

Handicapped Have Rights Too

Regarding the article "Residents Query Proposal on Retarded Adults" [Dec. 18]: Today many members of society refuse to realize that the handicapped have certain rights and that they, too, are human beings with sexual and emotional feelings just like everyone else. Just because a person talks with a lisp or walks with a limp, or has to be confined to a wheelchair, doesn't mean that he or she is less of a human being than you or I.

As a matter of fact some handicapped people are better than their non-handicapped peers. They hold jobs either in shel-



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tered workshops or in the competitive market and pay taxes just like everybody else. Yet they are treated differently.

Let me explain. The minute a hostel is proposed, the residents of that town or village say "fine," as long as it's not in their neighborhood, or on their block. Why can't these people realize that the handicapped are just like everyone else? They get up in the morning, eat breakfast, go to work, travel on the buses or the Long Island Rail Road just like everybody else and then come home and cook dinner and afterwards watch TV or go out to a movie.

Now I ask you, doesn't that sound common? Yet when youngsters and even adults hear a person talk with a lisp or see a handicapped person they begin to stare and sometimes even laugh. In America not one person is perfect. We are all handicapped to a certain extent. When neighborhoods put down hostels or workshops for the handicapped, don't the residents realize that when these people were born they did not ask to be handicapped? Why punish them now?

For those who still think it's fun to downgrade the handicapped, I say go take a tour of the cerebral palsy center in Roosevelt, the Human Resources School in Albertson, the Rehabilitation Institute in Mineola or the workshop that they operate in Rockville Centre. In these places, what you will see are handicapped people working to earn a living for what certainly couldn't be classified as middle-class wages.

While others are stealing hubcaps off cars or shoplifting, the handicapped are trying to become better, more productive citizens. This is why when people say no to hostels I want to scream. What right do they have to deny the handicapped a decent place to live? Remember a few years back how the blacks and Hispanics were denied a decent place to live and the government had to step in? Well the same thing goes for the handicapped. They too are human and should be treated as equals.

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Editor's Note: The writer is a handicapped adult who works in Forest Hills and lives in a "supportive living facili-