[39. 1988-009:004T Gaywire.mp3](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1hIa1WvYxWHWvKd7HdjW290hHCSSERcda)

This is Ellen Ager for Gaywire. Recently, the Coalition for Gay Rights in Ontario held a workshop at their annual conference on the concerns of disabled people in the gay community. Joanne Doucette and Scott MacArthur were the leaders of this workshop. Joanne works with DAWN: Disabled Women's Network, and Scott has a long history of involvement in the gay community. I recently spoke with Scott. Scott has cerebral palsy, a disorder that affects his muscle control and his speech. Since we communicate not only with our voice, but also with our body and facial gestures, I had no problem listening to Scott speak and understanding him. However, due to the limitations of radio, we will be presenting this interview in a slightly different way than usual. Paul Baker will be speaking in Scott's own words about the workshop held at the CGRO conference, and about the issues raised there. And so, we're going to go on with the interview and we'll hear from Scott at the end.

Can you tell me a little bit about how you've been involved in the gay community in the last few years?

Well I started my involvement with CHAT years ago, and in time I became a volunteer at the body politic. And then I went on to become a member of Metropolitan Community Church and ended up on the Board of Directors. And recently I've been working with Rites magazine.

Have you also been involved with the disabled community organizing in any way?

Very little. Time runs short when you're a volunteer, and my priority is more the interest in the gay community.

How do you feel you've been treated as a gay person in the disabled community? Are you out as a gay person there?

Yes, I’d say I'm out. But I don't feel I'm too well accepted socially in the disabled community.

Can you tell me how you got involved in giving the workshop at the CGRO conference recently?

A good friend of mine Carolyn Coburn died a few months ago, and DAWN: Disabled Women's Network, had a special service for her. And I spoke about the problems of being a disabled male as opposed to a lesbian. And from there, Joanne asked me to work with her on a workshop.

What kind of issues were raised at this workshop?

Accessibility. The inability of most disabled people to get into dances. Into gay clinics, such as Hassle Free. The sexuality issue. The right to have sex with a disabled person.

When you're talking about accessibility, you're not talking just about physical disabilities, like the need to use a wheelchair. You're talking also about other kinds of disability?

Yes. A lot of us, when we get to a dance or a buffet or something, aren't able to eat, because we need assistance to eat; to go to the washroom, because we need assistance to go. And then there's the problem of non-visible disabilities, such as hearing, and people on special diets can't drink pop or anything.

Have you found that there's any interest in the gay male community particularly in the organizations in the questions of accessibility and sexuality for people who are disabled?

I think that it is coming in philosophy. But in reality, there's still a lot of the Prince Charming syndrome, where everybody is looking for the beautiful young bodies. To be disabled, you really don't fit into that.

So how were your comments received at this workshop?

I think people were pretty open to them. I think that in the gay male community, anyway, the philosophy is there. It's just that, people don't want to get involved for fear of what they're getting involved with. That's a roundabout answer, but people really think that by asking a disabled person out, they're going to become a nurse or an assistant. And it isn't that way at all, because we have healthcare aids who are going to continue to do that aspect of our care.

Do you feel that AIDS has affected the gay community’s view or outlook on being disabled in the last few years?

I don't think it has really helped. But I think that in the near future as more and more gay people become debilitated, the question of accessibility will become a major issue. Sexuality… because I am disabled, people who feared me before AIDS are still going to fear me now. Really hasn't made a difference to me.

And now we'll hear directly from Scott again.

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I'd like to thank Scott MacArthur for speaking with me and giving his permission to use his interview in this way. And I'd like to apologize for our technical difficulties at the beginning, because we wanted you to be able to hear Scott at the beginning and at the end of this interview. I'd also like to thank Paul Baker for speaking today in Scott’s own words.

And I'd like to thank, Scott, it's been a privilege and wish him all the best.

Thanks. This is Ellen Ager for gay wire with Paul Baker.