

Conservative Research Department

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Prime Minister ①

CITF

Robin Harris has the attached speaking note. If you are content it can be issued to London Conservative MP's and Central Office be asked to produce

Director: ROBIN HARRIS

similar notes when the GLC distribute the record in other areas.

2nd May 1985

AT 315

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Dear Andrew,

I attach a speaking note which we prepared today drawing on material provided by Mr. Alan Clark's office at the Department of Employment. I understand that the intention is to answer the GLC's advertisement (which should therefore be attached to the note): but I assume that it should also contain the main points about our overall policy towards the disabled. Perhaps you could let me know whether this fits the bill and whether the Prime Minister wishes it to be circulated to London Conservative MPs.

I am also sending a copy to Mr. Clark, who may himself wish to feed in some comments.

Can do,
Robin
ROBIN HARRIS

Andrew Turnbull, Esq.,
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London, S.W. 1.

RH/JLS

SPEAKING NOTE

HELPING THE DISABLED

- AN ANSWER TO THE GLC

The GLC have recently been advertising a unit they have set up to help disabled people find work (see attached). The implication is that the Government is not acting vigorously to promote the employment of disabled people. This is totally contrary to the facts.

The Government has:

- (i) Sought fair treatment for the disabled in the jobs market.
- (ii) Backed training and other programmes for disabled people.
- (iii) Substantially increased the financial help given to disabled people.

(i) The New Code of Practice.

A new code of practice for the employment of disabled people was formally launched by the Prime Minister on 14th November 1984. Help in gaining employment used to be given to disabled people through the Statutory Quota Scheme. The Government was concerned that the quota was no longer working satisfactorily. It therefore asked the Manpower Services Commission to look at ways suggested by the Select Committee on Employment and others for improving the effectiveness of the scheme within the framework of the existing legislation. To help in this task the commission set up a working group whose membership included representatives of the National Advisory Council on Employment of Disabled People, disabled peoples' organisations, the CBI and TUC. The result was the new code of practice for the employment of disabled people.

The Manpower Services Commission's disablement advisory service has been promoting the Code of Practice among employers throughout the country. 62 specialist teams advise employers on it and also give advice on financial assistance available. During 1984/5 these teams made 17,000 visits to employers. Initial indications are that it is being favourably received both by employers and by organisations representing disabled people. The code has been endorsed by the Select Committee on Employment, the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Disabled People, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, the CBI and the TUC. The Manpower Services Commission will continue closely to monitor the response to the code.

(ii) Training and other programmes for the Disabled

The Manpower Services Commission also has major continuing programmes for disabled people:

- 1) - Employment rehabilitation: This is to assess the capabilities of disabled people and restore confidence and fitness for work. It

is provided through 27 MSC centres and a number of agencies throughout the country at a cost of about £21 million in 1984/5. In addition, an initial 3 new ASSET (Assistance towards employment) teams are shortly to be established in areas not currently served by employment rehabilitation centres.

2) - Sheltered employment: Work is provided in a sheltered environment for severely disabled people. Some £79 million was spent on this during 1984/5. There are around 15,600 people in sheltered employment at the end of 1984/5 compared with 14,900 at end of 1983/4.

3) - The MSC Disablement Resettlement Services and Blind Persons Resettlement Officers provide specialist job-finding help for disabled people. Through them 72,00 disabled people were placed in work or on the Community Programme during 1984/5 compared with 67,700 in 1983/4.

4) - The MSC also provides financial help. Some 4,500 disabled people received direct financial or practical assistance at a total cost of £2.6 million in 1984/85. Such help is given in a variety of ways. For example:

i. A grant of up to £6,000 to help towards the adaption of employers' premises or equipment to enable them to employ a disabled person, e.g. a switchboard can be adapted to accommodate a blind operator.

ii. Fares to Work Scheme which offers help with the fares incurred in getting to work. Help under the scheme is available to disabled people in receipt of the mobility allowance and it can be offered to anyone who is partially immobile - $\frac{3}{4}$ of the cost can be reclaimed.

iii. A Job Introduction Scheme whereby a grant of £45 per week is offered for a fixed interval - usually 6 weeks but sometimes 13 - after the placement of a disabled person in a new job.

iv. A Special Aid Scheme which aims to lend the equipment necessary for disabled people to take the opportunity of a job. Last year 1,226 aids to employment were loaned to disabled workers.

The Government's Fit for Work Award Scheme provides recognition to those employers who have demonstrated an outstanding record in employing disabled people. The importance the Government attach to this is shown by the fact that the Prime Minister herself attended last year's national reception for award winners.

(iii) Financial Help for Disabled People

The Government gave a commitment in the Conservative Manifesto 'to protect the most vulnerable members of our society'. This commitment has more than been honoured.

Total Expenditure on disabled people has increased by 30 per cent in real terms between 1978-9 and 1984-5. There has also been a substantial increase in the numbers of recipients of certain benefits as a result of Government measures to widen the entitlement and increase the take-up.

Invalidity Benefit. In November 1980 invalidity benefit was raised by 5 percentage points less than prices because, unlike the retirement pension it was tax free. In the autumn statement, the Chancellor announced that this abatement would be restored from November 1985.

The Severe Disablement Allowance. The Health and Social Security Act 1984 introduced a new Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA) to replace the non-contributory invalidity pension (NCIP) and the separate housewives' non-contributory invalidity pension (HNCIP).

It is expected that SDA will give over £20 a week to an additional 20,000 people at a cost of £20 million initially.

The Attendance Allowance has increased by more than the rise in prices between November 1978 and November 1984. This non-taxable benefit is payable to a person who is severely disabled physically or mentally and requires frequent attention or continual supervision.

The Invalid Care Allowance, which had previously been paid to relatives (other than married women) who are looking after disabled people in receipt of the attendance allowance, was in July 1981 extended to those carrying out this service who are not relatives. Some 2,000 people were expected to benefit. The amount a recipient of invalid care allowance can earn before affecting his or her allowance was increased, in November 1982, from £6 to £12.

The Mobility Allowance, is now £20.00 a week, double the amount of £10 a week when Labour left office; since April 1982 it has been tax free. The number of beneficiaries has doubled since 1978-9.

Conclusion

All Governments and parties care about disabled people. That undoubtedly includes the hard Left leaders of the GLC. But this Conservative Government is committed to policies which will provide the prosperity to create the jobs and pay for the benefits to help disabled people. Encouragement of fair but flexible employment practices; more help to train and provide opportunities for disabled people in work; and increased help for those who could not otherwise cope - these are the achievements of a Government which doesn't just say it cares but shows it.

They'd be a lot higher if he didn't mention his disability.

Because he'll be lucky to get an interview once that's on his application form.

One man that we know of had 50 job applications rejected in a row.

Until he didn't mention his disability.

He then received 12 interviews out of the next 35 applications.

Yet even if the disabled get an inter-

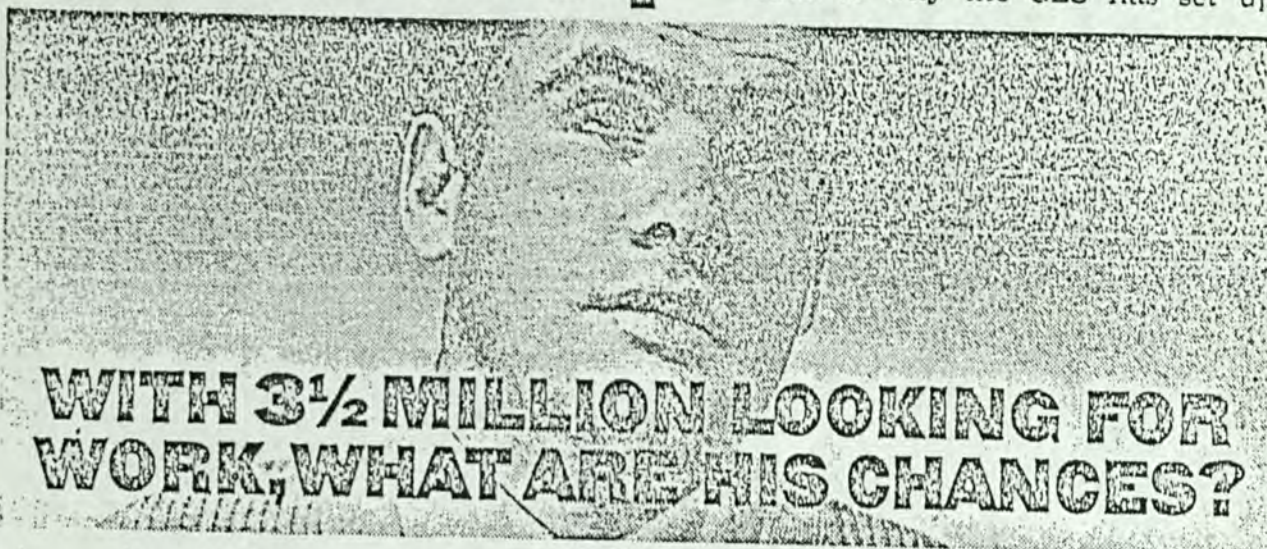
able through the Manpower Services Commission.

And you could be breaking the law if you don't employ them.

Because if you have over 20 people in your company then 3% of your workforce should be disabled.

Not that the law alone is powerful enough to overcome prejudice.

Which is why the GLC has set up



WITH 3 1/2 MILLION LOOKING FOR WORK, WHAT ARE HIS CHANCES?

view, a lot of the time is taken asking how they'd cope.

They'll be asked in great detail how they'd get to work if they had a puncture. Or how they'd be able to reach a particular filing system. (No thought is given to locating the filing system in a different place.)

But with 3 1/2 million able-bodied to choose from, why should you as an employer consider someone with a disability?

Firstly, many disabilities don't affect a person's ability to do the job.

An artificial leg is no barrier to being a draughtsman. Nor is deafness a handicap to programming a computer.

What's more, it's been found that people with disabilities actually take less time off through illness.

Simply because they're glad to be given a job.

And their disability often means that they're able to use their other senses more efficiently.

For example, the blind can have a more developed sense of touch or hearing. So for some jobs they might actually be better equipped.

Admittedly, it might cost you a small investment to accommodate them, but Government funding is avail-

the Disability Resource Team.

To encourage employers to operate an equal opportunities policy.

To give advice to the disabled themselves. As well as to other members of the community in positions of power.

Because even if disabled people are able to get a job, their problems are far from over.

The simplest of journeys is a major expedition. They're labelled fire risks in theatres and cinemas. Seen as obstacles in pubs and restaurants. Or restricted to off-peak hours in swimming pools.

Virtually imprisoning them in their own homes.

If you're an employer do give some consideration to employing the disabled. Or if you'd like advice write for our leaflet to GLC Disability Resource Team, Room 92, The County Hall, London SE1 7PB. Or telephone the GLC Hotline on 01-633 4400.

We'd also welcome enquiries from people with disabilities. We're not able to solve individual cases but we can give guidance.

If you do consider a disabled person for a job you'll sleep well at nights.

Not because you've been charitable.

But because you've made a wise business decision.

GLC. A DISABILITY SHOULDN'T BE A HANDICAP.