

blackening did not take place : but the Industrial Relations Act inhibited them from taking any such precise action in our support.

Incidentally, we were not invited by the RSC to take part in a discussion after the first night. We received no regular communication from the management except for the announcement in their letter to you. Is it normal for anyone ("left-wing" or otherwise) to extend invitations through the correspondence columns of a newspaper—which in fact we do not regularly read? And why was only one of the two playwrights referred to in this "invitation"? *Divide and Rule* is a time-honoured device of imperialism and this particular use of it reinforces our opinion of the attitude of the RSC to our play and its subject-matter.

We do not think it would be help-

ful material back into the show, but I failed completely and eventually gave up. But not before Joan Littlewood and I had had a monumental row.

The show opened to largely favourable reviews; Irving Wardle in *The Times* was particularly favourable. My reputation as a playwright has been enhanced by the success of the piece, but my self-confidence has been shattered.

Not having seen the show for several weeks, my wife and I visited the theatre last night to see it for the last time and were informed that Joan Littlewood had not been around for several days. She had gone to join John Arden in the picket line outside the Aldwych Theatre!

Yours truly,  
FRANK NORMAN,  
5 Seaford Court,  
222 Great Portland Street, W1.  
December 8.

## TIMES 9 Dec 1972 Handicapped children

From Professor Peter Townsend

Sir, You rightly call attention to the long-term disadvantage of the Government "shuffling off" responsibility for compensating the parents of handicapped children on to a voluntary trust (leading article, December 1). I play a small part in three voluntary bodies concerned with the interests of handicapped children and know others fairly well. None of them is equipped to do the job. None of them should be persuaded, expected, or feel vainglorious enough, to take it on. Their primary function should remain to press the Government into recognizing needs and introducing effective and fair aid for all.

The Government should accept a duty first to collect and publish information, and offer guidance, about all handicapped children, not just those with congenital deformity. Children were excluded from the 1968-69 survey and knowledge even about their numbers is sketchy. According to the best estimates there are up to 400,000 in the United Kingdom, including between 100,000 and 200,000 who require supporting services from the local social service departments.

Secondly, only the Government has the means to organize the assessment for an effective system of finan-

cial aid. The right long-term aid would be a generous child allowance for the handicapped — varying according to age and degree of incapacity—supplemented not just by an attendance allowance covering more children and by local services but also by a new local authority system of capital and current grants and allowances for accommodation, equipment, transport, home help, day nurseries and schooling. Our haphazard and unfair system of financial compensation in law should be completely re-cast.

Thirdly, the Government should not shield behind a voluntary trust, but should be answerable directly for any failure on the part of society to meet the needs of the handicapped.

Finally, handicap in childhood must not be separated from handicap in adult life. Already there are grave problems when handicapped children reach the school leaving age and there is a marked lack of continuity of care and responsibility. Financial aid for children has to be linked in principle to the development of public services and of a pension scheme for the disabled as a whole.

Yours, etc,  
PETER TOWNSEND,  
Department of Sociology,  
University of Essex,  
Wivenhoe Park, Colchester.

## Ashdown Forest

a matter of years the roads will be "improved" so that the diversions