

24 hours in a wheelchair

Disabled face discrimination

by Glenn Wanamaker

Have you ever thought what it would be like to live a life in a wheelchair? Not too many people have. And that is why paraplegics and quadraplegics are among the forgotten and discriminated in our society.

Being unable to play sports and move freely are two thoughts that come quickly to mind. But few people, particularly planners and architects, think beyond that and as a result, some very basic things which we take for granted are serious obstacles to those in wheelchairs.

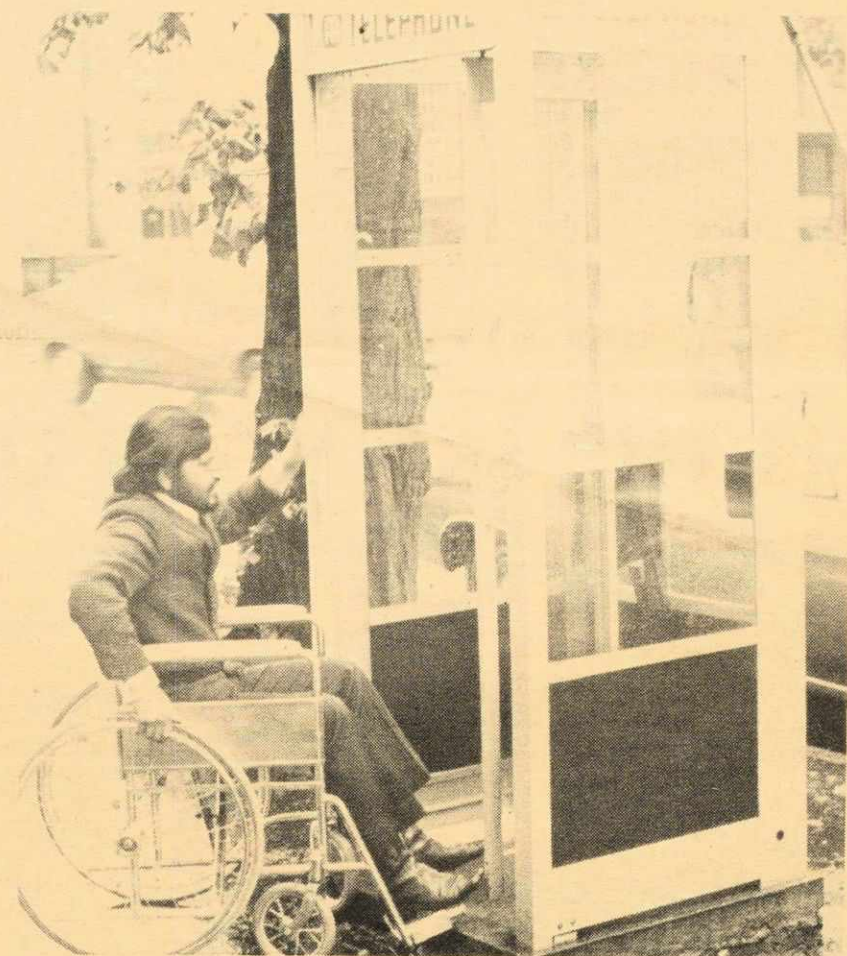
Ben Singh, a second year student at the Maritime School of Social Work, spent this past summer working for the

Canadian Paraplegic Association in Halifax. After spending 24 hours in a wheelchair, he soon found out that little consideration has been given to these people.

This 24 hours, says Singh, was a great experience in empathy. Everything seemed to move very quickly and there was tremendous difficulty just crossing streets. Curbs are one obstacle to the person in a wheelchair.

After wheeling around through his daily routine, Singh found that his fingers were bruised and that his feet felt sore. But the biggest problem was overcoming the obstacles that are non-existence for everyone else.

Most buildings are inaccessible



martin felsky/dal photo



martin felsky/dal photo

because of steps — even one step makes it extremely difficult. Telephones are always high, making it impossible for a paraplegic to reach it. Washroom facilities are rarely accessible, they are much too small and do not provide space to turn the chair around.

Most restaurants are out as well, because of steps and because of the structure of booths and tables.

Don Curran, executive director of the Canadian Paraplegic Association in the Maritimes, recently went to Province House to speak to the Premier on the lack of wheelchair facilities. He had to be lifted up the steps.

The obstacles are everywhere and the problem is to make known these obstacles so that homes and public places

can become accessible to those in wheelchairs.

Singh spent the summer contacting developers, engineers and architects at the various government levels. As well, he compiled a list of sidewalks that need to be ramped.

Each time the construction of a new building is announced, the Association contacts the architects to ensure that facilities for paraplegics will be provided. Revisions to the building code will also provide that paraplegics standards are guaranteed.

In the past ignorance of the obstacles has provided the problem. Now the Association is aiming to reverse that.

There Must Be
A New Majority

PM's arrogance caused strain
You can trust



Choose
a Better Way

Trudeau: Does the Melody Linger On? a good alternative.

The Liberals are prepared to live with our problems. We want to solve them. Support us in that effort.

Seeking workable solution
Jobless
Youth culture
Where leaders are today

'Just Society' ?

Make your demands for needed change in a responsible manner. Have the strength to fight for your beliefs effectively. Join a political party.

Progressive Conservative Student Federation

Progressive Conservative Party

The Hon. R.L. Stanfield

Victory
Visible