

# Our Rights - issue 31, March 2011



**The International Disability  
and Human Rights Network**

Please visit <http://www.daa.org.uk/> to leave comments, or email us at [info@daa.org.uk](mailto:info@daa.org.uk) with your news stories.

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## UN Convention

### Sign ups

As of March 15<sup>th</sup> 2011

#### Convention

- 147 signatories
- 99 ratifications

#### Optional Protocol

- 90 signatories
- 61 ratifications

### Togo ratifies Convention and Protocol

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, Togo became the 99<sup>th</sup> country to ratify the CRPD.

### Easy read French version of CRPD now available

The Belgian member of Inclusion International, AFRAHM, has created a French easy-to-read version of the Convention.

It is available at: [http://inclusion-europe.org/documents/UNCRPD\\_French\\_ETR.pdf](http://inclusion-europe.org/documents/UNCRPD_French_ETR.pdf)

## UK

### Minister for Disabled People on benefit reform

Interviewed in the Guardian, Maria Miller, Minister for Disabled People, claimed that, “The clear objective of the government is

helping disabled people to live more independent lives.”

She said the current system needs to be overhauled because it is flawed and makes disabled people too dependent on benefits.

In her interview she also emphasised that reform is about improving the way benefits are delivered, but was less willing to discuss the cost-saving aspects of the change.

“I often hear concerns that are based on a lack of detailed information of what we are talking about in terms of our reforms. People need to get the facts rather than speculation,” she said.

**Editorial comment:** This is a very important article as it exposes the government’s hard-nosed complacency about the harsh impact its ‘reforms’ will have on the lives of disabled people. To say, as Miller does, that people are angry because they do not understand the government’s objectives is as ridiculous as it is condescending. The many excellent comments on her interview show that disabled people are all too aware of how the government’s cost cutting – their primary and poorly disguised objective – will greatly diminish the quality of their lives.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/feb/16/maria-miller-disability-minister-benefits-reform>

## **Benefits test 'is a complete mess', says expert**

Professor Paul Gregg, an expert on welfare reform and one of those who devised the new benefits system, has warned that it would be wrong to roll out the new work capability assessment (WCA) nationally.

He said, "The test is badly malfunctioning. The current assessment is a complete mess. ...The test so far has caused a huge amount of anguish to the people who have gone through it. We need to have something that is working accurately before we apply it nationally.”

Since early 2009, more than 240,000 cases have gone to tribunal hearings with 40% of the negative decisions being overturned. The test has been used for new claimants since 2008, but will now be applied to all 1.5 million people receiving the benefit.

In pilots of the new arrangements, 30% fewer people have been found unfit for work and 70% fewer people have been found eligible for the full-rate, unconditional support benefit. In both cases claimants have been put on lower-rate benefits. The reform is expected to save the government £1bn over five years.

Chris Grayling, the employment minister, acknowledged that there had been problems with the test, but said reforms were being introduced and would be in place in time. "I see this as a constant process of refinement and improvement," he said.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/feb/22/new-disability-test-is-a-complete-mess?intcmp=239>

**Editorial comment:** Grayling has put his telescope to his Horatio Nelson (blind) eye and said "I really do not see the signal". This cavalier response to clear evidence of the failings of the work capability assessment defines the government's approach to dismantling or weakening a whole range of key structures created to support disabled people. As was evident in the recent interview with Maria Miller, Minister for Disabled People,

(<http://www.daa.org.uk/index.php?mact=Blogs,cntnt01,showentry,0&cntnt01entryid=350&cntnt01returnid=98>)

they do not want to listen to facts that don't fit their ideologically predetermined views. Instead they rush ahead using honeyed words ('choice', 'freedom', 'independence') in an increasingly fruitless attempt to hide what is really driving 'reform' – privatisation and cost cutting.

For an excellent, much more detailed picture of the 'reforms' and their impact on the lives of disabled people, see:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/feb/23/government-reform-disability-benefits?intcmp=239>

## **Disability test comes under fire from claimants**

At a public meeting in Burnley, Lancashire, MPs on the Pensions Select Committee heard from people who took part in a pilot of the new Work Capability Assessment (WCA). This is used to determine whether a person can work or if their impairments or illness is serious enough to qualify them for benefit.

Participants' evidence was unanimously negative on every aspect of the WCA.

One person reported, "I felt it was assumed that I was lying. It was more like a police officer cross-questioning a suspected offender than someone looking at my health and welfare and mental condition."

"My wife scored zero points," another said. "The test was a total waste of time; it was all physically orientated, nothing about her mental state. ... It was overthrown at tribunal. I can only describe it as mental torture; she was a mental wreck after it."

Although it is claimed that the WCA had been introduced to root out the workshy, a spokesperson, from the local Citizens Advice Bureau argued that the test was not fit for purpose, frequently declaring people with serious health conditions fit for work. He pointed out that 80% of those they supported at appeal tribunals had their WCA result overturned.

After the meeting, Dame Anne Begg, the chair of the committee, said she saw serious problems with the WCA and felt its implementation needed be slowed down.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/global/2011/mar/07/work-capability-assessment-criticism>

**“The welfare reform bill ...will punish disabled people.”**

In an open letter to the Coalition Government, MPs, professors

and disability activists claim that disabled people will be unfairly treated with respect to benefits unless the “anti-disability” provisions are removed from the Welfare Reform Bill.

These provisions include the 365-day limit (under certain conditions) to Employment Support Allowance, as well as the replacement of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and the use of a discredited eligibility test for DLA.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/mar/08/welfare-reform-bill-punish-disabled-poor>

## **Government advisors question changes to Disability Living Allowance**

The Social Security Advisory Committee is asking why Disability Living Allowance (DLA), paid to almost 3 million people to help cover extra of being disabled, is being replaced.

They have asked for "some clarity" about the overall aims of the change. Is the goal is to reduce numbers on DLA, reduce the length of time people receive it, improve its targeting "or to achieve something else"?

Commenting on the proposed withdrawal of DLA entitlement from people living in care homes who receive it to help with the costs of transport, the committee said, “This measure will substantially reduce the independence of disabled people who are being cared for in residential accommodation, which goes against the stated aim of the reform of DLA to support 'disabled people to lead independent and active lives'.”

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/feb/23/disability-living-allowance-overhaul?INTCMP=SRCH>

## **Birmingham protest against cuts**

Birmingham City Council plans to cut £212 million from next years budget. Among other things, this will mean 2500 job loses

and £33 million being cut from spending on adult social services.

Holding a demonstration in the city on February 25<sup>th</sup>, Birmingham Against The Cuts, a group made up of unions, campaign groups, organisations of disabled people and community groups, says thousands of elderly and disabled people will have their care packages withdrawn.

The city council meets to vote on the budget on Tuesday, March 1. During the meeting, Salma Yaqoob, councillor for Birmingham's Sparkbrook ward, will present a petition to the chamber calling for councillors to vote against the budget.

<http://www.sundaymercury.net/news/midlands-news/2011/02/25/hundreds-to-protest-against-council-cuts-in-birmingham-65233-28235871/>

## **International**

### **Australia: More spending to support disabled people**

A commission has called for an additional \$7bn to be spent on services to ensure disabled people receive high-quality care and support. Its draft report proposes two new insurance funds to ease the burden on disabled people and their families.

The commission said radical changes were needed to an "underfunded, unfair, fragmented and inefficient" system, and proposed a federal government takeover of the sector. The proposals have received bipartisan support.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/parties-back-disability-revamp/story-fn59niix-1226013814374>

### **Canada: Family fight to bring their baby home to die**

The Maraachli family is fighting to stop the Victoria Hospital in London, Ontario hospital from removing life support from their



son, 13-month-old Joseph, who is terminally ill. They want medical intervention to continue so they can bring their child home to die naturally rather than at the hands of doctors.

The hospital contend that such intervention can only briefly postpone the inevitable and will cause the child additional suffering. This decision was upheld by a judge in the Superior Court.

However, a lawyer acting for the family has managed at the last minute to stop the removal of life support, which was scheduled for Monday, February 21st. Negotiations are now underway to transfer the child to a hospital in Michigan.

<http://www.catholiccanada.com/catholic-witness/pro-life/629-baby-joseph-saved-from-life-support-removal-transfer-to-michigan-hospital-likely.html>

## **China: Moves to prevent disabled children being forced to beg**

The China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF), a national umbrella organization of and for disabled people, has offered to help police stop the criminal exploitation of disabled children as beggars.

The statement followed recent media reports that some children were forced to beg after they were abducted, trafficked, or threatened. In some cases, children were deliberately injured to increase their begging potential.

According to the Ministry of Public Security, police launched a crackdown on human trafficking in April 2009, saving more than 6,700 children by the middle of November last year.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-02/23/c\\_13744511.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-02/23/c_13744511.htm)

## **China: More reports of the enslavement of disabled people**

Zhang Wei, director of the Beijing offices of Enable Disability Studies Institute, a NGO, reports that young women have been sold by psychiatric hospitals as sexual partners and wives and young men with learning difficulties have been imprisoned as forced labourers in coal mines and brick factories.

In an economy with a chronic shortage of manual labour, ruthless recruiters often prey on people with learning difficulties or mental health problems. The worst offenders work with the brick kilns that are feeding a seemingly insatiable appetite for the new apartment complexes and malls cropping up around the countryside.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-china-brick-factory-20110226,0,2116711.story>

**Editorial comment:** This report adds further evidence and harrowing individual stories to the article on the forced labour of disabled people in China carried in the December issue of Our Rights.

[http://www.daa.org.uk/index.php?mact=Blogs,cntnt01,showentry\\_0&cntnt01entryid=318&cntnt01returnid=98](http://www.daa.org.uk/index.php?mact=Blogs,cntnt01,showentry_0&cntnt01entryid=318&cntnt01returnid=98)

## **India: Protest against 'biased' consultation on new state disability law**

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of March, in Chennai, capital of the state of Tamil Nadu, disabled people demonstrated against a consultation being held on new state-level disability legislation.

“Most of the 240 persons who registered their names for the consultation were people without any disability. More persons with disability should have been participating in the consultation,” said P.Simmachandran, State secretary, Federation of Tamil Nadu Physically Handicapped Associations.



Photo: M. Karunakaran

Protesters were also concerned that there was little representation from disabled people in rural areas and that the act would not be comprehensive enough.

However, according to those who organised the event, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act would guarantee equality and non-discrimination to all disabled people.

<http://www.hindu.com/2011/03/10/stories/2011031060360400.htm>

## **India: Disabled girls abused in orphanage**

Twelve disabled girls have appeared before a panel investigating alleged sexual abuse at the Kalyani Mahila Bal Seva Sanstha Orphanage at Kalamboli in Navi Mumbai.

Caretakers Ramchandra Karanjule and wife Surekha, who began the orphanage in 2003, and administrator Sonali Badte are now under arrest. Kalyani Karanjule, the daughter of the founders, who was also associated with the orphanage and had absconded, was arrested on Sunday.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/abused-at-orphanage-girls-give-panel-details-of-tormentors/758815/>

## **International: The war against euthanasia/assisted suicide**

Throughout the world a life-against-death war is raging, with battles being fought on many fronts. For example, in the USA bills to permit assisted suicide are or have been debated in Hawaii, Montana, Idaho, Vermont, New Hampshire, Wyoming, Washington and Pennsylvania. Attempts have also been made to legalise euthanasia in Australia, the UK and elsewhere. Even when their efforts are repulsed, as most have been, the pro-euthanasia lobbies regroup and launch yet more attacks. This is a war without end

To follow what is happening on the front line, see:

<http://www.euthanasiaprevention.on.ca/>

## **Kenya: People with mental health problems and learning difficulties face neglect and abuse**

The estimated three million Kenyans with learning difficulties or mental health issues endure intense stigma from society and get virtually no help from the state.

A CNN report found families locking up their loved ones, children discarded by institutions and cases of suspected sexual abuse.

A representative case is that of Thomas Matoke (33), who has been tied to a bed frame for almost all his life. His mother says they have been chased away from village after village by angry, fearful neighbours.



Thomas Matoke

The Kenyan government spends less than one percent of its health budget on mental health, though one-quarter of all

patients going to hospitals or clinics complain of mental health issues.

Dr. Frank Njenga, president of the African Association of Psychiatrists says, "The policy is very clear. Mental health services are a priority in this country. The practice is also clear. They (the services) are not. We as a people have perfected the system of hiding our friends, relatives and other loved ones who have intellectual disability away from sight. Out of sight, out of mind, no funding, neglected completely."

For more on this story, including video clips, see:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/02/25/kenya.forgotten.health/index.html>

## **Malaysia: Disabled street vendors protest**

A protest has been launched after authorities in Petaling Jaya tried to move five disabled and elderly street vendors from the Taman Megah market.

Disabled people met with Selangor state executive councillor Dr Xavier Jayakumar on Monday, February 28<sup>th</sup> and called for an immediate end to the harassment of the stall-holders and that they be allowed to stay in their spot unconditionally. They pointed out that their demands were in line with the provisions of the UN Convention, ratified by Malaysia.

The delegation also took the opportunity to make other demands. These included the following:

- Disabled vendors should be allotted space at the more accessible and visible front of the market
- As a matter of equality and respect, disabled people should be able to enter buildings in the same manner as everyone else
- Disabled people must be part of decisions affecting them
- Politicians and bureaucrats should be educated on

disability rights

<http://thestar.com.my/lifestyle/story.asp?file=/2011/3/3/lifefocus/8155251&sec=lifefocus>

**Editorial comment:** This incident finds a parallel in Peru. Here disabled street vendors (ambulantes) in Lima, despite having official permission to trade, were attacked and injured by police who tried to move them on. This in turn led to a demonstration by disabled people and their supporters. See videos of the events:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRwJPqwlG0>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwblzkUHSgU>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDIK7Reh5b4&feature=related>

Throughout the world, many disabled people make their living in the so-called informal sector, mainly as market traders. It would be interesting to know to what extent the discrimination and harassment in Peru and Malaysia is found in other countries, as well as what is being done to combat it. Please get in touch with us at DAA if you want to share similar stories.

## **New Zealand: Independent living options must be made available**

Ross Brereton, CEO of Disabled Persons Assembly (DPA), the umbrella body for New Zealand DPOs, has reminded the government of their duties under Article 19 (right to independent living) of the CRPD.

He says that there is a long way to go before disabled people and government understand the intentions of the CRPD. Currently disabled people do not have real choice over where they live. For example, the inappropriate placement of hundreds of younger disabled people in rest homes for elderly people, comes about because of a lack of alternative community living options and accessible housing.

Brereton added that talk about the possible need for larger residential facilities is unhelpful and unsettling to disabled

people and their families and would be in breach of the UN Convention.

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PO1102/S00147/disabled-people-must-have-access-to-community-living-options.htm>

## **Pakistan: Disabled people sold or kidnapped to beg in Iran.**

Police in the southern province of Sindh report that hundreds of disabled people are being trafficked to be exploited as beggars outside shrines and mosques in Iran.

In some cases poor parents are being paid to allow their disabled children to be taken away to beg. Others, both disabled children and adults, are being kidnapped.

Mujahid Shaikh, who made his way back to Khairpur in Sindh after being trafficked to Iran, and now begs at the railway crossing, said there were "hundreds of persons [from Pakistan] with disability, including children" living in captivity in Iran.

Many of those taken are already begging in Pakistan. According to Ghulam Nabi Nizamani, co-ordinator of Disabled People's International Pakistan, this is because, "From childhood, disabled people are told they are good for nothing and must always depend on others. They are severely disadvantaged in terms of access to education and those from poor families often end up as beggars."

<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=92183>

## **Tanzania: No access to justice for disabled people**

The failings of the judicial system is a major problem for disabled people in Tanzania, where it is estimated that the levels of sexual assault and other forms of violence are ten times greater for disabled people, especially women and

children, than the country's population in general. It must be stressed, however, that abuse is also a major problem for disabled men.

People with learning difficulties are particularly vulnerable, as the law enforcement system does not take into account their needs, often assumes they are unreliable witnesses and thereby leaves them exposed and defenseless. This can result in further attacks and injury during investigative and legal procedures.

In fact, it seems that most criminal cases against disabled people do not go very far, particularly when they relate to gender-based violence.

In short, disabled people in Tanzania are doubly betrayed, by their abusers and by a justice system that is bent on protecting and promoting the interests of the able and powerful.

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201103030896.html>

**Editorial comment:** The Tanzanian case is hardly unique, but is nonetheless instructive. It reminds us that while throughout the world disabled people have to fight for access to the physical environment, to employment, education or to information, lack of access to the legal system also remains a major barrier to realising equality and human rights.

## **USA : Court orders forced electroshock**



A judge has ordered the sheriff to pick up Elizabeth Ellis, 67, living at home with her husband in Moorhead, Minnesota, and bring her to a psychiatric institution. This has happened because Elizabeth refused to report last month for another involuntary court-ordered outpatient electroshock.



MindFreedom International is organising a national and international campaign to fight for Mrs. Ellis's human rights and against anyone being compelled to undergo this barbaric practice.

For more information and how to join the campaign see:

<http://www.mindfreedom.org/shield/ellis/ee-2>

## **USA: Billions available to support independent living**

Under the Affordable Care Act, the federal government is to spend \$4.3 billion to help establish and expand community-based alternatives to long-term institutional care.

\$621 million will be provided over the next five years to expand the Money Follows the Person programme. This allows disabled people who are living in institutions to move into the community with services and support.

Furthermore, the Department of Health and Human Services is proposing rules for the Community First Choice Option, a new initiative offering states access to a combined \$3.7 billion over the next three years in additional Medicaid matching funds if they agree to eliminate caps on the number of individuals who can live in the community.

Dr. Donald Berwick, administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), said, "There is more evidence than ever that people who need long-term care prefer to live in their own homes and communities whenever possible. To restrict these individuals to institutions where even the simplest decisions of the day such as when to get up, what to eat and when to sleep are made by someone else must no longer be the norm. This new Federal funding will make a difference in people's lives."

**Editorial comment:** When combined with the federal government's recent legal actions against states that have failed or been slow to move disabled people into the community, (see

Our Rights, February 2011) these latest initiatives demonstrate a concerted effort by the Obama administration to promote the independent living agenda.

A genuine good news story!

<http://www.dhhs.gov/news/press/2011pres/02/20110222b.html>

## **USA: Opposition to closure of institutional care homes**

The Administration on Developmental Disabilities' (ADD) recommendation to close the country's remaining institutional care facilities has sparked off a sharply polarised debate.

Those opposed to closure claim, "The nation needs a balanced range of service options for individuals with severe and profound intellectual and developmental disabilities, including the option of licensed facility-based care."

On the other hand, supporters of the ADD proposals argue, "We know all too well that abuse, neglect and other forms of denigration are far more likely to occur in large congregate settings. Integrated, community based housing is the only policy the federal government should be supporting."

ADD's final strategic plan is expected later this spring.

[http://www.disabilityscoop.com/2011/03/01/debate-over-institutions-flares/12424/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=March+1%2C+2011%3A+News+from+Disability+Scoop&utm\\_source=YMLP&utm\\_term=](http://www.disabilityscoop.com/2011/03/01/debate-over-institutions-flares/12424/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=March+1%2C+2011%3A+News+from+Disability+Scoop&utm_source=YMLP&utm_term=)

**Editorial comment:** The high levels of abuse in large residential institutions is very well documented and, because of this and other factors, the case for closing them down is overwhelming. However, as the next report demonstrates, without proper oversight, simply putting disabled people in smaller units is not enough to overcome problems of neglect and mistreatment.

## **USA: Crime but little Punishment. NY Times finds abuse rampant and unchecked in residential homes**

Forty years ago the state of New York closed down its large 'warehouse' institutions for people with learning difficulties and dispersed the residents to smaller group units housing four to eight people. They are often cared for by as few as two people and little effective supervision is provided.

A year-long New York Times investigation has found widespread problems in the more than 2,000 of these state-run homes. In hundreds of cases reviewed, employees who sexually abused, beat or taunted residents were rarely fired, even after repeated offenses, and in many cases, were simply transferred to other group homes run by the state, where they frequently continued to mistreat residents.

Despite a state law requiring that incidents in which a crime may have been committed be reported to the police, such referrals are rare. Of about 13,000 allegations of abuse in 2009 within state-operated and licensed homes, fewer than 5 percent were referred to law enforcement.

Local law enforcement officials say the fact that victims often cannot talk or have extreme cognitive impairment has made prosecution difficult. Trade union support for accused members has also made disciplinary action and dismissal complex and protracted.

Furthermore, in many cases, the residents do not have families actively involved in their lives, and, hence, no advocates to assure that state officials and the police take the mistreatment seriously.

Finally, the official agencies tasked with regulating the homes and protecting people with learning difficulties have been totally ineffective, tending to play down allegations of abuse rather than to root it out. Less than two percent of allegations of abuse or neglect of have been investigated.

After learning of the Times investigation, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo forced the resignations of the heads of the two agencies

concerned, the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities and the state's Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons With Disabilities.

The governor said "It is a basic function of state government to protect the most vulnerable among us." The Cuomo administration said it would undertake immediate and comprehensive review of the agencies and their practices.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/13/nyregion/13homes.html>

## **USA : Teacher convicted for abusing disabled child**

Laurie Peavy, a teacher at Woodstock High School in Cherokee County, Georgia, who duct-taped an autistic boy to a chair and confined a blind girl under a desk, pleaded guilty to false imprisonment and cruelty to children, was sentenced to six years of probation and \$2,000 in fines.

[http://www.ajc.com/news/cherokee/cherokee-teacher-pleads-guilty-851491.html?cxntlid=cmg\\_cntnt\\_rss](http://www.ajc.com/news/cherokee/cherokee-teacher-pleads-guilty-851491.html?cxntlid=cmg_cntnt_rss)

## **USA: Disabled people stage protest against cuts**

In Austin, Texas on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 400 disabled people and their supporters held a protest against cuts to essential services, outside the governor's office.

The disability rights group Adapt of Texas says they have sought a meeting with Governor Perry since August, only to be put off repeatedly. They vowed to stay until they were removed or arrested.



Asked why the governor has declined to meet with representatives, the governor's spokesman said that Perry meets with constituents every day.

“But if you don't meet with someone, chaining yourself to a fence or blocking access to the Capitol is not going to generate a meeting,” he said. “Disruptive tactics and preventing access to the Capitol is not going to accomplish anything.”

<http://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/texas-legislature/headlines/20110301-disabled-texans-stage-sit-in-to-protest-planned-cuts.ece>

**Editorial comment:** ADAPT staged a similar protest in Wisconsin at the end of February when they occupied the Wisconsin Republican Party headquarters in Madison. They were angry over changes that would favour institutional care over funding for independent living services.

[http://news.firedoglake.com/2011/02/24/activists-occupy-gop-headquarters-in-madison/?utm\\_source=Disability+Rights+California+E-Newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=cc8aa2618e-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN](http://news.firedoglake.com/2011/02/24/activists-occupy-gop-headquarters-in-madison/?utm_source=Disability+Rights+California+E-Newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=cc8aa2618e-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN)

## USA: “World better off without defective people”

Martin Harty, a 91-year-old Republican representative in the New Hampshire legislature, told, Sharon Omand, a constituent, that he believes in eugenics and that the world would be better off without “...the mentally ill, the retarded, people with physical disabilities and drug addictions - the defective people ....”

Harty said nature has a way of "getting rid of stupid people," and "now we're saving everyone who gets born." He added, "I wish we had a Siberia so we could ship them all off to freeze to death and die and clean up the population."

A colleagues observed that Harty, a retired market vendor, “... is constantly confused, easily swayed, hard of hearing, and prone to offer up unrelated commentary or go off on unrelated tangents.”

Rep. Jon Richardson, a Republican on the Legislative Administration Committee, said he does not condone Harty's comments on any level, but he takes into account the fact that Harty is a World War II veteran in his 90s.

Following the outcry about what he said, on March 15<sup>th</sup>, Harty resigned from the legislature.

<http://www.concordmonitor.com/article/245163/lawmaker-advocates-eugenics>

**Editorial comment:** Being elderly or a veteran or even a disabled person, and he appears to be all three, is no excuse for such blatantly disabilist comments, as it wouldn't be if Harty had made similar remarks about race or ethnicity. At least he had enough sense to realise he had to go.

