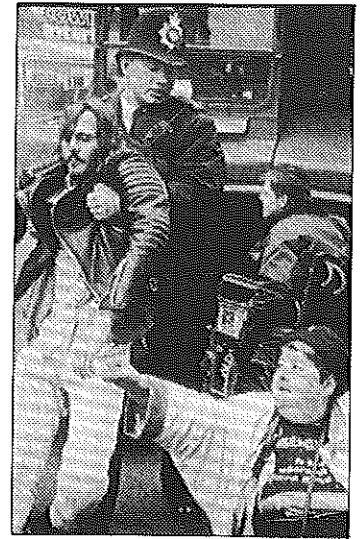
of living in a racist society, coping with overt prejudice and subtle, all-pervasive discrimination, often coupled with unemployment, poverty and bad housing, lead to regular mis-diagnosis by predominantly white, middle-class professionals.

## **The struggle for Anti-Discrimination Legislation (ADL)**

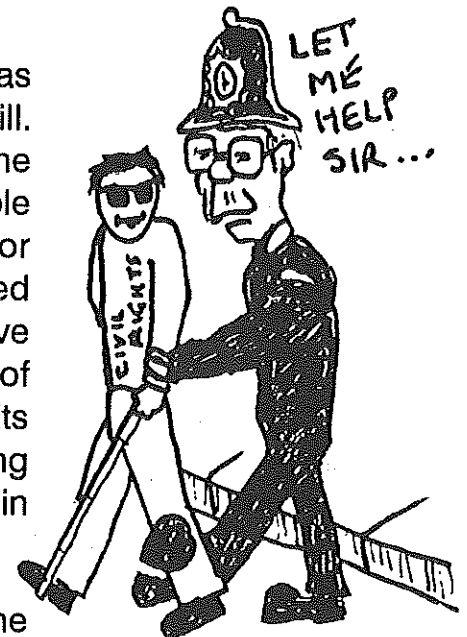
Disabled people have had enough. In Britain our campaigns have forced Parliament to discuss anti-discrimination legislation. The deceitful way the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill has repeatedly been talked out by the Tories, has provoked a wave of anger from disabled people and working-class people in general, leading to the resignation of the Minister for the Disabled, Sir Nicholas Scott.

To salvage credibility, the government has introduced the Disabled Persons Discrimination Bill. This is nothing more than a cosmetic exercise. The bill contains so many loopholes that it is questionable whether disabled people will benefit at all. For example, the bill contains a list of covered impairments. People who are HIV positive or have learning difficulties, along with many other sections of the disabled community, are excluded from its provisions. The bill talks of a "new right" protecting disabled workers against unfair dismissal but only in firms with over 20 staff!

Internationally, countries like China and the USA passed much more far-reaching laws to protect the rights of disabled people. The Americans with Disabilities Act (A.D.A.) was passed after a sustained campaign, particularly by the civil rights organisation ADAPT and veterans of the Vietnam War. Now, with the continuing economic crisis and the election of extreme right-wing Republicans to Congress, lawyers are paid big money to find employers ways to bypass the Act.



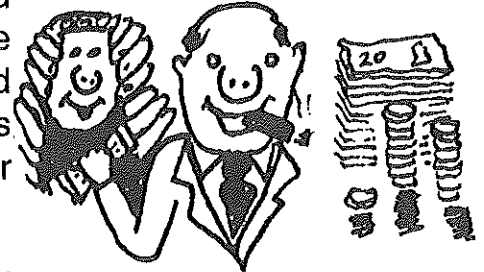
**we want laws which will help make us equal with everyone else**



**but even when we get new laws, we'll still have to fight for our rights**

China has recently overturned its legislation. All forms of social protection are being cast aside and new reactionary laws are being introduced, including compulsory sterilisation of disabled women, enforced adoption of the children of disabled parents and the criminalisation of relationships between disabled people. These laws are part of the drive by China's leaders to push the country further and further towards a cheap labour, capitalist economy.

**bosses are allowed to break the law**



These examples are a warning to disabled people in Britain. We do have to fight for the strongest possible A.D.L. But the bosses will try to water down legislation before it even gets on the statute books or just ignore it. Unless we get organised to force them to implement it and go further and fight for a complete change in society to take power out of their hands, they will always try to undermine and erode the rights we have won.

**they are only interested in money**

## The right to work!



Disabled people make up 5% of the working population. 20% of disabled men and 27% of disabled women, who are actively seeking work, are unemployed. Add to this the 50% of us, of working age, who do not even present ourselves for work and we can begin to understand the scale of the discrimination that disabled people face in employment. Those of us "lucky enough to have jobs" are often stuck in low-paid, low-skilled work. The average wage of a disabled worker is £38 per week lower than for non-disabled workers.

**bosses don't want to give us jobs**

In 1944, as the second world war was nearing its end, the government was worried about the political consequences of so many veterans, who had been disabled by the war, returning to poverty and no prospect of work. They introduced the Disabled Persons' (Employment) Act. The Act stipulates that 3% of all employees in firms of more than 20 workers must be disabled people. This scheme has never worked properly. The maximum fine for non-



**if they do then they pay us crap wages**



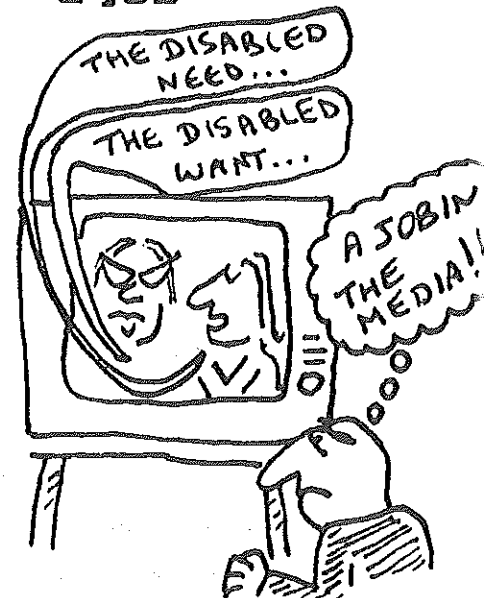
compliance is just £100. There have only ever been ten prosecutions under the Act, the last of which was in 1974. Only two of these resulted in the maximum penalty. Even in the 1960s, at the height of the post-war economic boom, only 65% of firms who were supposed to be employing a quota were doing so. That figure has now fallen to nearly 10%. 89% of companies receive bulk exemption certificates letting them off the hook.

There are 2.6 million officially unemployed people in Britain. One million more have been "artificially" removed from the figures. 800,000 people work part time and 600,000 are temporary workers looking for a full-time job. Therefore, the current jobs crisis affects at least five million people. It is in our interests to link up with other groups of workers to fight for a 35 hour working week without loss of pay, which in itself would create an estimated one million jobs. A programme of full employment must include access to work for disabled people. We call for a minimum income of £220 per week to avoid the poverty trap. Allowances should be paid to fully cover additional costs incurred through disability.

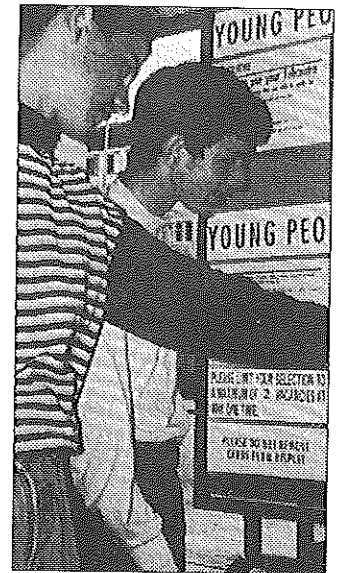
The government has just introduced its new Access To Work scheme. They had planned to make employers pay 50% towards the cost of equipment and personal assistance to disabled employees, but were forced to suspend this proposal at least for a year, after a campaign by the Disabled Peoples' Movement and Trades Unions to force the government to pay the full amount. Under this scheme, we are supposed to be entitled to up to £21,000 worth of help (called PACT, the Placing, Assessment and Counselling Team), over a five year period.

Disability Employment Advisers now often have to cover more than one Jobcentre. They are overstretched and poorly trained, so that disabled people face severe delays in getting the necessary equipment and support. We will often have been dismissed from our job before it arrives.

**everyone  
should be  
able to have  
a job**



**and at least  
£220 a week**



**jobcentres  
often don't  
have enough  
staff to help us**

If it does arrive equipment is often antiquated and inappropriate. Budgets are inadequate and often spent in the first few months of the financial year.

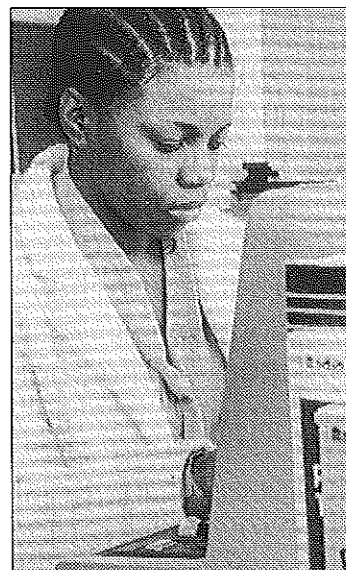
## Rachel's Story

"After I finished college, I wanted to use my language skills and wanted to travel. I decided to pursue a career in exporting. I got my export qualifications and after nearly a year on the dole, was offered a low-paid job in Northampton as an Export Administrator. I said goodbye to my friends in Manchester, where I had been living and moved down to Northampton at a week's notice, to start work. Still, I thought, at least it will give me a start. Within four weeks I had been dismissed. The problem? My "poor eyesight". This was despite the fact that the PACT had been to visit me on that day to sort out equipment and a computer had been given to me on the same day, which would have made my work a lot easier.

"We organised a campaign to expose the firm to the local community. We approached the local trade unions, who helped us to produce leaflets, press releases and conduct radio and television interviews. We held a day of action in the town centre, where a petition was signed by hundreds of people calling for my re-instatement. We demonstrated outside the factory, which was covered in the local press, radio, and regional T.V. Leaflets were handed out to workers explaining what had happened, along with application forms and leaflets urging people to join a trade union.

"Letters of support came in from as far afield as Ellesmere Port and Derbyshire. Everywhere I went that week, I could hear people saying, "That's the woman who was sacked for being disabled". The campaign certainly did have an effect on the local community.

"We spoke to several union branches, which heightened awareness of disability issues amongst local workers. As a result, local branches of M.S.F. and the C.W.U., put resolutions into their national



**Rachel was sacked for being disabled**



**but she fought back**

conferences calling for their unions to take up policies to protect the rights of disabled people at work. I now have a good job with a disabled people's organisation, but all my exporting knowledge has gone to waste!

"Similar campaigns should be waged every time a disabled person is victimised at work. By drawing support and strength from the trade union movement, pressure can be brought to bear on unscrupulous employers. At least employers in the Northampton area will think twice before sacking a disabled worker in future."

This is the kind of system we live in. One which is so outdated and inflexible and hell-bent on making profits, that it cannot accommodate people and enable people to make use of their skills and reach their full potential.

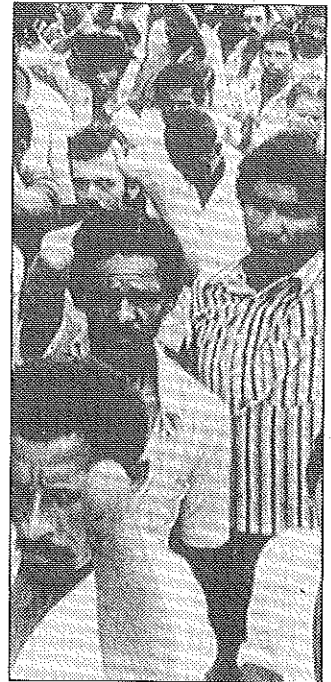
The Tories have recently made it much more difficult to claim Invalidity Benefit, changing its name to the equally insulting "incapacity" benefit. They say that if you are strong enough to lift a 5lb bag of potatoes, for instance, you are fit for manual work. Their aim is to force more disabled people onto income support or into low paid jobs. Civil service unions and the Disabled Peoples' Movement must jointly campaign for a properly funded PACT, with an urgent campaign to recruit more disabled people as advisers.

There must be no dismissals on the grounds of disability. Workers who become disabled must be given the equipment and support to carry on working if they feel unable to do their old job. If not, they must be redeployed without loss of pay or status, or given full compensation, including the costs of aids and adaptations.

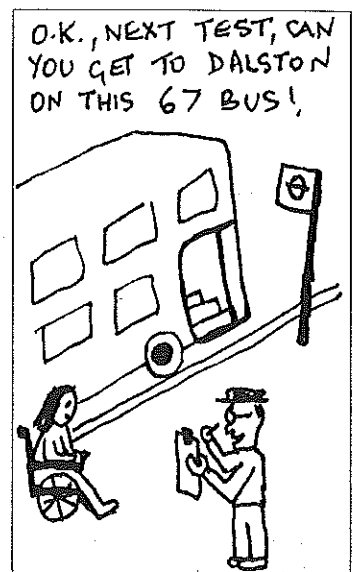
## Transport

If we want to travel - to work or to school or just to go out - we have to pay massive taxi fares or wait hours for the dial-a-ride bus. Buses, trains,

## we should work with the unions to fight for jobs



**the government wants to test us to see if we are really disabled!**

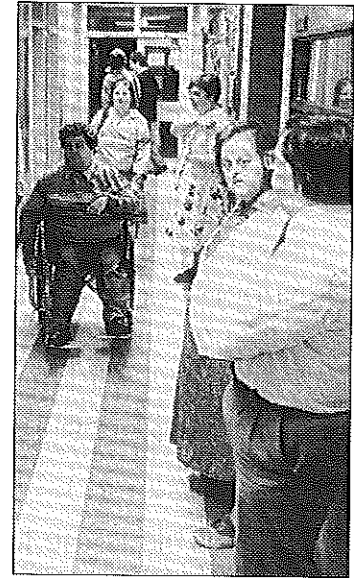


underground trains and almost all other forms of transport directly discriminate against us - whether it is because we cannot get on or because of a lack of accessible information or simply because of a lack of training on the part of staff. The government says they want to introduce accessible transport facilities but transport operators are still signing contracts, valid well into the next century, to buy new inaccessible buses and trains.

## **Independent Living/Community Care**

The Tories, in the drive to privatise local services, saw their chance to save money by introducing Community Care. They know that public opinion is rightly in favour of the closure of large institutions and disabled people living independently in the community. But they have consistently refused to fund the transition. Instead, the government has shifted responsibility onto friends and relatives. Recent research, published in Community Care magazine, shows that nearly 40,000 young people are currently providing unpaid assistance to a relative. There are now over one million unpaid assistants in Britain, mostly women who may already have jobs and responsibility for children. This puts an intolerable strain on relationships.

The implementation of Community Care has been a shambles. Even the Tory Association of Local Authorities admitted that an extra £800 million is needed. To make up this shortfall, they have told local authorities to charge users for services. But we are already paying, through high council tax, VAT and income tax. Charges for community care services means we are paying twice. Many will stop using services because they can't afford them. In Brent, before charges were introduced, over 3,000 people used community care services. Since then, that figure has fallen to 1,000. These charges are part of an all-round offensive to cut public expenditure so the



**It's good that all the big institutions are closing**



**but we must be allowed to live in our own homes**



**the government want us to pay for community care services**

Tories can give tax cuts to their rich friends. If we allow them to get away with charging for Community Care, this will encourage them to charge for other council services, such as education, refuse collection and the emergency services.

Some disabled people are refusing to pay. If we were all linked up in local and regional non-payment unions, with clear demands for non-withdrawal of services and unity of users and staff, we could beat them. When people refused to pay the Poll Tax and organised in anti-poll tax unions, they killed that hated tax and even saw off its maker, Margaret Thatcher. Militant Labour members are proud of the role we played in that battle and we will be there in the struggle to defeat charges for Community Care.

The quality of services is often poor with councils increasingly using private nursing agencies. These offer little staff training, do not recognise trade unions and pay poverty wages. This all adds up to high staff turnover, preventing disabled people and staff from developing good working relationships. Because the agencies are privately run, disabled people and social services have little control over the services they provide.

The scope is also far too limited. In many areas home helps have been renamed home care workers, instructed only to carry out duties related strictly to personal care, for example, assistance with washing and dressing. Essential tasks such as shopping and cleaning are no longer provided, lowering the quality of life and increasing the isolation that many disabled people are forced to live in. This also puts more pressure on families and friends to provide unpaid assistance to disabled relatives.

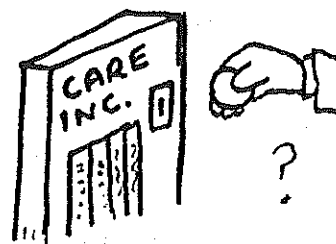
## **Personal assistance not "care"**

Many disabled people, especially young people, reject the idea that we have to be cared for

**we beat the  
poll tax by  
coming  
together and  
not paying**



**we can beat  
community  
care charges  
too**



**we need these  
services to get  
on with our  
lives**



and looked after. We may not be able to do certain things by ourselves and we may need a Personal Assistant to enable us to do them. Because disabled people have individual needs and lifestyles, some are demanding that we should be given money to employ our own Personal Assistants. For many disabled people this has been a liberating experience. We are no longer bound by the rules and regulations of Social Services and we can organise our personal assistance, to fit in with our lifestyles and needs, instead of someone else's.

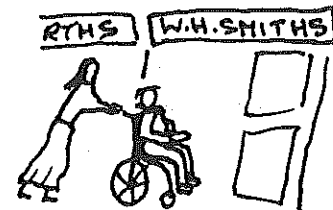
Because of the underfunding of Community Care, disabled people are not being given enough money to employ Personal Assistants on a decent wage. Some organisations of disabled people have tried to persuade local authorities to introduce the personal assistant scheme on the grounds that it saves on overheads such as administration costs. There is a danger that local authorities will support the implementation of these schemes in order to save money. Even the Tory government has indicated that it will make direct payments to disabled people legal next year.

We would be extremely wary of support from the Tory government. Most of their so-called reforms in other fields have meant cuts and reductions in services or the concentration of fewer services on those who can afford to pay. These schemes must be fully funded and available to all who want them or they could become a trap. Any money saved should be reallocated to improve other local authority services.

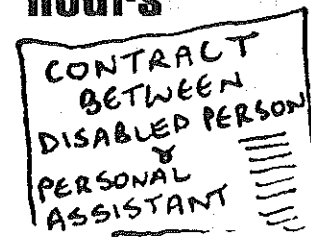
The quality of personal assistance work we receive also depends on a good relationship with the personal assistant. This work is sometimes physically demanding and often involves working nights and unsocial hours. Disabled people are not always able to pay allowances for this work. Workers who are employed by a single individual may be more vulnerable to unfair dismissal and have less contact with others doing the same job. It may be more difficult to have the same access to trade union



**the people who help us are our personal assistants**



**they are very important to us and should get fair wages and work reasonable hours**



**we have to fight any cuts**



membership as they would if they were working for the local authority. The personal assistance scheme must ensure the pay, conditions and rights of the assistants. We are completely opposed to cuts in local authority services. Those which have taken place should be reversed and local authority services expanded but with more democratic control by those who provide and use services.

## **A place to live**

Militant Labour believes that everyone has the right to a decent place to live. A vital ingredient of community care is an accessible, independent place to live and access to our friends' and relatives' homes. We don't want "special" homes. We don't want to live in disabled "ghettos". We want all homes to be accessible to all. This means disabled people, along with the whole community, must be involved in the planning of new buildings and development of existing ones.

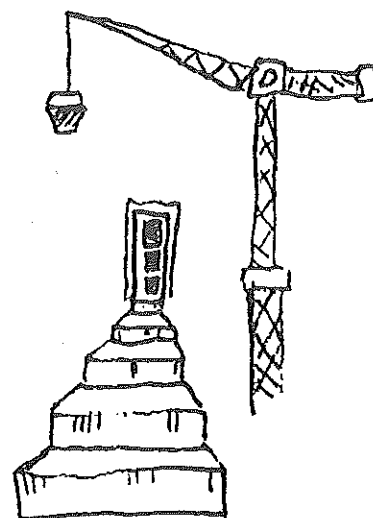
The vast majority of us have to rely on local authorities or housing associations for homes to rent. Local authority budgets for adaptations are inadequate - many local authorities spend the new year's budget in the first few months to try to clear the backlog from the previous year. We often have to wait years for an Occupational Therapist Assessment which we need in order to get any adaptations to our existing homes.

Local authorities are not able to build new houses and much of their housing stock has been sold to tenants or handed over to housing associations. Most housing associations treat disabled people as the responsibility of specialist housing associations. Nursing or residential homes and group homes for people with learning difficulties, which charge high rents because of the personal assistance or "care" they claim to provide, are taking over from large hospitals and institutions.

## **we should control our services**



**we should have homes of our own**



**building firms don't build accessible homes**

There is a major crisis in housing affecting millions of disabled and non-disabled people in Britain. Housing is not seen as a basic right but as something a few people can make a fortune out of, resulting in the misery of debt, homelessness, repossessions, overcrowding and substandard homes. People owe mortgage lenders £370 billion. They are living in homes they can no longer afford because of rising interest rates and speculation on property pushing up prices. The low income of most disabled people puts a mortgage beyond their reach.

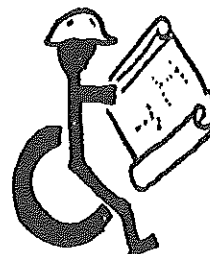
Building companies such as Taylor Woodrow and Wimpey's make enormous profits. They give big donations to the Tory Party and yet they claim they can't afford to build homes which are accessible to all.

To solve the housing crisis of disabled and non-disabled people, the resources of the building and finance industries should be taken into public ownership. They should be under democratic control so that their vast resources are run in the interests of working class people and so that we can be involved at every stage in the planning of our own environment.

## **Education: Inclusion not Segregation**

Despite over 130 years of state education in Britain, most disabled young people are still in segregated special schools and institutions. This increases the isolation of young disabled people from their own community. We do not have the right to attend the school of our choice. Pitying and patronising attitudes are often reinforced by staff, parents, teachers and governors. Recent research has shown that including disabled children in mainstream schools raises awareness and helps dispel fear and prejudice from their non-disabled peers. The whole school benefits from the experience. Disabled children are able to achieve

**the building  
firms give lots  
of money to  
the Tories**



**we should  
take over the  
building firms  
so we can plan  
accessible  
buildings**



**we should be  
allowed to  
go to the  
same schools  
as our  
friends**

**better educational standards and social skills in mainstream schools, rather than with the low expectations many face in segregated special schools. Disabled children must be included in a mainstream education and be able to attend their local school.**

All disabled children are currently "statemented". This means an assessment is made of their perceived "special" needs. Often this leaves out their educational needs and concentrates, for example, on their physical needs. This process causes the provision given to disabled children to be seen as separate and additional, rather than a part of the school as a whole.

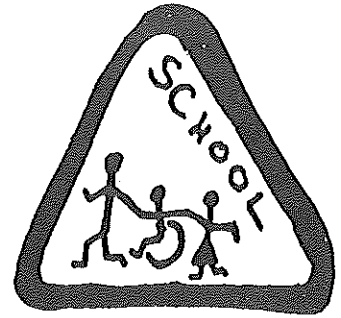
Deaf and hearing-impaired children must be regarded as a linguistic minority, with the same rights as those for whom English is not their first language.

Part of the 1993 Education Act related to disabled children. This was the "code of practice", which regarded the child as the problem and ignored the nature of schools, institutions and local education authorities (L.E.A.s). This code was not funded by the government and remains toothless legislation.

We demand the funding of FULL inclusion. This means every activity in mainstream schools, for example, educational trips, sports facilities, social events, school performances etc. The recruitment of more disabled teachers would greatly aid this process of integration. They would act as role models to the students and could provide advice to fellow teachers. Without this involvement in mainstream education, we will continue to be ghettoised and our possibility of finding employment reduced.

Cuts of any kind in education funding must be fought by teachers, parents, governors and students. The examples of some school governors voting to implement deficit budgets because they were being expected to slash education provision in their schools should be followed throughout the country.

**we are not  
the problem.  
It's the system  
that locks us  
out**



**teachers,  
parents,  
governors  
and students  
must work  
together to  
fight for our  
education**

Everyone must have access to Further and Higher Education, with a minimum grant of £75 per week, as well as extra allowances to cover the cost of readers, signers, personal assistants, equipment, etc.

## The right to be me

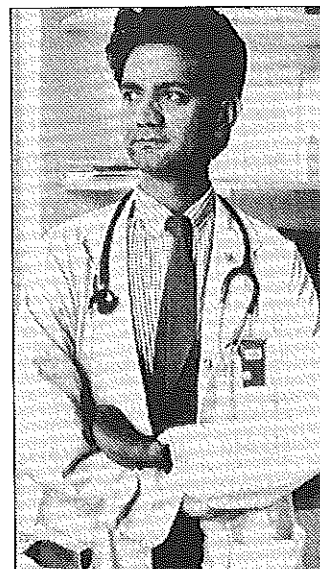
Much of the charities' funds go on researching cures for physical and mental impairments. If disabled people controlled the way this was spent, we might decide to address our immediate needs, rather than the current emphasis on research for cures.

Militant Labour does not believe that people should be pressurised into accepting treatment nor condemned if they try to obtain a cure. Treatment can often cause much pain and stress. Disabled children particularly are often subjected to long, intensive treatment. Childhood should be full of love, learning and fun, not hours on end in hospitals and "special" clinics. Those disabled people who want to remain as they are must be fully respected and included by society.

People must have genuine choices. Any treatments which exist, must be made immediately free and available to all on the NHS. But there are serious obstacles to this. In this society medical research is dominated by the pharmaceutical companies who produce for profit and charge extortionate prices to the NHS.

Incidents such as the thalidomide scandal, where children were born with limbs missing after their mothers had been prescribed morning sickness tablets, arose because the manufacturers had rush-released the drug to harvest the massive profits associated with patents, ownership of rights, without adequately testing it first.

We are campaigning for the pharmaceutical industry to be nationalised, incorporated into the NHS and run under the democratic control of workers and



**We should  
be allowed  
to choose if  
we want any  
hospital  
treatment**



**all the people  
should  
control the  
drug firms, not  
a few rich  
people**

service users. All research must be publicly funded and discoveries made public immediately to enable a open and informed discussion to take place.

## **My body! my life!**

Disabled people are often seen as defenceless and asexual, particularly in residential institutions, where they are often physically prevented from forming relationships. In America, a lesbian couple had to fight a long court battle just to remain together after one had been injured in a car accident.

High court judges are still ordering the compulsory sterilization of women with learning difficulties who they, in their infinite wisdom, do not consider fit to bring up children. There have been cases of children born to physically disabled mothers and mothers with learning difficulties being "taken into care". Women whose conditions make them infertile are seen as "unsuitable candidates for infertility treatment". Infertility treatment should be available on the NHS.

Disabled women, or women suspected of carrying disabled children are often pressurised into having abortions. Militant fully defends a woman's right to choose and believes that any information on the condition of the baby should be made available to parents, if they want it. Prospective parents should also have access to disabled councillors, who can give them first-hand information on how a particular impairment will affect the life of their child, so that they can make informed choices about whether or not they go ahead with the pregnancy.

There are people, mainly from fascist and extreme right wing groups, who believe in the construction of a "perfect society" or "master race", where all ethnic, physical, psychological and sexuality differences can be eliminated. Whilst fascist ideas may be regarded as outrageous by most people, capitalist ideology itself promotes very rigid ideas about "conformity" and "normality". In these days of



**we have the same feelings as anyone else**



**we should be able to have whatever relationships we want**

**we should be allowed to get married or have kids if we want**

advances in pre-natal screening and in gene technology, there is a danger that decisions and advice given by some professionals in healthcare and social services may be inadvertently influenced by prejudice. Becoming a disabled parent or having a child born disabled, causes extra pressures on the family because the facilities are not in place to fully support disabled people and because of the reaction and prejudices of people around them. Our movement has to campaign to counteract these prejudices and ideas.

The technology and resources exist to enable disabled people to form relationships and develop family units of our choosing. Capitalism is not prepared to give us the resources to meet our needs. It prefers instead to give tax cuts to the rich and concentrate its research on developing weapons to kill and maim more people. It also rests on a set of ideas, which ignores the many different kinds of relationships and households which people actually live in and puts forward an ideal, nuclear family (husband, dependant wife and two kids), which it tries to force people to conform to.

Everyone who doesn't fit, the vast majority of people in fact, is considered deviant. Behind this lies the fact that the nuclear family saves the government money. Women are supposed to provide free services in the home which otherwise would be provided on a community basis and paid for out of public expenditure. They are not in the slightest bit concerned about our wishes, or the quality of peoples' relationships, just with cutting taxes for their friends.

The growth in the number of people living longer is concentrating the minds of the Tories and big business. Some are making money out of elderly people by opening private nursing homes. The government is trying to cut back on state pensions as part of the cut back in public expenditure. There have been scandals recently, where people over 65 have been refused operations. Some people are

**If a baby is going to be disabled, the parents must not be made to think that they should get rid of it**



**most of us are very happy to be alive**



supporting euthanasia, from the point of view of not prolonging "unproductive" lives. This system sees everything as commodities, including human beings. When we can no longer work and make money for them, we can be consigned to poverty or disposed of.

We support the movement of people to take control of their own lives through living wills, which spell out how they want to be treated in the case of terminal or chronic illness. Those on the receiving end should have a decisive say in medical and other treatment. We support the expansion of a free NHS, to ensure the health of elderly people is not neglected. They must also be guaranteed an income which ensures they don't live in poverty.

## Young disabled people

Life for young disabled people can be pure hell. We go through the "special" school system without mixing with our non-disabled peers. We may have been forced to go through painful exercise routines every day during our formative years. We are told over and over again to try harder to be like "normal people". We often see our families struggling to support us and we can often be made to feel like burdens on those closest to us. No-one thinks to explain emotions, sex, the facts of life to us because they think we'll never need them.

Sex education must be available to all children, including information on contraception and discussion on all aspects of sexuality. Advice centres must be properly funded by local and health authorities to give on-going support to young people and adults.

We are excluded from most pubs, clubs, venues and sporting events - either because they aren't accessible or because they are too expensive. It is ironic, that whilst football bosses are spending millions refurbishing their stadiums, creating executive boxes for the rich and famous to spend thousands of pound entertaining each other, ordinary fans are

**the system  
doesn't  
treat us like  
human beings**



**we want to  
control our  
own lives**



**why should we  
be treated any  
differently just  
because we  
are  
disabled?**

facing higher ticket prices and disabled fans often can't even get through the turnstiles.

All we want is the right to enjoy our young lives like anyone else, free from stigma, discrimination and patronage. Young disabled people have started to organise for these rights. Cinemas have been occupied and restaurants and shops picketed, when they refused entry to wheelchair users.

## Rights Not Charity!

Every year disabled people demonstrate outside events like Children in Need and Telethon. I.T.V.'s Telethon was taken off the air after 1,000 disabled people picketed the show. Charities gloss over the discrimination and poverty we face and encourage a patronising attitude that we need "looking after".

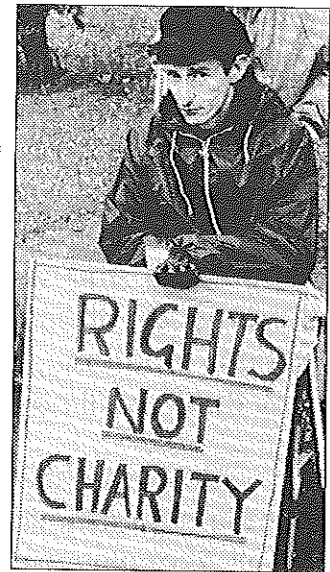
The vast majority were originally set up by "carers" or parents of disabled people. The usual aim was to find a "cure" or "treatment" and provided an alternative to direct begging. They portrayed disabled people as objects of pity. Upper and middle class dogooders gained the credit by holding garden parties and sponsored fund-raising events. Whilst the bulk of donations now come from the working class and local and central government, the management committees of the larger charities still bristle with lords, ladies, bishops, O.B.E.s and celebrities. They are run like medium-sized private companies with some top executives earning £70,000 a year plus. Most of the money raised never gets to disabled people.

Many working class people regularly give money to charity. This is an understandable example of the human solidarity so often expressed by our class. Non-disabled people may have misconceived ideas about the needs of disabled people. Small wonder, when they are prevented from coming into contact with us at school, at work or socially. These prejudices are often reinforced by the charities

**we need to  
learn about  
sex, emotions  
and everyday  
life**



**we are  
fighting for  
these rights**



**charities are  
not the  
answer. They  
are run by rich  
people who  
don't know what  
we want**

advertising, for instance, showing disabled people in sad, pathetic, black and white images. These pictures do not reflect the real life experiences of disabled people. They are attempts to manipulate people's emotions in order to raise funds but they miseducate people about disability.

Over the last few years there has been a growth of charities at the same time as the destruction of the limited services that were once ours by right. Why is it that John Major and the other Tory ministers regularly speak at charity functions and praise the worthy work of the main charities? It certainly isn't out of the goodness of their hearts - charities save them money! The more the charities raise, the more they cut our services.

The big charities are controlled by non-disabled business people. Disabled people are fighting for the right to represent ourselves but our organisations are desperately underfunded compared to the leading charities.

*Money received in grants in 1992 by organisations FOR disabled people:*

<i>Scope (formerly the Spastics Society)</i>	£54 million
<i>Royal National Institute For the Blind</i>	£46 million
<i>MENCAP</i>	£23.4 million

*Money received in grants in 1992 by organisations OF disabled people:*

<i>British Deaf Association</i>	£1.39 million
<i>British Council of Org's of Disabled People</i>	£170,000
<i>People First</i>	£59,000
<i>National Federation of the Blind</i>	£55,000

Organisations OF disabled people are also discriminated against by law. Many have had to become charities to make their meagre funds go further. Charities do not have to pay Corporation Tax. Under the Charities Act 1992, any person who is "incapable by reason of mental disorder, illness or injury, of managing and administering (their) own



**OUR organisations haven't got much money but charities have lots of money**



**THAT WOULD BE LIKE LETTING CATS AND DOGS RUN THE RSPCA!**

**we aren't even allowed to go on charity committees which are supposed to be FOR us!**

affairs" (i.e. disabled people) is deemed unfit to become a board member. Charities also have rules, enforced by law, to stop "beneficiaries of the work they do" from becoming board members.

We say this should be changed and that organisations which claim to represent or work on behalf of disabled people must be democratically controlled by disabled people, with those in executive positions subject to regular election and on average salaries.

Charities should not be prevented from campaigning politically or criticising national and local government, if they are implementing policies against the interests of working class people.

We believe that democratic, socialist planning of society would end the need for the begging bowls of charity. As Karl Marx said, "From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs".

## Surviving the system

The issue of "mental illness" is surrounded by ignorance, fear and stigma. It's definition and treatment has been used as a method of social control. In Victorian society, women who wanted a divorce were considered to be suffering from "moral madness" and clitorectomies were performed to make them more docile. The shock, pain and humiliation of this mutilation was often enough to knock the rebellion out of them. Single parents and their children were often locked away and classified as "insane" or "mentally defective". As late as 1972, lobotomies (removal of part of the brain) were being used as a cure for depression in women experiencing domestic violence. This treatment was considered ideal as they could still carry out household duties. Electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) has been widely misused to "treat" depression.

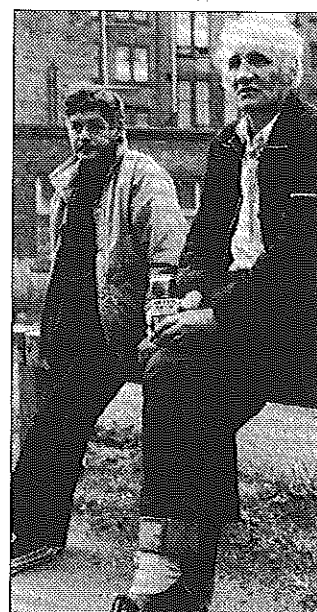
The large mental institutions are now closing but the attitudes that govern the definition and

**all  
organisations  
who say they  
are working  
for us**



*"Do people treat her differently because she's blind?"*

**should be  
run by us**



**when we are  
angry or upset  
we don't need  
to be locked up  
or given drugs**

treatment of mental illness remain. Many sincere, caring people work in the mental health service. But they work within the confines of a system which undermines their efforts and limits the effect they can have.

Vast profits have been made by the pharmaceutical companies producing drugs such as Valium and Librium. These tranquilisers "treated" depression arising from living conditions, unemployment and social isolation, for example, amongst women with young children. Prozac is the latest "wonder drug". No doubt it is an effective aid to the treatment of clinical depression and anxiety, but it is being hyped as a happiness pill, guaranteed to make you feel confident and free from stress. Often these drugs become part of the problem as takers become addicted and suffer long-term effects.

Why do so many of us suffer anxiety, stress and depression?

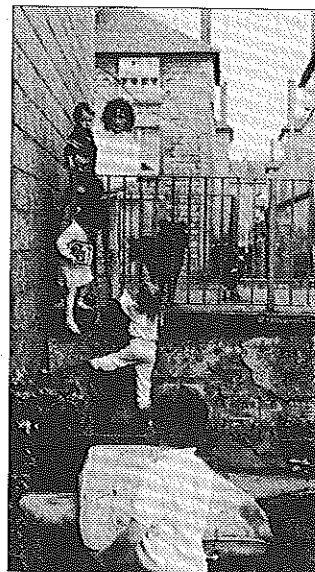
Militant Labour believes the cause often lies in the conditions of life in capitalist society. The search for higher profits and greater wealth for a few means more and more of us are subjected to unbearable pressure, whether this is bad living and working conditions, lack of money, polluted environment, lack of opportunities for leisure, relaxation and entertainment. We experience insecurity due to unemployment and decline in health and other services. We also suffer social isolation and emotional distress. For example, schizophrenia is often associated with child abuse or bereavement.

Yet we live in a society, where the media and government put forward the idea that you should cope with things within your family. Often people have no one to turn to. Open expressions of grief and especially prolonged inability to come to terms with the loss of a partner or other relative or friend, is seen as a sign of weakness. The disruptive behaviour of a child who has been abused is often seen as a discipline problem.

**we don't want  
to get  
addicted to  
drugs**



**we should  
live in a  
system  
which won't  
make us feel  
lonely**



**it's usually  
the system  
which makes  
us ill in the  
first place**

Of course the brain is an organ like any other and can be damaged or malfunction. Drugs and other treatment can play a role in such circumstances. But we are fighting for a socialist society, where much of what is classified as mental illness today, would be prevented by eradicating poverty and insecurity and by building a society where people would not feel excluded and isolated and in competition with one another.

## **Disabled people in prison**

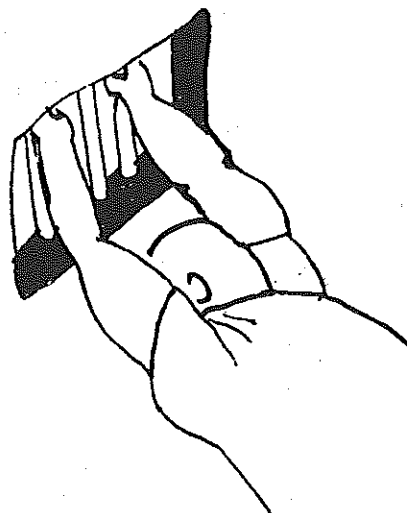
One in four prisoners are disabled people. The legal system is weighted against us. Recently cases have come to light of disabled people who were physically abused whilst they were in residential homes. This includes a number of rape cases. Yet when prosecutions were taken out, the cases have fallen because the courts were intimidatory and procedure confusing for people, for example people with learning difficulties. No effort was made to ensure they could give their evidence or to assist and encourage them in court. Because disabled people are not included in society, juries may not have any previous contact with disabled people and may not understand the reasons why we may behave differently to non-disabled people.

The same applies in defence cases. Defence lawyers, many of whom are from middle class backgrounds, have little contact with ordinary people. Vital pieces of evidence may be considered irrelevant and missed out of our defence cases.

People with learning difficulties are particularly susceptible to frame-ups, as they may not know their rights and may not have the confidence or skills to withstand systematic police questioning and cross examination. This may lead them to confess to crimes they had nothing to do with.



**if we are arrested we can be scared and say we did things we didn't do**



**most disabled people in prison should not be there**



The introduction of the Criminal Justice Act will make miscarriages of justice against disabled people more likely. Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, said, "The innocent have nothing to hide" as he abolished the right to silence. But studies have shown that under intense questioning most people can be made to say things they know not to be true.

One survey of 156 suspects in London police stations showed that 15 had learning difficulties or brain damage. In the Tottenham 3 case, Winston Silcott's original appeal was allowed partly because the police had interrogated a 15-year-old witness who had learning difficulties, denied him legal representation and then used his evidence against Silcott. The CJA must be repealed, the right to silence reinstated and effective legal representation strengthened.

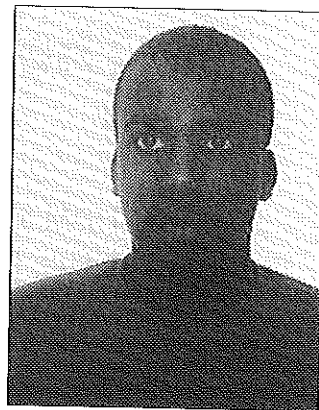
## Oliver's Story

*Oliver Campbell, a young black man, was convicted in 1991 of killing a Hackney shopkeeper. An eye witness identified Oliver in court. He had failed to do so previously. The attacker had been wearing a similar baseball cap to one which had been stolen from Oliver. When the cap was recovered, hair and skin samples on it did not match Oliver's.*

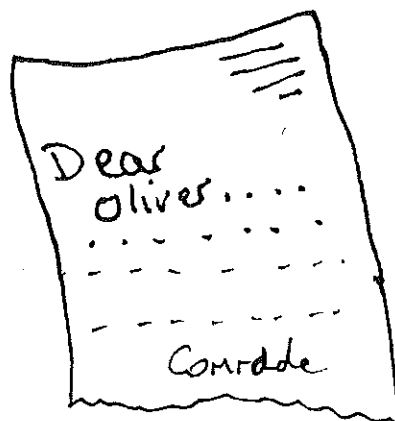
*The main evidence against Oliver was a confession obtained in police custody without a solicitor present. Despite psychological evidence that Oliver Campbell has severe learning difficulties and is extremely suggestible, the "confession" was accepted by the court and he was sentenced to life imprisonment.*

*Oliver's only crimes were that he was young, black, working class and had learning difficulties. You can support Oliver by getting involved in the fight for his release. Write to Justice For Oliver Campbell Campaign, P.O. Box 273, London E7.*

# this is Oliver



**he is in  
prison  
because he  
is black and  
has learning  
difficulties**



**Oliver is a  
member of  
Militant Labour.  
Why not write  
to him**

The Disabled Prisoners Support Group, was set up to fight for the rights of disabled people in the judicial and prison system. They can be contacted by writing to: Disabled Prisoners Support Group, c/o 3-13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.

## The Disabled Peoples' Movement (DPM)

The DPM has grown enormously over the last ten years. The British Council of Disabled People, (BCODP), was set up in 1981, the International Year of Disabled People. It now has well over 100 affiliated organisations, all controlled by disabled people, with a total membership of over 250,000 people.

These organisations have helped to politicise disabled people and educate society on disability issues. But many still retain their charitable status. This means that they cannot campaign in an overtly political way. Many are funded by central or local government. They fear that militant action will result in loss of funding. But cuts in public expenditure will lead to cuts anyway, as in the case of BCODP. Next year, they will receive £45,000 - the same as three years ago, followed by £40,000 and £35,000 in 1997/8. If you do not launch a militant fightback against Tory attacks, they will attack you all the more - "weakness invites aggression".

Much of the funding for the Voluntary Sector as a whole now comes from unelected quangos such as Training and Enterprise Councils and NHS trusts. Their role and grant-making powers and budget of £54 billion, should be given back to the local authorities, where they can be administered by elected councillors, who must then be made accountable to the local community.



**disabled  
people are  
getting  
organised**



**our  
organisations  
must fight  
for our rights**

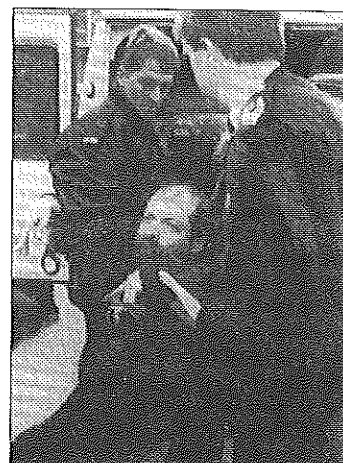
## Direct Action and disabled people

A new type of disabled peoples' organisation is now emerging. Groups like the Disabled Peoples' Direct Action Network (DAN) are funded by their own members and donations from sympathisers. This gives them the freedom to carry out the direct, political action, which disabled people need to take if we are to win our civil rights.

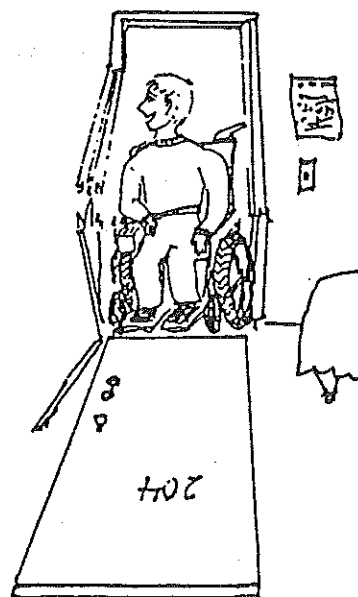
Direct action has formed an important part of all liberation struggles, from the struggle of women for the vote early this century, to the campaign of lesbian and gay people to equalise the age of consent. Direct action is important because it illustrates in a graphic way how people are discriminated against. For example, when the Tory Government talked out the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) bill, scores of disabled people turned up at Westminster, blocked buses and even crawled into Parliament. This shocked the establishment, intrigued the press and led to a public outcry. If we had not taken this action and had simply left it up to half a dozen peers and M.P.s to humbly hand a letter in to 10 Downing Street, the Tories' scandalous behaviour would never have been brought to public attention.

We have had extensive publicity in Britain and as far afield as Canada and India. This type of action heightens public awareness about the discrimination we face. The sight of a crowd of disabled people, brandishing banners and getting stuck into the establishment, challenges traditional ideas that we are passive and that our needs are catered for in this society.

Direct action is important but we won't completely win the battle to play a full part in society simply by small groups of us gaining publicity. How can we solve our problems and where will our allies come from?



**direct action  
gets a lot of  
publicity**



*"Never mind calling  
the manager.  
It's accessible  
now!"*

**women, black  
people and gays  
and lesbians  
have used  
direct action**

Disabled people are increasingly getting active in trade unions, such as UNISON, the TGWU, MSF and the National Union of Teachers. Many unions have now adopted policies supporting the disabled people's movement and have sponsored demonstrations and actions. These joint actions can be extremely effective. In 1993, for example, when DAN held a demonstration against Children in Need outside the BBC, we approached B.E.C.T.U., the broadcasting union for support. As well as sending representatives to the demo, BBC technicians held a collection, as they normally would on Children in Need night, but this time the proceeds went to DAN, not Children in Need.

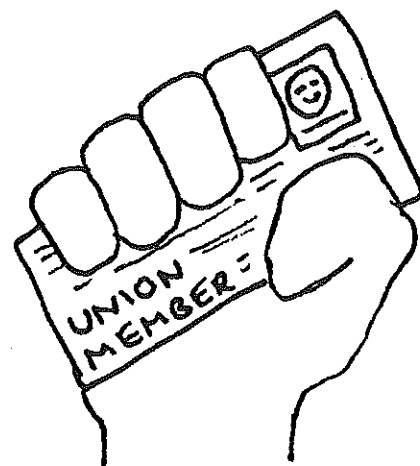
The trade unions were formed by working class people to defend themselves from the system which also exploits and discriminates against us. There have been important battles against low pay, redundancy, for a decent education, for the health service and against bad housing as well as on many other issues. The unions are the largest organisations in Britain, involving over 8 million ordinary people. They also have considerable financial and technical resources, which can assist our movement. Most of the current leadership spends its time stopping effective action by the rank and file and kow-towing to anti-trade union laws designed to protect the wealthy from our legitimate demands. Just as we have to struggle in our own movement for a leadership prepared to fight and be democratically accountable, we have to make common cause with similar struggles in the trade unions.

## **We are not alone**

All working class people, the vast majority of the population, face poverty and social isolation in some form.

At least 10 million workers earn less than the European Union decency threshold. One in three children is brought up in poverty, whilst company

**direct action  
is not enough**



**we must link  
up with the  
unions**



**we should  
support our  
brothers and  
sisters in the  
working class**

directors, like Cedric Brown, Chief Executive of British Gas, get a 75% pay increase.

Tory M.P.s brand benefit claimants fraudsters and scroungers and call for the introduction of ID cards, so they can have access to personal information about our lives. At the same time, they reject even the mild recommendations of the Nolan Committee report, requiring them to disclose how much they earn.

## **It doesn't have to be like this**

The resources do exist in society to give everybody a decent standard of living and to enable individuals to develop their skills and play an active role in all aspects of social life. These resources are produced not by the handful of wealthy people who own them but by working class people. They work in the factories, generate energy, build the houses, offices and roads. Transport, the finance system, communications - every aspect of society relies on working people. Yet the vast majority of us only see a tiny fraction of the wealth we collectively create.

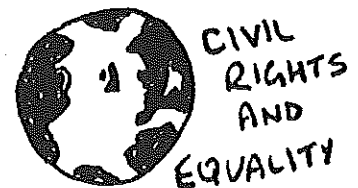
£57 billion a year is paid to city investors in share dividends every year - money they do not work a single day to earn. The Government are spending £60 billion on a Trident nuclear defence system, which will quickly go out of date. The Tories were prepared to squander £20 billion in implementing and then abolishing the hated Poll Tax.

This has to change. We must own and control the wealth we create. Working class people have the power to change society because of the work they do. The 150 largest companies must be nationalised and run democratically in the interests of working class people. We would be able to put resources into health, housing, education and employment.

Under these conditions anything could be



**we are fighting for a better world for everyone**



**we want a socialist world**



**we could plan what was needed**

possible. The introduction of a shorter working week, along with a £220 minimum wage, for instance, would mean that everyone would get a chance to work, but would also have the time and energy to educate themselves, take up hobbies and leisure activities and participate in the running of their workplace and communities.

The needs of all sections of the community would be catered for. We would be able to expand the system of personal assistance, adapt existing buildings to make them accessible to everyone. Access would be incorporated into the design of all new buildings. We would be able to develop an integrated transport system which would be safer, less polluting and accessible to all. Newspapers, books and all public information would be available in forms accessible to all. The sort of technology which is now available to a handful of people like Steven Hawkins, author of "A Brief History of Time" and an Oxford don, would be available to all.

Internationally we would be able to tackle the poverty which is a major cause of disability.

This is the socialist society Militant Labour is fighting for. In order to achieve our aim we will have to build a mass movement, uniting all working class people, capable of ending the current capitalist system based on greed, inequality and discrimination. If you are interested in playing your part in the fight to change society - join Militant Labour. With our experience and enthusiasm, we disabled people will be amongst the leaders in the fight for socialism.

*If you have any comments about this pamphlet please write to 3-13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.*

**in Militant  
Labour, you  
can learn  
about your  
history and  
about politics  
and you can  
help change  
the world**



**Join us - ring  
0181 986 7578**



Material for this pamphlet has been gathered from many sources, including; *Mouth* and *Incitement* from the USA, *Disability Equality In The Classroom*, *A Human Rights Issue* and *Coalition*. These publications can be obtained from Militant Labour. This is primarily an educational resource for socialists both within Militant Labour and others.

The pamphlet is in large print (14pt) to make it more accessible to partially-sighted people, people with dyslexia and people who have difficulty reading small print. The very large type and the drawings in the right margin will hopefully make the pamphlet more accessible to people with learning difficulties, people for whom English is not their first language and children/adults who may have difficulty with some of the language in the main body of the text. The pamphlet is also available in Braille and on audio cassette tape for blind people and people who cannot read. Send requests for either of these two formats to the address below, together with £2 plus 50p P&P.

Any comments about this pamphlet would be very welcome. They can also be sent to Militant And Disabled at the address below.

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1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes the need for transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data. It highlights the importance of using reliable sources and ensuring the integrity of the information.

3. The final part of the document provides a summary of the findings and conclusions. It discusses the implications of the research and offers recommendations for future studies and practical applications.

# The Segregated School - It's A Rap

I woke up in the morning  
for my first day at school  
I was off to the country  
they told me it's the rule  
"You'll have to come to  
terms" they say  
"accept the way you are"  
but accepting our oppression  
won't get us very far

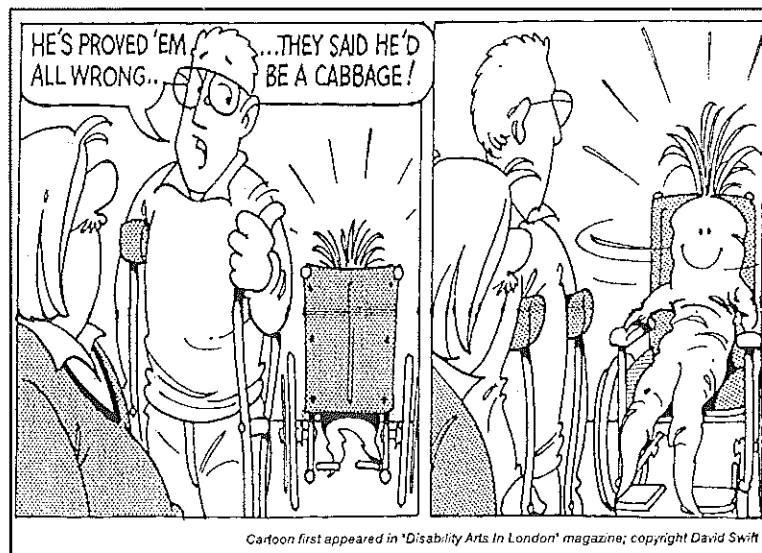
my uniform was neat  
and my calliper was clean  
I took my wheelchair with me  
to the school... Oh what a dream  
it didn't take us long to see  
they hadn't got it right  
physical perfection put an  
end to their insight

they told me it was special  
I tend to disagree  
I left my friends behind  
'cos they're different from me  
to fit into their world  
we must obey the rule  
to be upright is normal  
no legs, no arms - "how cruel!"

teaching based on therapy  
never expected to achieve  
like all other children...?  
No - don't be so naive  
the cruelty was theirs  
denying us our right  
chip on our shoulder  
just because we fight

the problem was our bodies  
was the idea that they sold  
we must strive to be normal  
or stay out in the cold  
we'll define the problems  
just you wait and see  
it's the construction of society  
which most oppresses me

**Steve Duckworth**



Cartoon first appeared in "Disability Arts In London" magazine; copyright David Swift