

PAUL HUNT

by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation.

Paul Hunt, a founder member of the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, died on 12th July, 1979, at the age of 42. Paul's sudden death has not only been a great personal loss to his family, to the members of the Union, and to his many other friends, but it is also a significant loss to all physically impaired people who struggle to improve their conditions of life by integration into the mainstream of society. In his life and work, Paul consistently made a contribution that was characteristically dynamic, determined, selfless and courageous in its content and practice.

Paul himself suffered a degenerative physical impairment from early childhood. His formal education was curtailed when, at the age of 13, he became chairbound and was forced to go and live in hospital. In 1956, at the age of 18, he got himself moved from a chronic sick ward to Le Court Cheshire Home in Hampshire where he spent 14 years. The 'Cheshire Smile', a journal that is distributed internationally throughout the Homes, bears witness to Paul's regular and outspoken contributions promoting progressive changes in the Cheshire Homes. Paul also edited and contributed to 'Stigma', a book of essays by physically impaired people. He vigorously promoted the introduction of Fokus, the Swedish integrated housing and work scheme, into this country; he had published a number of articles on different aspects of the needs of physically impaired people, and he was an active member of the Disablement Income Group from its inception up until the foundation of UPIAS around 1974.

Paul believed fundamentally in the principle that people should have control over their own lives and that, in contemporary society, this control should not be denied to anyone, including those who need particular kinds of technological or personal help because of physical impairments. At Le Court, despite any fears of intimidation, Paul was over a considerable period of time a trusted leader and outspoken participant in the eventually successful struggles of residents for representation on controlling committees and for a much greater voice in running their own Home and their own affairs.

In 1970, Paul married and left Le Court to live in the community and work as a computer programmer. His wife, Judy, shared Paul's convictions, and with her support his dedication to the cause of full integration never wavered, but if anything became even more urgent when other demands were made on his time and severely limited energies. He never forgot the struggles of physically impaired people who remained segregated and isolated in institutions of all kinds, and

the focus of his work was consistently to encourage and support those who are most oppressed by their exclusion from normal society.

For some twenty years, then, Paul Hunt was at the forefront of our struggle. He consistently opposed the intimidation of physically impaired people by established authorities and noble patrons, etc, who control our lives and claim to speak with our voice. He strove always, and often at personal cost, for the concrete application of the lessons that he learnt in struggle, and the principles that he developed, for the benefit of the mass of physically impaired people. His natural hatred of oppression and its attendant suffering, for example, led him to an increasingly conscious struggle towards its root causes in our particular society. He also came to understand the fundamental need for the mass of physically impaired people to unite and organise themselves to put forward their own agreed views as a group and in support of each other. To that end, Paul was determined that they should have an independent and democratic organisation of their own which could campaign against all segregated facilities and institutions, and give support to such struggles as furthered this aim. It was through Paul's initiative in 1973 that the organisation which eventually became known as UPIAS was formed; and in the six years of struggle that remained to him, Paul's strength, humanity, experience and abilities made a major contribution to the organisational and ideological character of the Union, as well as being a profound influence and source of strength for all of us with whom he joined in struggle.

No brief obituary can pay full tribute to the contribution Paul Hunt has made to the organised struggle of physically impaired people in the United Kingdom. Such a tribute can only come when a complete and honest history is written about our struggles for emancipation. Such a history will be free from misplaced praise for patronage and so-called experts who claim to act in our interest. It will look to the struggles of physically impaired people themselves, and in this light Paul Hunt will certainly be recognised as the figure of leading significance in his time.

To Paul's wife, Judy, and to their son, Patrick, we offer our deepest sympathy.

As members of UPIAS, we pledge that Paul's death will allow no respite to our oppressors; and with confidence we assert that others will come forward to join us in developing the struggle which Paul Hunt did so much to advance; that is, the struggle of physically impaired people for emancipation and the elimination of our disabilities.