

Report of the

First European Disabled People's Parliament

HELD IN THE HEMICYCLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
BRUSSELS, BELGIUM FRIDAY 3 DECEMBER 1993



Note: This report is compiled from written notes taken during the plenary session of the Disabled People's Parliament.

Transcripts of audio-tapes will be available at a later date.

Please let DPI-EC know about factual errors contained within this report.

EUROPEAN DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS:
FRIDAY 3 DECEMBER 1993

THE EUROPEAN DISABLED PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT
held in the Hemicycle of the European Parliament building in
Brussels

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

Opening address by Rachel Hurst, co-Chair with Frank Mulcahy
of the Parliament

Ms. Hurst began by saying that the Parliament was a formal gathering and that the Chairs would be keeping to the order and time-limit of the list of speakers. They would have to be very fierce in the interests of equality.

She took the opportunity warmly to welcome all delegates and said there were four reasons why this remarkable event had come about.

First, the European Commission, through the HELIOS Programme, had been inspired enough to realise the importance of the International Day of Disabled Persons and that it should be supported through European action. The Commission had given every support to disabled people for the Day.

Second, the Parliament had graciously allowed DPI to use its debating chamber. Ms. Hurst said that we had many supporters within the Parliament, none of them stronger than President Klepsch himself.

Third, the activity at national level by coordinators to get the delegates to Parliament had been extraordinary, and had been matched by efforts to organise local and regional events in each country.

Last, and most important, said Ms. Hurst, the delegates themselves had made considerable efforts to find the money, to read papers, to think of what they wanted to achieve. There had been some difficulties since arrival in Brussels but the delegates had come because they all knew what a serious day this was for disabled people: our opportunity to tell the world that disability is a human rights issue.

Address by Egon Klepsch MEP, President of the European Parliament

President Klepsch expressed his honour and pleasure at welcoming delegates to the Parliament. He explained that integration is basic to the European Union, its nations and its peoples, and that integration is essential within each society. Each citizen, each community can play a role in building tomorrow's society. The main measure of integration within the institutions of the European Union would be the degree of direct involvement by disabled people and their organisations.

President Klepsch noted that disabled people are the victims of prejudice and discrimination and that they were here today to say that they want equal opportunities. The European Parliament would do everything in its power to make sure that disabled people achieve full integration. He said that he himself, without any hesitation, supports the disabled people's movement and its commitment.

After his keynote address; President Klepsch signed the Affirmation of Commitment.

Notes from the Chair: Commander Robert Fraser had invited the Prince of Wales to the Parliament. Prince Charles had been unable to attend but sent his very best wishes for the debate.

People must not use flash cameras as this violates other disabled people's human rights. This had to be repeated a number of times during the Parliament.

Address by Willem van Velzen MEP, Chair of the Social Affairs Committee

Mr. van Velzen told delegates that they are European citizens - citizens of a European country and citizens of Europe. He hoped that the European Day would shorten the distance between national and European levels of administration; between the European institutions and disabled people's daily needs.

Mr. van Velzen stated that disabled people's cause is a human rights issue and that barriers to equal opportunities should be destroyed so that participation in society's activities could be 100 per cent. He recalled that the European Parliament has a long tradition of promoting disabled people's rights, beginning in 1974 with the first European programme for integration in vocational life. Vocational action, said Mr. van Velzen, is important but a job is not enough to achieve full social integration. Disabled people's demands must go beyond jobs.

After his keynote address, Mr. van Velzen signed the Affirmation of Commitment.

Address by Ken Coates MEP, Chair of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights

Mr. Coates made mention of the work necessary to reach the European Parliament of Disabled People. He drew attention to the architecture of the new building, a colossal representation of the European Union. Mr. Coates spoke of the democratic deficit within Europe, saying that the Disabled People's Parliament, like the recent Pensioners' Parliament, is another step towards overcoming that deficit. These parliaments brought in those people who have been left outside, with no access to public space; gave a voice to people who have not traditionally been listened to.

This gathering, he said, was a parliament of people who have been excluded but can be excluded no longer. Mr. Coates commended the motion for resolution before the Parliament and said that he hoped to be with delegates in the next Parliament to scrutinise the progress made.

After his keynote address, Mr. Coates signed the Affirmation of Commitment.

FIRST PLENARY SESSION

Rachel Hurst read the motion for resolution, with the amendment submitted by Ireland, to the Parliament.

Address by the Parliament's Rapporteur, human rights lawyer Theresia Degener, Germany.

Ms. Degener began by saying how delighted she was to see so many disabled people, young and elderly, gay and lesbian, disabled men and disabled women. She pointed out that disabled people have traditionally been the forgotten minority and that images of us have contributed to our victimisation. We have been seen as objects of social welfare and rehabilitation policy, requiring help and pity from professional 'experts'. It was good to see so many activists from different states of the European Union. It gave her a feeling of power and a feeling of pride. We are the experts in disability policy, said Ms. Degener and one major outcome of the work of organisations of disabled people is the 1991 UN report on human rights and disabled people.

That report shows that in every area of life, disabled people's rights have been violated, in the past and today - invidious violations, such as the campaign to legalise the killing of infants with severe forms of segregation and isolation brought about by the imposition of physical and social barriers. Ms. Degener pointed out that, despite disabled people's vulnerability to oppression, there is no

of the European Union flaunt their disability policies, she said, while research has shown that the situation of disabled people in Europe is as bad as, or worse than, that in developing countries. We have had enough, said Ms. Degener, of being patronised, of being medicalised and abused by professionals, of being told which segregating policy is in our best interests. The time has come for a change to a human rights model of disability. The main outcome of the adoption of the motion for resolution before the Parliament would be to prove first and foremost that disabled people are persons with human rights.

Our most common experience as disabled people, said Ms. Degener, is the experience of discrimination. The World Programme of Action and the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Disabled People, though important instruments, are not binding. The motion for resolution before the Parliament demands binding legislation and concrete steps for implementation. Ms. Degener ended by saying that the European Disabled People's Parliament and the motion for debate mark a European milestone for people who are different but proud. *There was warm applause for this.*

OPENING COUNTRY STATEMENTS

IRELAND: Elaine O'Neill

Ms. O'Neill thanked Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) for its efforts.

She said that Ireland had a great tradition of being charitable and that for disabled people, Ireland is still a third world country. She said that Irish disabled people, as consumers, reject this completely. Successive governments, she explained, have ignored the plight of disabled people, forcing voluntary organisations to provide basic core services that government should be providing. The excuse has always been that Ireland, as one of the poorest states, can't meet even the least request to improve disabled people's lives.

European Union legislation is the only way forward and, in moving the amendment to the motion for resolution, the Irish delegation intended to draw attention to the failure of the Irish government to recognise disability as a basic human rights issue.

Disabled people face discrimination daily, said Ms. O'Neill. They face institutional discrimination throughout their lives and are excluded from all aspects of community life. Modern welfare services continually deny disabled people their basic human rights.

It is critical, said Ms. O'Neill, that disabled people are employed at all levels in any institutions where policy is being developed. *This comment received warm applause from delegates.*

BELGIUM: Jean-Paul Herbecq & Rene Vastmans

As a delegation, said Mr. Herbecq, the Belgians are very proud to participate in the Parliament. He pointed out that disabled people are at least 10 per cent of populations in Europe, more than 30 million people and that their representatives were in the Parliament to say what they expected from Europe.

Mr. Herbecq pointed out that there was no binding regulation or directive about disabled people and that the time had come to act. President Klepsch had said that the delegates represented all disabled citizens of Europe. Mr. Herbecq said he didn't want all the solutions today but he did demand that a firm measure should be decided upon. He wanted clear definitions so that we could speak about the same things; clear statements of policy and a budget, especially for the poorest countries. What was needed was a legal framework: the European Union must do something concrete. *Applause.*

Mr. Vastmans then spoke, pointing out that the fact that it was necessary to organise a European Day meant that there were

many problems. However, he said, we have the chance to share responsibility and to develop solidarity. This had to be the first stage in the struggle for human rights.

DENMARK: Niels Arthur Hansen

Mr. Hansen said it was a pleasure to meet so many active people from disability movements all over Europe and to represent his country. He said that in Denmark there aren't serious human rights problems. Our opponents respect us as equal partners in Danish society. The Danish umbrella organisation, DSI, representing 27 Danish organisations, brings together ministries, municipalities and disabled people. This type of collaboration is necessary but not enough.

Mr Hansen did not favour the Americans with Disabilities Act as a basis for European legislation. He said it would be difficult to enforce such laws in Denmark. It wouldn't work with other legislation already available for disabled people.

Every year in the Danish parliament, explained Mr Hansen, there is a debate on the living conditions of disabled people and, from 1994, there will also be a Centre for Equal Opportunities.

GERMANY

Mr Peifer said the motion for resolution was supported by Germany. He spoke about how central parents and members of disabled people's families are in the day-to-day influence of disabled people's environment. He felt it was important to reduce the causes of disability and to create a borderless Europe for all people. The German delegation felt that the European Day should be repeated every day: it isn't enough to have just one day a year. His final point was that words should become deeds.
Applause.

FRANCE

Mr Dutertre told everyone how proud the French delegation was to be seated in the Parliament. He thanked the Parliament for its support and confidence and DPI-EC and DAA for their inspiring vision and for their hard work to turn that vision into reality. The European Disabled People's Parliament is the first stone laid down for coming years. Everyone here is ready to work to give the Parliament the scope and magnitude that it deserves. In France, said Mr. Dutertre, there is a small anti-discrimination legislation and the obligation to give jobs to disabled people.

Despite the lack of institutional support for independent living, much was being done to foster integration in France.

GREECE: Yannis Vardakastanis

Mr. Vardakastanis took up the point about democratic and organisational deficit made by Ken Coates MEP in his opening address. He said the first task was to get organised at national and European level and that this should not be a once-a-year event. *This comment met with warm applause.*

What we are asking for, said Mr. Vardakastanis, has a political aspect. It needs a legal framework but issues can only be solved by social and political action.

ITALY: Manilo Marcioni

Mr. Marcioni began by introducing himself as a profoundly Deaf person. He said that the Italian delegation had wanted to be more numerous but had been unable to for financial reasons.

On behalf of all Italian disabled people, Mr. Marcioni wished to denounce the disastrous actions of Italian bureaucracy. Red tape was, theoretically, there to help disabled people but lack of money has meant ineffective implementation of rules and regulations. No

modifications have been made to schools and other public buildings because of lack of money. Architects are doing little. Little is being done for schooling for Deaf children or to allow disabled people to participate on television. Italy forbids Deaf people to teach. Unemployment is still a big problem for Italian disabled people. Not enough is done to give jobs to disabled people. We don't want your pity, said Mr. Marcioni, we want access to training for decent jobs. He said that he wanted publicly to ask Members of the Italian Parliament to respect their own laws. He wanted disabled people to play a major role in national and European parliaments. Mr. Marcioni also mentioned some of the local and regional events happening in Italy to celebrate the European Day.

NETHERLANDS

Mr Treffers began by saying that 10 December marked the 45th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. He said that internationally, regionally and nationally, rights were transgressed but that 3 December, the new International and European Day of Disabled Persons was a sign of democracy; of hope. The European Union, said Mr. Treffers, is a political entity, born from economic requirements. It has always wanted to go further, into the social realm, but this has frequently been blocked by individual member states.

Disabled people are categorised and not represented on the labour market; lack accessibility; suffer institutionalisation. Their rights are transgressed. Organisations of disabled people should be fighting for our rights, concluded Mr. Treffers.

PORTUGAL – Albertino Santana

Mr. Santana said that in most European countries, human rights have been strongly defending for a long time. In Portugal,

however, there is a lack of respect for rights. The different Portuguese associations of disabled people have to struggle for survival. Disabled people have to fight for the right to job-training, housing, income maintenance, pensions, medical insurance.

Mr Santana said that disabled people in Portugal want independent living; want to be equal partners in society. There are principles of human rights. Mr Santana mentioned the Harare Declaration ratified by DPI. He said that the World Programmes of Action and the Standard Rules ask for access for disabled people to all levels as equal partners. In reality, there are obstacles to this.

Mr Santana also revealed that the presence of the Portuguese delegation had been compromised. They had asked the Portuguese government via the ministry for disabled people for a subsidy to send two disabled people to the Parliament. Granting of the subsidy had been postponed, so the two delegates couldn't come. A meeting had been set for three days after the Parliament. Mr Santana said he wanted to raise awareness in the Parliament of the difficulties experienced in Portugal by disabled people.

He ended by saying that through union and collaboration we would all grow stronger. Everyone at the Parliament would always find a warm welcome in Portugal.

Note from the Chair: The President of the Reichsbund der Krieger – und Wehrdienststopfer, Behinderten, Sozialrentner und Hinterbliebenen e.V. (the National German Association of Victims of War and Military Service, Handicapped, Social Insurance pensioners and Dependents) sent a letter of solidarity.

UNITED KINGDOM: Bob Findlay

This is the first European Disabled People's Parliament, said Bob Findlay. Speaking for all those present, he said: "We are proud; proud of who we are; proud of our experience. We are here to give warning to those who have historically denied us; marginalised us outside mainstream social activities."

Disabled people were attending the Parliament, said Mr. Findlay, to lay down a marker. Each 3 December, disabled people will hold to account those who have oppressed them -to see what they have done in the previous year. Here. in this institution of power, he said, disabled people are opening the floodgates for social change: "Our power will not be denied. Our voice will not be silenced. Our dignity will not be rubbished. We are here to say: nothing about us without us." Mr. Findlay said it was time to stop talking about rehabilitation and to start talking about self-determination; time to stop talking about being aware and to start talking about legislation.

The strategy for social change. explained Mr. Findlay, must include full participation in every institution that takes decisions about disabled people's lives. "Equal is about being there; making choices; exercising power. We cannot afford to be invisible." Too many people. said Mr. Findlay, are waiting to thrust disabled people back into obscurity. 3 December must not be a token. For 365 days a year, our message, voice and power must be seen and felt. We all have a duty, said Mr. Findlay. not just to talk about what is wrong and to say that we are angry, but to say what we will do about it. How are we. as organisations at the European level. to shift power at the European Parliament. We must question what programmes mean; they must be more than fine words on paper but a living reality to us. in every village, town and city across Europe. Today is just the beginning. concluded Mr. Findlay, we must fight those who work against us.

Mr. Findlay's statement met with warm applause.

SPEAKERS: MORNING SESSION

Horst Frehe, Germany

Mr. Frehe spoke about independent living and the European Network on Independent Living. "We don't want to be grateful," said Mr. Frehe, "we want to be independent. We want the right to autonomy. We don't want to be represented by non-disabled people. We want to work at all levels, gain independence through consultations and help each other to develop our own skills."

There was applause for this point.

Mr. Frehe felt that disabled people have to work to reduce dependence and to defend their rights in different areas by developing standards in all countries. There should be social standards on welfare supported by European directives.

Rita Kwiotek, Ireland

Ms. Kwiotek spoke on the double marginalisation of disabled women. She said it was difficult enough to get this issue on to the political agenda within the disability movement. To be seen as equal to a man, a woman needs to be twice as good -and twice as good again if she is a disabled woman.

Disabled women should have the right to be women in all aspects of their lives -the right to procreate, to marry, to stay single; the right to have choices. Inclusion will not happen unless all disabled people, including disabled women, have equal rights. Ms. Kwiotek ended her statement with a question: "Will the framework regulations for the structural funds ensure that all programmes financed by the structural funds guarantee equality of opportunity for women, including disabled women?"

Denis Doudoux, France

Mr. Doudoux spoke about employment. He said it was hard to look for a job; to get training. Schools and universities must be adapted. Quotas are not recognised and should be increased.

Mr. Doudoux said that many disabled people didn't know their rights. He said that the government gives benefits so that disabled people stay at home and don't enter the labour market.

Note from Chair: the bars in the disabled toilets on the hemicycle floor had given way.

Richard Wood, United Kingdom

Mr. Wood spoke about definitions. He said that there are many ways in which disabled people are oppressed. The language we use to liberate ourselves is used by others to oppress us, he said. As a movement we need to develop our thinking and our language. We use language to empower ourselves which describes how we are oppressed. Others use it to oppress us.

He took as an example the word 'special'. In the UK, he said, there are 'special' people who have 'special' needs which are met in 'special' ways -for example, in 'special', segregated education. Special segregated education, employment schemes, segregated transport mean that we have no rights. These special arrangements in every area of our lives mean that others become rich as professionals. 'Special' becomes a word used by professionals to keep us out of mainstream policy. "We are the oppressed people of Europe", said Mr. Wood. "It is up to us to fight for our rights."

"Legislation won't happen unless we're out on the streets", concluded Mr. Wood. "Don't rely on the politicians. They'll talk, put it through committees. This is our struggle, our responsibility. We want rights now, not in ten years time."

Procession of signatories into the Chamber.. to the European anthem, the 'Ode to Joy'. Addresses and signing of the Affirmation of Commitment:

Padraig, Flynn, Commissioner for Social Affairs

Mr. Flynn said it was an honour to address the Parliament on the first European Day of Disabled Persons and to be asked to sign the Affirmation of Commitment. He said that human rights are the central issue of the Day and the central issue for the 34 million disabled people the delegates have been nominated to represent. He said a fundamental commitment to equal opportunities is essential to the achievement of human rights for all and that equally important is the removal of all barriers that discriminate against disabled people. Mr. Flynn spoke of the HELIOS II, TIDE and HORIZON programmes as tangible demonstrations of the European Parliament's commitment to disabled people.

Mr. Flynn said that the Commission would give its utmost consideration to the resolution and do all it could to counter discrimination and exclusion.

Mr. Flynn then signed the Affirmation of Commitment.

Mr. Ducarme, representative of the Belgian government
(President in Office, Council of Ministers)

Mr. Ducarme declared that all disabled people are full citizens and must have an equal share of all the rights, responsibilities and benefits arising from improvements in social and economic development. The European Day presents an opportunity for disabled people to fight for their rights and to express their demands directly to the public authorities. It is also an opportunity to express solidarity with disabled and non-disabled people throughout Europe.

M Ducarme then signed the Affirmation of Commitment.

Derek Prag, MEP, Chairman of the Intergroup on Disability

Mr. Prag began by saying that until recently, surprisingly, he had never heard anyone speak about the human rights of disabled people. We only think about human rights when they are not respected, he said, and DPI is right, disabled people's rights are not respected.

Mr. Prag looked briefly at the history of disabled people's oppression, mentioning how in Britain aristocrats in the eighteenth century took excursions to torment the inmates of the Bedlam mental asylum. There is still outrageous discrimination and a lack of funds for facilities, he said. Disabled people are at the wrong end of the queue. Mr. Prag described a ludicrous situation in his UK constituency, where a second lift was needed at the railway station. He said it was possible to return from the north or travel to the south independently but not to travel to the north or return from the south.

Mr. Prag also pointed out that the proportion of the European Social Fund spent on rehabilitation and vocational training is falling rapidly. He and his colleagues had had to fight hard to make sure that 10 per cent of the fund is spent on disabled people. He looked to the future, to a time when disabled people's rights would be truly respected, and concluded: "We have a long way to go and much to do."

Mr. Prag then signed the Affirmation a/Commitment.

Johan Wesemann. Chair of the HELIOS Forum
This first European Disabled People's Parliament is a chance to say to those who prevent integration, "Look at what we are doing". Together, said Mr. Wesemann, we can be a political and economic force. We need equal opportunities at all levels, he said. We need a Europe-wide policy to create balance, to get rid of oppression and to make sure that we are full citizens.

At this point co-Chair Frank Mulcahy had to interrupt Mr. Wesemann to point out that, despite an earlier note, people were

still using flash cameras which was causing difficulties to a group of people with epilepsy. He had to say that anyone using a flash in future would be expelled from the chamber.

Mr. Wesemann continued by saying that together it is possible to break oppressive models of behaviour through sanctions. He gave an example: if his local bank has three steps, it causes him no problems as a Deaf man. But his bank should listen to his recommendations about access. If not, he will go to another bank. We must have collective action, said Mr. Wesemann, and then we will achieve human rights for disabled people. Our time will come.

Mr. Wesemann then signed the Affirmation of Commitment.

Ms. Hurst told the Parliament that now is an exciting time for DPI and that the organisation's central concern is human rights. To have got all the delegates to Brussels was a triumph and a joy. The struggle must go on. "Our human rights are vital to our lives" she said.

Ms. Hurst then signed the Affirmation of Commitment.

Procession out of the hemicycle, to "We Shall Overcome" (thanks to EMI for permission to use it)

Lunch, hosted by the Brussels Capital Region.

AFTERNOON SESSION

Address on behalf of the European Commission by Bernhard Wehrens, Head of DGV-C3

Increasingly, said Mr Wehrens, the majority of the population of Europe will experience the European Union in a personal way. Cooperation between NGOs and the European institutions and changes within Europe offer chances to prove that disabled people are not people for whom one needs to have pity. They can

increasingly take part in a more humane society. Disabled people show us how everyone can contribute to the defence of the principles that underpin such a society.

Convergence, said Mr. Wehrens, is the key word: harmonisation of objectives and policies to promote equalisation of opportunities for disabled people. A European policy for the integration of all citizens is part of the Maastricht Treaty.

Mr. Wehrens said that because of violent actions against disabled people in Europe, we need a real social dynamic in Europe. The Commission, he said, condemns all forms of discrimination. He said that comparative analysis is very important for long-term policy decisions. The exchange of ideas is also essential-between governments, NGOs, families, scientists, volunteers, etc. There is the potential, said Mr. Wehrens, for a human revolution in favour of all European citizens. "You have been pioneers", he said. This Parliament will have a large effect, at Community, national and local authority levels. Integration requires space in our hearts and minds. Mr. Wehrens ended by saying that the conclusions of the Parliament would be followed with interest by the Commission.

SPEAKERS: AFTERNOON SESSION

Monica Wilson, United Kingdom

Ms Wilson spoke on behalf of Mobility International and the European Anti-Poverty Network and its poverty and disability agenda. She drew attention to the effect of high levels of unemployment on disabled people's chances of employment and to the additional costs of living as a disabled person. These additional costs are due to barriers within society.

Disabled people need recognition of their rights to be social and sexual beings, said Ms. Wilson. Our demands for inclusion must be accepted and a timetable must be set for change. All

programmes at national level should include disabled people in mainstream-planning and not banish us to the margins.

Helias Sofianos, Greece

Mr. Sofianos spoke about family life and personal dignity. The birth of a disabled child in a family is a shock, he said. The family was the first environment in which disabled people potentially feel rejected and under-confident. There are different reactions but often a rejection and banishment to institutions. Where this doesn't happen, disabled people are often isolated in their own homes. Over-protection can lead to lack of confidence. As a result disabled people find it difficult to adapt. The aim must be to improve financial and technical capabilities. Racism and fascism are plagues in Europe, said Mr. Sofianos: "We demand a better future for our children."

John Baun, United Kingdom

Mr. Baun spoke on employment services. He explained what happened when he looked for jobs. He would go to an interview, get the job, then go to the Disability Advisory Service (DAS) to say that he needed a minicom and a fax to carry out his new job effectively. The DAS said, no, we have to see you in your work environment. It took four weeks for them to make the assessment and then a further four weeks for the equipment to be installed. The firm might have an equal opportunities policy but things were difficult when he had to go back to them to say that the DAS wouldn't spend the money on disabled people's needs.

Mr. Baun said he suspected the same thing happened in other countries. There were funds that he couldn't get access to. The Employment Services should give funding to a disabled person as soon as they get a job, with 50 per cent coming from the Service and 50 per cent from the firm. The quota system, said Mr. Baun, should be abolished.

Jean Luc Simon, France

Mr. Simon started by saying that protecting our human rights is a wide mission and that we are working for the whole of society. It is time to stress the principles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. What is declared there must be respected and implemented. As an example, he said, the President of the French organisation, a Deaf man, should have had five minutes to speak, not three, as his statement needed to be interpreted. *There was a strong feeling that more time was needed.*

We have to make sure that we don't make the same mistakes as the people we condemn, said Mr. Simon. We must avoid discrimination among ourselves. *There was a lot of support for this statement.*

Frank Mulcahy, the co-Chair of the Parliament, said that Mr. Simon's comments would be taken up in the evaluation of the Parliament and in planning/or next year.

Clare Gill, Ireland

Ms. Gill spoke about education and in particular the urban/rural feature of education systems. Access to facilities was to a great extent dependent on where you live. The goal of education, she said, is full participation in society. There needs to be a consistent framework for disabled people to participate. Ireland is educating disabled people within the mainstream and this is a promising sign. But access to facilities and support varies according to where you live. These facilities and support must be inherent in the system, not 'special'. The benefits would be that disabled people would be among their peers, seen as people with abilities for whom disability was secondary. They would be seen exercising one of their most basic rights.

Maryse Moreels, Belgium

Ms. Moreels said she represented a Belgian Christian association for disabled people. The aim of the organisation was to avoid isolation. Today's meeting, she said, seemed discriminatory, as able-bodied people were only there to help disabled people.

Ms. Moreels wanted to make two points. First, the Maastricht Treaty didn't look social enough. Decent revenues were needed for social welfare and medical care to avoid a two-tier medical system. Second, said Ms. Moreels, we should deal with peace. We are living in a unified Europe but there are wars in the region. Disabled people's outrage at these wars must be expressed in any report about the Parliament. *There was support for this point.*

Joe Roe, Ireland

Mr. Roe reminded the Parliament that many disabled people are unemployed. The Irish Trade Union Congress and the Irish government have agreed to positive discrimination to increase the number of disabled people in the civil service. He called on other governments to do the same. The unemployment figures don't include disabled people, said Mr. Roe. Legislation is needed to improve the situation.

Sharon Mace, United Kingdom

Most of us at this Parliament, said Ms. Mace, are devoting our lives to making a dream come true: for choices and rights in our lives. Ms. Mace explained that she was born with an impairment but had attended a mainstream school and was fully integrated. Of her friends, she said: "They supported me. I supported them." It was a struggle to gain her place at the school, as she found out later on: her father had built the ramps that allowed her to get into the school buildings.

From the age of eight onwards, Ms. Mace realised that things were happening for her friends that weren't happening for her. Gradually, her rights were eroded. Years were spent fighting to keep her out of a special school. There are many areas of her life in which her rights are attacked. Doctors decided that she should have a hysterectomy to make life easier for her personal assistants - a huge violation of her rights as a young disabled woman.

Ms. Mace described how her friends don't go to theatres, cinemas and shops if they aren't accessible. "They protect my civil rights", she said. "But my government doesn't." She spoke of a black disabled woman friend from South Africa who described life in that country. What we are experiencing as disabled people, said Ms. Mace, is apartheid. Each step turns us away; each venue without Sign language turns us away. Our governments have a duty to act, she said. We must end the apartheid we are living with. *This statement met with warm and enthusiastic applause.*

Terkel Anderson, Denmark

Mr. Anderson spoke on policy-making. The Danish organisation, he said, attaches great importance to the Standard Rules. It was their conviction that the Standard Rules and the motions before the Parliament are realistic and could be applied if the political process is given the necessary impetus.

Mr. Anderson also said that the Danish educational system met disabled people's needs. Special education in Denmark is carried out in an integrated setting. De-institutionalisation is considered one of Denmark's most important achievements. But he said that disabled people's equality is constantly challenged, new tendencies of marginalisation appear and constant vigilance is necessary. It is our responsibility as disabled people, said Mr. Anderson: we are the experts. Governments and the European Union should recognise our role and financially support our attempts to form a common platform.

Olivier Harland, France

Mr. Harland spoke about images of disabled people. Television in France, he said, is giving more opportunities to disabled people - more programmes about disability and more information in news programmes about us too. He mentioned the Paralympics, which he said had been well covered in France. But disabled people can also be on television, to report on the sports, the news, etc., he said this would allow us to face life better. It would give testimony to efforts made for us and by us to be considered as full citizens.

He reiterated the point that our human rights demand not just one day a year but 365, if they are to become a daily reality. *Applause for this point.*

Michalis Noutsos, Greece

Mr. Noutsos spoke on human rights. He said that there is no coordination or programmes in Greece. Government policies are desperately needed. As proof of how ineffectual the government is, Mr. Noutsos cited the fact that even the number of disabled people in Greece is unknown, let alone where they live, their sex, age or impairment. The aim of the Greek association, said Mr. Noutsos, is to promote expectation among disabled people and to develop legislation recognising that disabled people have the same rights and duties. Next year, he concluded, I hope we will see some of our problems solved.

Gene Lambert, Ireland

Ms. Lambert spoke on segregated education. She described it as a cultural problem and said that education policy in Ireland is not embedded in an inclusive philosophy. 'Special', she said, means segregation -by gender and by type or degree of impairment. Most educationalists agree that mixed abilities in an integrated setting with appropriate support benefits everyone.' At present, there isn't even tolerance of difference. Bullying is widespread. The cultural manifestation of intolerance to difference that we have inherited has been made archetypal by media images.

Education for disabled people, explained Ms. Lambert, led on to training for low-paid manual jobs. But now, even such job! are on the decrease for disabled people. She pointed out how a few years ago there was a pragmatic decision to train blind people as telephonists. There is now an enormous population of unemployed, trained blind telephonists that doesn't acknowledge the huge range of abilities possessed by blind people. Forward with integration, concluded Ms. Lambert. Let's hope that segregation ends soon.

William Wolfe-Morris, United Kingdom

"I've been waiting five years for a bus," began Mr. Wolfe-Morris. But, he continued, they're not low-level and they have no lift: you can't get on. Disabled people need accessible public transport. All minicab drivers should be properly trained. It is better to keep disabled people in work than on benefits. Don't patronise us. *There was warm applause at this.* "Don't call me handicapped", concluded Mr. Wolfe-Morris. "I'm a non-walker. People who see me as a wheelchair are the handicapped ones."

Berta Maia, Portugal

Ms. Maia hoped the European Parliament would go on working on social policy to support disabled people but she said that such legislation wouldn't be respected in Portugal. There are one million disabled people in Portugal and most of them are marginalised. Ms. Maia also spoke about the government's attitude to people living with Aids. The Portuguese authorities have refused to set up a committee to award allowances to people with the HIV virus or who are living with Aids.

Nothing is done, she said, to integrate disabled people on the labour market. There is a huge deficit in rehabilitation. The Portuguese organisation is filing a complaint to the European Court of Justice and has organised a national parliament for disabled people. Ms. Maia suggested that this was something each country should do and that there should also be an on-going monitoring activity.

Joe Sargent, Ireland

Mr. Sargent spoke on physical access in rural Ireland. He said it is impossible for disabled people to get into banks, churches and other public buildings and that there are no accessible toilet facilities. It is only very recently that accessible taxis had become available in Dublin. Disabled people in Ireland, he said, are always told that no money is available 'at present'. Our needs are pigeon-holed and left to gather dust. "Keep the opposition under

pressure", is what the Irish World Cup manager tells his team. This is what we must do, said Mr. Sargent.

Dr. Andreas Jurgens. Germany

Dr. Jurgens spoke about legislation in Germany. He explained that after reunification proposals from the German organisations of disabled people had been dismissed by the authorities. The excuse was that the Constitution cannot promise equal opportunities, since it is impossible to meet that promise in real life. This shows, said Dr. Jurgens, a gap in imagination. MPs must work to emancipate themselves. We have more experience of emancipation than any of them and we can share it with them. *Applause.*

Jill Allen-King, United Kingdom

Ms. Allen-King drew attention to the fact that the Parliament is not accessible to blind and visually-impaired people. There are no tactile or audible indications of stairs, etc. She had, she said, campaigned for years for anti-discrimination legislation in the United Kingdom. In January 1992, after a five-hour
Totally blind people could certainly tell a different story.

When she went totally blind at 24, Ms. Allen-King lost her job. After the birth of her daughter, she was sterilised because doctors felt that a blind woman couldn't be an effective mother. Information from the government and local authorities isn't available in alternate media. 1.6 million people in the United Kingdom can't use ordinary print, she added. Transport isn't safe for blind people and pavements should be kept clear and safe. To be totally accessible must mean to take account of all disabled people, not just wheelchair users.

Ms. Allen-King proposed that the European Disabled People's Parliament strongly recommend anti-discrimination legislation be enacted by the European Parliament. *Applause.*

Bernd Knabe, Germany

Reunification, said Mr. Knabe, had seen an increase in violence against minorities in the former East Germany. Since Germany became one state, unemployment, hopelessness, poverty had increased. The young, elderly and disabled people had all been completely rejected. Promises had not been kept.

Mr. LaPere, European Trade Union Congress (ETUC)
ETUC has representatives from 27 European countries, which provides a great opportunity for solidarity. ETUC is against any form of discrimination and takes part in the fight against Nazism, which also affects disabled people. At their November conference, ETUC concentrated on the struggle for employment in Europe. It rejected the language of technocrats and demanded equal opportunities for all- men and women, disabled and non-disabled, black and white, heterosexual and homosexual. ETUC also demanded that the European Commission draft a declaration on the rights of disabled people.

Peter Moore, Ireland

Mr. Moore spoke about personal assistance. He told the Parliament that he is a published author and journalist. All the issues mentioned in Parliament, he said -education, independent living, income maintenance -for him depend on having a personal assistant.

When he was young, people told him he was intelligent. I didn't believe them, he said. I never came near to reaching my full potential because I was told, and I believed, that independence was doing things like normal people. If he had had a personal assistant when he was young, said Mr. Moore, he had little doubt that he would now be earning a substantial income from writing.

The right to personal assistance, said Mr. Moore, should not depend on economic grounds. People like me, he said, are in effect prisoners in our own homes, dependent on the goodwill of friends and family to go out socially. Others are in institutions and

have no control over when they go to bed, when and what they eat, even when they go to the toilet.

Personal assistance is only one way of empowering disabled people, said Mr. Moore. We need assistance that gives people control over their own lives. In Ireland, vast amounts of money are invested in a system that says disabled people need to be cared for; that they can't take charge of their own lives. This has got to stop. It won't mean spending more and more money on disability, said Mr. Moore, rather a redirection of resources already available. *Mr. Moore's statement met with warm applause.*

Bruno Moncelle, France

Mr. Moncelle pointed out that the specificity of Sign language meant that discrimination was occurring in the Parliament, in that it takes longer for a Deaf person to deliver their statement.

The French Association of the Deaf has 4 million members, said Mr. Moncelle. Though France has been in the forefront of progress on education, it is now stagnating. Compared to progress in the UK and Denmark, France is a desert. There are not enough interpreters and a great lack of information, particularly on Aids. Infection amongst Deaf people is widespread. He spoke about the lack of availability of devices like minitel. He also expressed concern about new medical devices whose main purpose is to make Deaf people into people who can hear. Deaf people, said Mr. Moncelle, don't want to be stigmatised or marginalised. They want to be perceived as people who are different but who have their own way of communicating: their own language and culture. *Applause.*

Knud Sondergaard, Denmark

Mr. Sondergaard spoke on the human rights of Deaf people and in particular the status of Sign language. He said that the European Union should do something; it was overlooking children and young disabled people. In the last decade, medical experiments had been carried out on Deaf children. Cochlear

implants, he said, are not the answer to the 'problem' of Deaf people. Doctors take decisions for children but should they have the right to do so? Deaf people need interpreters. The European Union should make sure that Deaf people can use interpreters in every member state.

Declan Considine, Ireland

Mr. Considine left school in 1987. He was driven 'from pillar to post' between rehabilitation and youth employment schemes. The quota system in Ireland, he said, is never fulfilled. He would like to see the 5-7 per cent quota in mainland Europe enforced in Ireland, to bring conditions for disabled people in Ireland into line with those in Europe. We need open employment, he stressed. Without it, you can't lead an independent life.

Careen Bradbury, United Kingdom

Ms. Bradbury was speaking on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind. She spoke about jury service in the United Kingdom and a section of a 1974 Act which exempts disabled people from service. A judge recently refused to let a blind juror serve because he said the blind person wouldn't be able to see the faces of the accused and the witnesses and wouldn't be able to read documents relating to the case.

Ms. Bradbury also spoke about the needs of visually-impaired people. She said there should be white lines on steps. that visually-impaired and blind people could be educated in the mainstream but needed support. Blind and visually-impaired people, she said, had specific learning difficulties. It was not that they couldn't learn but that they needed specific support to do so.

Thomas Kleisiotis, Greece

Mr. Kleisiotis began by saying how proud he was to be in the European Parliament and what a struggle it is to get to take part in policy-making. Aims in Greece, he said, include setting up the infrastructure for securing integrated education, meeting the needs of all children to develop different potentialities. Another

major aim is to modify images of disabled people. Mr. Kleisiotis concluded by saying that to have an impairment doesn't mean you have no power.

Hans Cohn, United Kingdom

Mr. Cohn said he was speaking on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind. He began with a quote to illustrate the nature of disablement: "Man has built empires of scientific capability to manipulate the phenomena of nature into enormous manifestations of his own dreams of power and wealth. But for this he has exchanged an empire of understanding of equal magnitude: an understanding of what it is to be part of the world and not an enemy of it."

The whole of mankind is disabled, said Mr. Cohn, but there are two kinds of disabled people. The first are those with physical or sensory impairments, people with learning or behavioural difficulties; the second are those who are attitudinally disabled. *There was warm applause at this point.*

The common assumption is that disability and unfitness are linked, continued Mr. Cohn. The achievements of disabled people tell a different story, he said. We must convince society that it has the wrong image of us. Mr. Cohn suggested that rehabilitation should be two-pronged - rehabilitation to enable disabled people to live in society; rehabilitation for humankind as a whole. Able-bodied people have made laws designed to protect us, concluded Mr. Cohn, which in fact restrict us.

Maurice Hayard. Belgium

Mr. Hayard spoke about the Charter for Deaf People. He congratulated all those who signed the Affirmation but he said that something was missing for Deaf people so they had decided to write their own Charter, which demanded recognition and respect for Sign language.

Being Deaf, said Mr. Hayard, meant having an invisible disability. The Charter may seem too strong but very often previous acts have been discriminatory. He asked that everyone attending the Parliament respects the sentiments of the Charter.

Codula Edler, Germany

Ms. Edler spoke about family life and personal dignity. One important activity of her organisation is encouraging elderly disabled people, young disabled people and non-disabled people to understand each other, so that no one is excluded from society.

We must support our children, stressed Ms. Codula. Children must be properly integrated in education and leisure. We are asking, she said, that parents of disabled children should decide how their children should be integrated.

Michael McCabe, Ireland

In Ireland, said Mr. McCabe, the personal assistance service is a very new idea. Yet in one year it has become a reality for some people. However, there are still places in Europe where independent living has never been heard of. You have to take on a lot of responsibility, explained Mr. McCabe, to manage personal assistance. This is easier if you became disabled later in life. If not, an over-protective family and life in a residential institution, where everything is done for you, encourages dependency and you find it difficult to make choices and to direct an employee. However, with training for both the disabled person and the personal assistant, independent living transforms people's lives, said Mr. McCabe.

Gloria Pullen, United Kingdom

Ms. Pullen spoke about the human rights of Deaf people. She began by saying that the Deaf community of the United Kingdom was pleased to address the European Parliament. In 1987, the Parliament had said that indigenous Sign languages should be acknowledged but this has not been followed through. Ms. Pullen asked the other delegates to support Deaf people in their cause of

getting Sign language recognised in each country. If this is done, it will go a long way towards securing the rights of Deaf people.
Applause.

Pierre Poisson. France

One of the main rights of disabled people, said Mr. Poisson, is the right to create organisations of disabled people and to decide on one's own fate. These organisations enable disabled people to be more aware. Individual and separate we are powerless but together we are strong. Be aware of the force of organisations of disabled people, concluded Mr. Poisson.

Donal Toolan, Ireland

Mr. Toolan spoke about the misuse of the European Social Fund. Governments encourage us to see them as powerless said Mr. Toolan, because they have no money. In reality, an enormous amount of money is spent in the 'disability industry' at Community level. He suggested that disabled people ask about resources and said that Ireland is one of the biggest beneficiaries of funding. The big question is: is that money supporting or challenging the charity/patronage system? The onus is on the Parliament of Disabled People and the European Parliament itself to challenge that system, said Mr. Toolan, if they are committed to not being tokenistic.

Look at HORIZON and the other European programmes for disabled people. Why should governmental organisations be in receipt of that funding? It should go to organisations of disabled people who are in a better position to empower disabled people and to make change.

Mr. Toolan pointed out that it was a privilege to be in Brussels because the disabled people there were only a tiny minority of the millions of disabled people who would never take part in such events. The delegates must take their responsibility seriously and ask how our money is being used to prop up the disability industry which supports and gives jobs to non-disabled people.

Nikolaus Panouis, Greece

Mr. Panouis spoke on legislation. He said the Greek Constitution has a provision on disability but that this doesn't include psychiatric illness, blind or Deaf people. Unfortunately, there are different rights for different people. Mr. Panouis proposed improving European legislation for people, with psychiatric impairments and to protect the future of disabled children. He said that the state must take responsibility for disabled people.

John Evans, United Kingdom

Mr. Evans spoke about independent living, saying it should be the right of every disabled person throughout Europe, despite age, gender sexuality or impairment. It isn't a right now, he said. We must fight for it, remembering that we are the elite, mostly funded by organisations to attend the Parliament. Our friends are imprisoned in their own homes or in institutions with no access to services, assistance or transport. Independent living is about giving people that access.

The unique thing about independent living, said Mr Evans, is that disabled people created it. First in the United States during the 1970s, then in Europe where it was developed during the 1908s. It gets disabled people out into the community and it gives them choices and rights. But it is limited at present to just a few of us. We must all fight to extend that. The European Network on Independent Living, formed in Strasbourg in 1989 by 14 countries, particularly in southern European countries. Without independent living, he said, we don't have human rights and without human rights we don't have independent living.

Mr. Bauchard, Belgium

Mr. Bauchard began by saying that he was not in favour of the use of Sign language. Children should have oral language, he said, and they must be integrated into society on the basis that most people use oral language.

Mr. Kleinbussink, Netherlands

Mr. Kleinbussink spoke on behalf of the European Region of the International Federation of the Hard of Hearing. Many members of the Federation had lost their hearing later on in life. They become invisible within their own communities. This social exclusion had existed for centuries. With efforts from other people, said Mr. Kleinbussink, the hard of hearing can be involved. He suggested that delegates ask their organisations and the Commission to pay attention to the needs of hard of hearing and deafened people.

He was glad that the language and culture of Sign existed but as a vehicle of communication he didn't think it helped people who had lost their hearing later in life. It was necessary to promote other things as well. He also felt that children born Deaf had the right to become hearing through cochlear implants.

Paul Schuhler, France

Mr. Schuhler said that it was better to be part of a national federation so that a country could speak with one voice on disability issues. The exchange of experience facilitated by the Parliament and the chance to meet others who had experienced similar oppression in other countries is empowering. There is, he said, a real need for interactive comprehension among disabled people in Europe.

Mairead Manton, Ireland

Ms. Manton spoke about living in residential care. She said that in some ways such a life was too comfortable. You had shelter, food and heating but were not entitled to benefits. You just get pocket money. Education is essential if disabled people are to move into the community and care for ourselves. The responsibility and control must start in the residential setting, she said, and end with disabled people managing and educating non-disabled people out in the community.

Ms. Manton also said that she needs three people to lift her on and off of trains and buses but that she will continue to go out and make this happen or we will never have accessible public transport.

Giampiero Griffo, Italy

Mr. Griffo began by drawing attention to where we were. He said that he was sitting in an MEP's seat and he read out the man's name. He then said that this MEP might never know how he, Mr. Griffo, feels. But that he must be told. Mr. Griffo said he might ask that Italian MEP to become his sponsor and suggested that other disabled people do the same thing -ask the MEP whose seat they were using.

Mr. Griffo went on to say that he hoped the situation for disabled people would be better next year. He said there are different conditions in different countries but that all states want to save money. In Italy, people's usefulness is defined in percentages, he said, and he is defined as completely, 100 per cent, useless. Diversity, said Mr. Griffo, is basic to cultural development. Our aim must be to set up a better, more humane Europe for all minority groups.

Ian Riddell, United Kingdom

Mr. Riddell spoke about the United Kingdom's organisation for people with learning difficulties, MENCAP, and its Gateway clubs. For 48 years, said Mr. Riddell, MENCAP had been campaigning on behalf of others not eloquent enough to make their voices heard at all levels for the right to education, work, leisure, dignity.

Recently, said Mr. Riddell, a council had decided to charge families for day services. MENCAP condemns such charges. Also quite recently, a company made seven people with learning difficulties redundant. After lobbying, they were re-employed.

Mr. Riddell mentioned that in 1994, the European Young People's Festival would take place in Manchester and he condemns plans

by the European Commission to charge for audio-visual recordings, which are used widely by people with learning difficulties. He also said that he fully supported the motion before the Parliament.

Myriam Noel, France

Education of disabled children must be integrated, said Ms. Noel. This will help them to be integrated in adult life. Unfortunately people aren't open-minded. Ms. Noel has a blind daughter. For five years she had an assistant in the mornings but this year this stopped. The worst thing anyone has ever said to her was another parent saying: "If I had a child like yours, I would have committed suicide by now."

Jana Overbo, Ireland

Ms. Overbo spoke on independent living. She has been living in Ireland for one and a half years and is tired of arguing about whether independent living is viable. We have chosen it, she said, as the only way forward. Yet many non-disabled people continue to gather at symposia and seminars to debate whether or not it is workable. We, disabled people, she said, have embraced it. Enough words. We need action. We must challenge governments and the European Union to stop spending money on a system that disenfranchises and institutionalises us; Stop spending money on sheltered workshops. She cited the 'Crippled Children's School', and the children who need to be driven for a whole day to get there. Would the money, she asked, not be better spent on making mainstream schools accessible? States are getting away with saying that they are too poor to make expensive changes, yet money is spent on systems of oppression and dependence. The challenge for all of us is to talk to our governments about it.

Dr. Jacobs, Germany

Dr. Jacobs spoke about vocational integration on the labour market. Disabled people, he said, want direct access to the labour market. People with mental disabilities, he said, were a forgotten minority. We must work towards 3 December next year, said Dr. Jacobs, and ensure a human culture based on solidarity.

Gianni di Maio, Italy

Mr. di Maio was introduced as a representative of the Italian Blind Union. He started by saying that only disabled people were

present in the Parliament The MEPs should be there too. *There was warm applause to this.* We don't need their pity, the speaker continued. We don't need their venue. We can speak anywhere. We must decide on our strategy and then talk to decision-makers and trade unions.

Jim Hyland, Ireland

Mr Hyland began by introducing himself as the father of a 19-year old man with learning difficulties. He said the needs of carers, of parents and of the immediate family, must be recognised. He then went on to criticise the way people are labelled -not by who they are but by what they have. Crumbs from the rich men's tables were what disabled people had to put up with. The emphasis was always on segregation rather than integration. Integration is the basis of human rights.

Mr Hyland drew attention to the widespread institutionalisation of people with learning difficulties and the fact that there is often no clear differentiation between mental disability and mental illness. These attitudes can and must change, he said. We need integration and choice. The golden key to greater awareness is education. Non-disabled children must be educated about disability.

Aristeides Pananos, Greece

Mr. Pananos spoke about sport and leisure. Greece, he recalled, is the country of sports. It was a struggle and a fight to gain equal access to society, said Mr. Pananos. Mentally disabled people can take part in sports. This is very important, especially for children. It's not just fun and a way of expressing yourself. Sport is a way to break down prejudice and it should be publicised throughout the Community.

Niels Arthur Hanson, Denmark

Mr. Hanson said that he wished to move an amendment to the motion.

Frank Mulcahy, co-Chair of the Parliament interrupted Mr Hanson to say that an amendment to the motion could not be brought at this time as the closing date for submitting amendments had passed.

Rita Lawlor, Ireland

Ms. Lawlor introduced herself as a person with learning difficulties. She said that people with learning difficulties should appear on the television to show their talents and capabilities and to let people see that they are just like everybody else. Don't call us 'mentally handicapped', said Ms. Lawlor. The term we have chosen is 'people with learning difficulties'. People are still building residential units, she said. I and many others don't want to be hostelised but it is hard to get a house or flat. You had to be living with a man or have a baby to get one. Information should be more clearly presented. Some people with learning difficulties can find it hard to pay bills and get caught in the poverty trap when they live in their own homes. Keep fighting until we have our rights, said Ms. Lawlor. It isn't easy to live in a hostel. If you work, your benefit is taken away. Once you have a job, you can be hassled. They make you work extra hours. You can be vulnerable and more work is put on to you. The European Parliament could do a lot for us. You must listen to us. We are adults. We can speak for ourselves. Listen to us.

There was a great deal of applause for Ms. Lawlor's statement.

Annet Heinich, Germany

Ms. Heinich spoke about images of disabled people. Imagine, she said, if disabled people lived everywhere. If we all met and got to know each other. Non-disabled people have a totally different image of us than we have of ourselves. We are faced with ignorance because they have never had the chance to get to know us. We are often presented as weird. We have to talk loudly about what we want; about our equality of opportunity.

Applause

Terry Riley, United Kingdom

Mr. Riley began by saying that he was speaking for all the Deaf and disabled children who are unable to speak for themselves. His concerns were human rights for Deaf people in the European Union, child abuse, fostering, adoption and Aids.

The British Deaf Association (BDA) said Mr. Riley, asks the European Parliament of Disabled People to assert that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child applies equally to Deaf children in the European Community and to confirm that:

1. All Deaf children in the EC have the right to expect to grow and live in a safe and caring world.
2. That all Deaf people in the EC, especially survivors of abuse, have the right to expect recognition of abuse whenever it occurs and to appropriate professional support.
3. That all Deaf children and Deaf people in the EC have the right to expect to have access to information in Sign Language. to have the support of professionally trained Deaf counsellors.

The BDA also requests the Parliament to confirm that:

2. 1. Deaf children in Europe have the right to be made aware of. and the right of access to the Deaf community, its language and its culture.
- 2.2. Deaf children in Europe have the right to the opportunity to belong to. participate in. and benefit from the experience of the Deaf and hearing communities.
- 2.3. Deaf children in Europe have the right to effective communication with their families and such communication is essential to enable the Deaf child to achieve her/his full potential.
- 2.4. Deaf adults have the right to be considered as potential foster or adoptive parents and not to be discriminated against solely on the ground of their deafness and that Deaf adults be empowered through awareness and training programmes to realise this potential.

Martin Luther King, recalled Mr. Riley, said: "I have a dream." He pointed out that Johan Wesemann had said earlier: "Our time has come." One day, hoped Mr. Riley, we would be able to say, "Our dream has come true." Use you vote next year, he concluded. The European elections will soon be upon us. Elect a disabled MEP. We will never have integration and human rights until we have a real influence in Parliament. Go out and make it happen. *There was a great deal of applause for Mr. Riley's statement.*

Roland Roux, Belgium

Many of the organisations represented in the Parliament are multi-impairment organisations, noted Mr. Roux, and maybe that fact promotes tolerance among us. Disabled people have expressed the desire to be recognised as people with human rights. Many families and people close to us are trying to protect us, however. They over-protect or institutionalise us. We have to go back to the faith which animates us. Our actions have to be devised by us so that next year we can have more concrete resolutions; legislation on paper which will give us human rights.

Christos Moatsos, Greece

Mr. Moatsos spoke about organ donation and dialysis. He said there should be a legal framework within Europe for organ donation, with objective criteria about the giving and receiving of organs. Dialysis patients should be given the opportunity to go on holiday and financial conditions should be improved through social security payments.

Russ Palmer, United Kingdom

Mr. Palmer spoke about deaf-blind people in the United Kingdom and Europe. He said that many deaf-blind people have both visual and hearing impairments but that the term is misleading. He said some people are born deaf-blind, some people have some sight or some hearing and some people become totally deaf-blind. The European Community, said Mr. Palmer, should particularly consider employing, educating and socialising deaf-blind people within the Deaf community as some can use Sign.

Mr. Palmer said that he wanted to point out that a hearing loop was not available to facilitate his participation and that perhaps on another occasion this could be rectified. He also said that when travelling deaf-blind people have to have a guide with them and that they have to pay for this person. In Scandinavia, guides could travel for free. *Applause.*

Cearbhall O'Meadhra, Ireland

Mr. O'Meadhra spoke on information and research. Drawing attention to sections D and F of the Preamble to the motion for resolution, he proposed action: the adoption by the European Parliament of a directive on transparency of information. People who create information need to become more active, said Mr. O'Meadhra. Useful materials get left on library shelves. Information-recipients need to be enabled to interpret the information coming to them.

People who are Deaf or blind or who have learning difficulties all share the problem of interpreting information, said Mr. O'Meadhra. Computers can make a huge difference. An undertaking is needed that information will be available in machine-readable form and that research will be undertaken on the best ways of giving information.

Kikolaos Lianos, Greece

There are some things missing from today, said Mr. Lianos, that we are here. Our struggle is an all-year-round one but this historical Day gives us the opportunity to talk about our rights and to make sure they are respected. The Greek Association of People for Mutual Help is based on equality. Big changes are needed. This is not one person's job. Everyone must do it, said Mr. Lianos. He said his Association aims for integration and over the years had changed from philanthropy to something more active and empowering.

Flavio Porello, Italy

Mr. Porello introduced himself as a member of the National Association of Families with Disabled Children. He said that the Association was able to work for the rights of disabled children. If you are told there is no money, he said, wait until there is an election. MPs can always find money when they want to. Disabled people must come together to fight against fascism, said Mr. Porello. He mentioned the former Yugoslavia and said that we must keep working to increase solidarity, irrespective of colour, race, gender, etc.

Colin Barnes, United Kingdom

Mr. Barnes mentioned 31 January 1992, on which day the 10th debate on anti-discrimination legislation was held in the UK's House of Commons. On that day, the British Minister for Disabled People, Nicholas Scott admitted for the first time that discrimination was widespread. Though nothing had been done subsequently, the minister's admission was still a major triumph, said Mr. Barnes.

Research by the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People, the national organisation of disabled people in the United Kingdom, has shown that evidence of discrimination is overwhelming. No politician or policy-maker, said Mr. Barnes, can now deny its existence.

To be a disabled person, continued Mr. Barnes, means to be discriminated against on the grounds of impairment. To protect our rights we need comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and we need it now. Statements of principle and resolutions are not enough. For 40 years we have heard the same rhetoric. Yet disabled people remain the poorest of the poor.

We demand, said Mr. Barnes, that the European Commission start work on comprehensive anti-discrimination policy and that the member states work individually and collectively to build a legal framework to dismantle the institutionalised systems of oppression within which we live.

The days of rhetoric are over, concluded Mr. Barnes. We want rights not rhetoric; rights not charity . Give us the tools and we will do the rest. *Warm applause at the end of this statement.*

The vote was held and the motion passed; becoming the first resolution of the European Disabled Peoples Parliament.

Closing address by Rachel Hurst, Disabled Peoples' International – European Community Committee

Ms. Hurst said that DPI pledged to take the resolution up with the European Commission and Parliament and to consider action for next year's European Day of Disabled Persons. We will have learned from today, she said, and we hope that some change will have been made in furthering our human rights.

Ms. Hurst thanked the 18 language interpreters and the Sign language interpreters. She also thanked members of the DPI and DAA staff, those in Brussels and those who had remained in London. She said the level of debate had been very high and that delegates should be proud of themselves. The representation of disabled people, however, was not broad enough - there were too few women, for example. But we will work on that, she said. The most important thing for us is to be united.

Ms. Hurst's concluding exhortation was: "Strength in Unity!"
This was echoed loudly from the floor of the debating chamber.

CLOSE OF THE PARLIAMENT

RESOLUTION OF THE EUROPEAN DISABLED PEOPLE'S
PARLIAMENT 3 DECEMBER 1993

The European Disabled People's Parliament,

- A Recognising that disability is a human rights issue,
- B Recalling that all human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal and thus unreservedly include disabled people,
- C Bearing in mind that every person is born equal and has the same rights to life and welfare, education, living independently, equal opportunities for employment, and active participation in all aspects of society,
- D Recognising that disabled people have the right to full and equal participation in the economic and social development of Europe,
- E Considering that any direct discrimination or other negative discriminatory treatment of a disabled person is a violation of his or her rights,
- F Convinced that disabled people should be guaranteed equal opportunity through the elimination of all socially-determined barriers, be they physical, financial, social or psychological, which exclude or restrict full participation in society,
- G Realising that disabled people face three forms of unfair discrimination -direct discrimination. indirect discrimination, and 'unequal burdens' imposed by socially constructed barriers,
- H Having regard to the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons adopted by the United Nations' General Assembly at its thirty-seventh session,

- I Convinced that disabled people, through their representative organisations, have the right to be consulted on issues and decisions affecting their human rights,
- J Invites the Community institutions and the Member States of the European Community to take practical steps to guarantee the human rights of disabled people by the adoption or adjustment of legally binding instruments, and to adopt and to ensure implementation of the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for disabled people.
- 1 Invites the Commission of the European Communities:
 - i) to examine the status of equal opportunities within Directorate-General V and to consider renaming the Directorate General as follows: "Employment, Industrial Relations and Equal Opportunities". There is an urgent need to develop policy in the area of equal opportunities for all citizens of the European Community, and in particular for disabled people.
 - ii) to establish a new Directorate within DGV with the responsibility for developing policy initiatives in relation to equal opportunities legislation and to ensure that disabled people are employed at all levels within this new Directorate.
 - iii) to publish in 1994 a Green Paper, the contents of which should include the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for disabled people, and an outline of the Commission's plans to initiate Community legislation for its adoption and implementation;
 - iv) to present at the European Parliament of Disabled People, 3 December 1994, a report on the progress of the Green Paper on the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for disabled people, and the Commission's

proposals for the introduction of Community legislation, including a comprehensive social policy initiative.

- 3 Invites the Community institutions and the Member States of the European Community to support studies on human rights of disabled people, and to ensure that disabled people, through their representative organisations, are involved in all stages of the planning and management of such studies, and that the results of the studies are disseminated as widely as possible.
- 4 Invites the Community institutions and the Member States to adopt equal opportunities instruments in the areas of employment, contract compliance and funding criteria.
- 5 Invites the Community institutions and Member States to ensure that at the time of revision of the Treaty on European Union ('Maastricht'), a general anti-discrimination provision is included.