The disabled only needs more money—not a new Act

May 10 1973

Sir,—The article in the Guardian (May 2) by Professor Townsend and Walter Jaehnig no doubt presents some very useful suggestions with regard to policies for the disabled. It does, however, gravely underestimate the value of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. It contains a number of such vital inaccuracies that it may well encourage the Government and local authorities to fail to carry out their legal duties.

There are three important points. First, Section 1 of the Act is its basis. It is absurd to suggest, as the article does, that it does not make a local authority responsible to seek out and identify handicapped people. The provision specifically requires local authorities to inform themselves of the number of disabled persons. How can they do this without ascertaining who they are?

Indeed, the Joint Under-Secretary of State for the Department of Health and Social Security, Mr Michael Alison MP, recognised this in a letter dated March 22, 1973 to Mr Alfred Morris MP, the author of the Act, stating: "I do . . . recognise that Section 1 lays a duty, not a discretion, on local authorities to inform themselves of the numbers and needs of the handicapped people in their areas." He took the bold step of adding that "a letter has been sent to the Clerk of the Cornwall County Council asking him to bring it to the attention of the Social Services Committee at their next meeting with a view to considering what further steps should be taken in the discharge of the Authority's statutory duty."

The criticism made against a number of local authorities is that they are not carrying out this legal duty and that the Government, in spite of constant pressure in Parliament, has failed to make local authorities aware of this duty, and, for their part, handicapped persons aware of their rights e.g., by radio, television and through the press. There are many voluntary organisations which would gladly assist local authorities in seeing this is done.

The second criticism in the article is that Section 2 is discretionary with regard to local authorities getting in contact with disabled persons and in establishing that a particular service is needed by the disabled persons. Again, this criticism is ill-founded. The section makes *mandatory* the provision of services.

True they are to be provided where the local authority is satisfied it is necessary for the disabled person. But obviously, where the local authority has information under Section 1 of the disabled person, and the disabled person applies to the local authority for the provision of these services, the service *must* be provided if the need exists. In other words, a local authority which does not make them available is in breach of the section.

Perhaps the most important flaw in the article is the suggestion that the Act "did not carry the necessary financial backing to assist authorities in expanding provision." This is clearly wrong.

In a letter dated May 20, 1971, the Secretary of State said that the Money Resolution passed in connection with the Act "was not a commitment to increase expenditure, *but an authority to do so. In other words, the resolution gave Parliament's sanction for any additional expenditure arising under the Act.*" Thus the Secretary of State made it clear there was undoubted authority from Parliament to provide the necessary finance to implement the Act. It may well be that that authority has been exercised with a self-defeating meanness, but it is clearly there.

There remains the suggestion in the article that one of the consequences of the Act "appears to be a widening of the gap between progressive and recalcitrant authorities; the good get better, the bad get worse." In fact the opposite is the case; the direct effect of the Act is to make "the bad" considerably improve. If one may quote the examples of the Cities of Canterbury and Salford, they made superb progress in the past year; in the previous year, they were both bottom of the list and subject to bitter parliamentary criticism.

Too little is known about the other provisions in the Act, which are of immense importance. It still remains the "civilised and compassionate charter for which disabled persons had waited so long." If its implementation is being hampered, that is the fault not only of some local authorities, but of the Government's failure to provide the necessary finance authorised by the Money Resolution and to take vigorous steps to see the aims of the Act are acccomplished.

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House of Commons.

John Arlott

INQUIRIES about Alsatian wines raise interesting points. A reader in Kent complains that they are difficult to buy in his area. That should not be so. Although two thirds of the production is drunk in Alsace, ample supplies reach Britain. The local branch says none is stocked by the Co-op—reputed to sell a greater bulk of beer, wines, and spirits than any other firm in the country—nor by the generally comprehensive Augustus Barnett. It is listed, though, by most of the large chains—Tylers, Victoria Wine, Westminster, the south country firm of Roberts, and Peter Dominic. Meanwhile every individual wine merchant with a remotely representative range should carry at least three Alsatian varieties; and certainly any one of them could obtain a supply if he wanted, within hours; easily in a few days.

"How should a restaurant chill Alsatian wine?" is not quite the trick question it seems. Except in unusual circumstances the solution is a refrigerator. The ordinary ice-bucket is designed for champagne, white Burgundy, or Bordeaux. The flute bottle used for the Rhenish wines is only about an inch to an inch and a half taller yet, because, for tidiness, the bucket is never full of ice, while negligible quantity of the liquor in the shorter bottle is left outside, quite often the top four inches of a slimmer flute goes unchilled. This means that invariably the first glasses poured are tepid, and the remainder too cold.

This has long been a source of

Barr. In Britain now these wines are cheap enough to allow, even encourage, tasting; and good enough to make the experiment economically sound.

Solicitors

Letter

MY FIANCE intends to change his surname before we marry, so it would be necessary to register the change of name officially in order for the change to be made in his passport, and for our marriage certificate to bear the correct name. We telephoned a number of solicitors in Hull in order to inquire how much is charged for this service, and were astounded at the variety of prices quoted, and also at the discrepancies found in the explanations given as to what, exactly, would be required. We were quoted sums from £4 to £50, the majority of solicitors quoting about £8, and while some told us that a deed poll was unnecessary except for members of certain professional bodies which were not specified, others told us that there was no difference between a statutory declaration and a deed poll and that what would be done for us would be a deed poll.

I then wrote to the Law Society, thinking, in my innocence, that they could give me some guidance as to the correct charge for the drawing up of statutory declarations and deed polls, and, while they shed further light on the differences between these two

continues till June 6, is closely linked to the directorate's two-part bulletin, "Spaces in the Home," which deals with both these areas.*

Like the bulletin, the exhibition sets out to describe the research which has been done into kitchens and bathrooms, the standards that have been adopted as a result of the research, and the basic planning principles. It does not, unlike Kira's report on bathrooms published in America in 1966, call for radically different appliances such as self-contained bath and shower units, nor specify circular or modular kitchen service units as designed for a Birds Eye competition and developed experimentally by Allied Ironfounders. And though the absence of radically new ideas may make the exhibition less exciting, its commonsense approach does mean that there are many useful suggestions which can be applied to kitchens and bathrooms today.

In the kitchen, research has tended to concentrate on layout and working areas, and in theory it is now possible to specify the minimum area needed for any kitchen without which no housewife can work efficiently. That this has never been done is due to the directorate's fear that minimum standards are often treated as standard ones, but nevertheless there is enough data on storage requirements and the space needed between different working areas for a minimum size to be worked out.

There is, for example, a standard 900mm worktop height, a recommended 600mm back-to-front cabinet dimension