

## Comment

(This article appeared in Greater Manchester of Disabled People's Magazine 'Coalition: (1996) Special Edition on Disability and Sexuality (p. 1).

"Well I think you're very brave. Very brave indeed"

The speaker was not some patronising do-gooder but a strong disabled activist. I'd just mentioned to her that we were proposing to produce an edition of Coalition looking at disabled people's sexuality and relationships.

I understood what my colleague meant. The issue of sexuality, even relationships, is something that disabled people rarely talk about amongst ourselves. But other people talk about our sexuality, and think about it. Oh yes they do, and they've been talking about it and thinking about it for years.

There are a thousands of non-disabled people out there who even get paid to talk about and think about our sexuality. I'm referring, of course, to the social workers (in "specialist" areas), the sex therapists, the counsellors, the occupational therapists, the doctors, the "home care" workers and Uncle Tom Cobley and all.

There is a "contact club", run by a non-disabled person which exists to bring together disabled and non-disabled people. There is even a charity, run mainly by non-disabled people - SPOD - which exists to raise awareness of a provide information on disabled people's sexuality and relationships.

Perhaps it's not surprising that we' so reluctant to speak about sexual matters - we never know who might be listening! And that was a major reservation that w voiced about producing a magazine on the subject of relationships -we never know who might be reading!

There are also always concerns that you leave yourself open to criticism if you don't

"cover all bases". We rely on articles being submitted - and articles were requested on most issues, some were submitted, some weren't - so if any readers feel there is, particular area missed which should have been covered, either write article yourself or make a proposal - we're always open to ideas.

A friend of mine told me recently: "I was 42 years old when I lost my virginity. I'd always been regarded as sexless and thought that I couldn't have a relationship. But I began to notice other severely impaired people who were involved in relationships, and then met someone who changed my life. I thought 'I wish I'd known all this was possible twenty years ago!'"

'Nuff said.

Ian Stanton