



## The 1<sup>st</sup> RADAR Debate:

“This House believes the majority of disabled people can and should work”

The Brit Oval, Monday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008

Edited Transcript of the Speech opposing the motion by Sir Bert Massie, Commissioner of the Compact and Commissioner, Equality and Human Rights Commission

21 SIR BERT MASSIE: Thank you Liz I'm delighted to do so.

22 I actually agree with everything Rachel said but she  
23 didn't suggest a (inaudible) on the paper and she wants  
24 to change the motion even further. Let me tell you what  
25 the motion Says. "This house believes that the majority

1 of disabled people can and should work." The motion  
2 doesn't actually make a decision about sub disabled  
3 people, this is important. The majority of disabled  
4 people; let me help you: that's more than 50 per cent,  
5 more than half. You've got it, the majority of disabled  
6 people. Over half are of retirement age and there are  
7 330,000 -- 350,000 disabled children. So before we even  
8 consider the minorities who are of working age, and more  
9 of half of those who are not working, by the way, those  
10 who vote in favour of this motion and the 73 of you who  
11 did, you've now got to justify how you're going to go  
12 into the schools and drag these kids out and stick them  
13 up a chimney. You've got to go to old folks homes and  
14 drag out people with dementia and get them out there  
15 into the great British workforce. That's what the  
16 motion asks you to do and 73 of you have bought it before  
17 you've had a drink, for heaven's sake. This motion asks  
18 us to demand more of disabled people than any other  
19 section of the community. You can reject this motion  
20 and agree with everything that Rachel said. And unless  
21 we insist that the majority of disabled people who  
22 happen to be outside the ages of 16 to 60/65 are  
23 included into the workforce, it is blatant nonsense to  
24 argue that the majority of disabled people can and  
25 should work. For that reason alone, if you think about

1           it, you have to reject this motion. If it's good enough  
2           for Rachel, that's what the motion says, the figures are  
3           there. Reject it. One of the problems we face is  
4           defining the number of disabled people. Who are we  
5           talking about? Of course, different definitions are  
6           used for different purposes. United Nations reckons one  
7           in ten people in any population are disabled. So in the  
8           UK that gives us 6 million people. I hope these figures  
9           don't get confusing. Included in the 6 million, I  
10          assume, are the 9 million people who have arthritis and  
11          impairment largely related to ageing. I assume it  
12          includes the 8945,000 deaf and hard of hearing people  
13          according to the RNID, and of this figure, 6,471,000 are  
14          people aged over 60. Who is going to drag their  
15          hearing-aids off and send them back to work? If we look  
16          at those with the most profound deafness,  
17          108,000 are aged 16 to 60, 580,000 are over 60.  
18          Profoundly deaf people, you take their old age pension  
19          away and send them back to work over 28 per cent of  
20          wheelchair users are over 60. At the DRC, we normally  
21          use the figure of about 10 million [disabled] people, but  
whatever  
22          figure we use, most of them, up to two-thirds, are of  
23          retirement age, and 73 of you have voted to send them  
24          back to work. However when we look at the figures they are  
25          also significantly to do with ageing. Now experience in

1 the USA and work by Ray Tallis indicates this is not  
2 inevitable, and we are beginning to move to a position  
3 where the onset of ill health and disabilities delayed  
4 to the place where old age alone, and the resulting lack  
5 a physiological adaptability, will result in people  
6 becoming disabled older and dying sooner but we're not  
7 there yet, and what you've heard is what we would like  
8 to be. Don't vote on this motion believing the support  
9 services are there, because they ain't. The motion is  
10 about now, not about 10-years' time. And if you include  
11 those with mental health issues, it still increases with  
12 age so logically the motion must fall because it denies  
13 all the figures. The percentage of disabled people  
14 within the working population will increase in future  
15 years. As private pension schemes become more restrictive  
16 one of the effects of this will be that the number of people  
17 of  
18 working age who are excluded from the labour market  
19 because they generally can't work is likely to increase.  
20 Let me turn to that minority of disabled people, the  
21 people you thought you were voting for earlier. This is  
22 a subgroup not addressed by the motion where the group  
23 is currently subject to scrutiny and positive  
24 development as we heard from the minister. Agree with the  
25 main route of the Government's arguments, those who can  
work should do so. I welcome the increased support for

1 those unable to work. However, in any debate such as  
2 the one we're having, we should avoid presenting work as  
3 the only morally correct outcome and stigmatise those  
4 who remain outside the labour market. In looking at  
5 disabled people of working age we face a confusion of  
6 figures. Much of it is based on those in work and in  
7 receipt of incapacity benefit. Disabled people who are  
8 unemployed and are classed as employable are not recorded,  
9 and they are submerged in the general figures of the  
10 unemployed. Incapacity benefit is a contributory benefit,  
11 so all of the recipients had a job in the past. The  
12 figures do not include those in childhood who have never  
13 worked, and as a consequence, those with learning  
14 disabilities are unrepresented in those figures.

15 According to Richard Berthoud in the report he wrote for  
16 the DWP in 2006 there are 3.6 million disabled working  
17 aged in the UK. Of these, 29 per cent were working and  
18 71 per cent weren't. This compares with the almost  
19 reverse numbers for non-disabled people, of whom 76 per  
20 cent were working and two were per cent were not. He  
21 stressed that the level of impairment is an important  
22 factor in terms of employment prospects but is by no  
23 means the only variable. Where a person lives will have an  
24 effect. This is an important issue as Nick was saying  
25 earlier, because of the chaos in our social care systems

1 makes it impossible for people to move to follow the  
2 work. It's not just about how good you are it's about  
3 the support which we don't give. A critical factor is  
4 the level of education a person has; disabled people are  
5 much less likely than non-disabled people to have no  
6 qualifications. Of course disabled people do face  
7 discrimination by employers. The destruction of the  
8 Disability Rights Commission has set us back in tackling  
9 that issue. The recent lords judgment has removed the  
10 protection which the DDA gave disabled people and we  
11 need to use the coming Equality Bill to put that right.  
12 So all the support the minister told us is there simply  
13 isn't. It's as simple as that the law lords are at it  
14 again.

15 He also recognised that, to take the labour markets,  
16 disabled people are at an even greater disadvantage.  
17 This weekend we had the Chancellor of the Exchequer  
18 telling us we're in the top economic crisis in  
19 50 years. Sixty. 60 years, that's right. 1948, yeah  
20 the year the health service was born. If that is right  
21 then anyone on the margin of the labour market is going to  
22 suffer as unemployment starts rising; already bankers  
23 are losing their jobs. It won't be long before shop  
24 assistants start losing theirs and disabled people will  
25 suffer. So in this stage we can take all the old people

1 out of care homes and the jobs are going to start  
2 disappearing and it is going to get much more  
3 competitive, there are going to be two more useful  
4 pieces of work that question the numbers of disabled  
5 people who need to be excluded from the labour market  
6 and they deserve consideration.

7 Waddell and Aylward's The Scientific and Conceptual  
8 Basis of Incapacity Benefit made a number of strong  
9 points. They stressed, as we've heard today,  
10 unemployment is bad for people's health. Agreed. Once  
11 people go on, they don't like to leave it, agreed.  
12 People with severe mental conditions account for only 25  
13 per cent of the IB, but those with the most common  
14 health problems, 42 per cent of the mental health  
15 conditions, 21 per cent musculoskeletal and 11 per cent  
16 cardio respiratory. They assert that these conditions  
17 are manageable and long-term incapacity benefits are not  
18 inevitable. They claim that up to 1 million IB users  
19 could potentially return to work provided, I repeat,  
20 provided they are given the right opportunities, support  
21 and incentives, and throughout that study both orders  
22 stressed always that the support people get is critical.

23 Dame Carole Black picked up many of the issues in  
24 her report. Her opening words are "The subject of this  
25 review is the health of people of working age." So she

1 considered a subset of a subset of disabled people.  
2 It's nonetheless well researched in the report she  
3 pointed out that unemployment across the country costs  
4 this country £100 billion a year, and she argued that  
5 the reason people go on to IB is the failure of  
6 occupation and other health services to give them  
7 support. That has to be true. One of my roles has been  
8 helping with the mental health issue for some years.  
9 (inaudible). They are simply not here.

10 To the credit of my friend P they've taken both  
11 reports seriously and tried to affect changes but mainly  
12 the tensions as well the health service and that is  
13 moves very slowly. It is possible that when the changes  
14 are made, then more, perhaps most, disabled people will  
15 be able to return to work, at least as far as health is  
16 concerned but they will still face all the other  
17 barriers I mentioned. This debate is not just about  
18 people on IB, its about all disabled people. That's  
19 what the motion says. It doesn't say people of working  
20 age, it says the majority of disabled people. That's  
21 what it says. So those unable to work were able to have  
22 a fulfilling life. If this motion only considers the  
23 majority of disabled people of working age, then I'd be able  
24 to support it. Once again all the figures and the logic fly in the face  
25 of this motion and so those 73 of you who voted for it,

1 think about motion, believe people can and should work,  
2 but that's not what the motion says. You have to vote  
3 against this motion and I call on the house to do so.

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