

Jan 22 1969

Help for disabled

Sir,—Your report that the Secretary of State for the Social Services has turned down the proposal for a Disablement Commission ("Guardian," January 18) is hard to believe or understand. The proposal was sponsored by the Disablement Income Group and first put to a sympathetic House of Commons by a disabled Labour MP, Mr Jack Ashley.

The proposal was that the Department of Health and Social Security badly needed the continuing guidance of experts, including social scientists as well as physicians, who had first-hand knowledge of modern forms of treatment, pension and welfare schemes in other countries and the social problems of different kinds of disabled persons in Britain. The inadequacy of our provisions for the disabled is widely acknowledged and neither the Government's survey nor its staffing and advisory structure can produce that informed and continuous review of the problem that is required for policy-making.

The Government's national survey will only give a first, and probably incomplete, picture of the number of disabled—not what could or should be done about their problems. The Department has a range of advisory committees and councils touching on only some of the problems of the disabled or only dealing with certain categories among them—such as war pensioners and industrial injury pensioners. The structure badly needs revising. By his decision the Secretary of State has postponed the day when a comprehensive social security and welfare scheme for the disabled

can be introduced.—Yours e

Peter Townsend.
Department of Sociology,
University of Essex.

Sir,—Richard Crossman's attitude to disabled people, many of whom are in a desperate situation, dismays me.

I am a paraplegic housewife entirely without a pension or other income living at home with my husband who finds his income as a teacher increasingly inadequate to maintain me.

Disability is expensive. I need much more heating, special clothing because I am incontinent, and expensive hired cars on the few occasions when I am taken out. There are so many hidden expenses that they are too numerous to describe.

When Jack Ashley, MP, asked for a commission to be set up to inquire into the known needs of the disabled, and try to find out just how many disabled people there are in Great Britain (which figure is unknown at the moment) he was listened to by a packed House of Commons with sympathy.

This heartened me a lot. At last something was going to be done for disabled people many of whom are in a much more desperate situation than I am.

But Mr Crossman's attitude is so discouraging that I feel ready to give up the struggle to live at home and retire into a geriatric hospital where the other young disabled housewives are. It would cost the country £35 a week.

Is it worth while trying to live at home?—Yours sincerely,

Disabled Housewife.

Croydon.

(Name and address supplied)

to be a bridesmaid next week. I half last night doing the dress and doesn't seem to fit." "Did you invitation from Christopher for next

Are you going? Lucy, get out of the water, you'll freeze. No you can't take your gloves off. I thought I'd wear that new dress I got in the sales. Well, I wouldn't say it was marvellous, but it'll do—for 30s."

Such days are rare and burn themselves for ever into memory. "When we were children we used to skate on the pond. . . ." True, there is evidence from the Meteorological Office that it is getting warmer. But only compared with 100 years ago, not 20.

The atmosphere of indoor ice rinks, scene of the serious skating, is quite another thing. Electric organs, cafeterias, intense competition, private lessons, dance sessions, tights and skating skirts, and cogn. buckskin boots. Silver diplomas, gold diplomas, love, ambition—and hooliganism.

There are only 38 ice rinks in Britain and 16 of those are in Scotland. It is not cheap. At least 11s to take two children for an afternoon, hiring skates.

This is not to say it is all professional. The mums come in with their children during

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