



**Virtual Ability, Inc.® presents the 6th Annual  
International Disability Rights Affirmation Conference  
December 1 and 2, 2017  
in Second Life at  
<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Virtual%20Ability/54/170/23>**

Title: "Human Rights Under Attack: The struggle against cuts and austerity in the UK, 2010-2017"  
Speaker: John McArdle, Black Triangle, Scotland, UK

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[2017/12/02 06:25] Carolyn Carillon: Hello everyone.  
Today's presentation is being transcribed so those without audio or who require text only can participate in real time.

A little explanation about this service.

Voice-to-text transcriptionists provide a translation of the key ideas discussed, NOT a word for word transcription.

Voice-to-text services provide an in-the-moment snapshot of ideas and concepts, so that those who are unable to hear or to understand the audio program are able to participate in real-time.

You will see the transcription in local chat.

Transcription is provided by Virtual Ability, Inc.

The transcriptionists are:

Elektra Panthar

Carolyn Carillon

The following initials in the transcription record will identify the speakers,

JM: John McArdle

[2017/12/02 06:29] Carolyn Carillon: <<transcription begins>>

[2017/12/02 06:29] Suln Mahogany: Hello everyone,

I am Suellen Heartsong and I have been a member of Second Life for over 8 years

I am a retired 911 dispatch supervisor from the Midwest

who met her now RL husband in SL and moved to Colorado.

Talk about a Leap of Faith!

I joined SL as a stress relief from my job and found that I enjoyed the music and dancing and

became a DJ inworld. Music is what "feeds my soul".

I also enjoy photography in SL and have had work displayed at our own Cape Able Gallery.

I have been a member of Virtual Ability, Inc. for over 5 years and am please to step in and help out for conferences as well as the occasional party at the Heron's Nest on Cape Heron sim.

Being part of Virtual Ability Inc. has given me the ability to help others and learn about

things that help myself as well as my husband.

Today I am pleased to introduce to you our first speaker

who is joining us via wi-fi from Poland:

John McArdle, disabled activist, co-founder of the user-led campaign network Black Triangle.

Black Triangle Campaign ,

<http://blacktrianglecampaign.org/>

University of Leeds 1989-1993

Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Formerly a reporter for Eastern Express,

Correspondent Agence France Presse Asia Pacific Bureau, Hong Kong.

Research and Publications Executive

British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong.

Today's presentation will be:

Human Rights Under Attack: The struggle against cuts and austerity in the UK, 2010-2017.

Audience, please refrain from typing in Local Chat during the presentation, until he asks for input or the Q&A.

Additions to the chat stream may make it difficult for those of us who can only follow along in text to understand what is being presented.

May I suggest you notecard your questions or comments until the end.

Thank you.

Please welcome Mr McArdle to the podium.

[2017/12/02 06:34] Carolyn Carillon: GH: John is from Scotland but is in Poland  
He's having some issues

So we're having him come in through Skype

On my computer

Trying to call on Skype

[2017/12/02 06:43] Gentle Heron: Thanks to our audience for your patience with our tech issues

[2017/12/02 06:44] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): I'm not following. This was working before I left Scotland. Anyway

In the meantime

Who here has heard of Black Triangle?

[2017/12/02 06:44] TopperBernham: I have

[2017/12/02 06:44] Mook Wheeler: I have

Both Topper and I are in the UK, though

[2017/12/02 06:45] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): We have been campaigning for seven and a half long years

Would people please like to just ask questions and I will answer

A Q & A

As I cannot type what I had prepared

[2017/12/02 06:49] Gentle Heron: John, so sorry the tech is failing us. We will invite you back soon! But I want to know, are people really dying in the UK?

[2017/12/02 06:49] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): I was going to speak from bullet points

I know my stuff so I don't usually write it all out

We began in 2010

After a friend who went through a DWP ATOS Work Capability Assessment hanged himself

I myself have depressive illness and take daily medication

So we campaigned to have the work capability assessment regime scrapped

The Conservative Government made it even tougher

As the UN said - The government is perpetrating grave and systematic violations of pour human rights

The assessment regimes for disability benefits are some of the tools they use to perpetrate these abuses  
Their goal is ideological  
They want to destroy the welfare state and replace it with private medical insurance  
They have impoverished many millions of people  
Thousands of avoidable deaths  
go unreported by our state broadcaster the BBC and other mainstream media  
But there is hard empirical scientific evidence  
from our national health service and respected academics of what they are doing to us  
So we demonstrate, educate and inform  
Yet the outcry expected never really materialised  
That is the most depressing thing  
We fail to understand how anyone decent or kind could vote for this brutal government  
Only by getting the government out can we put a stop to our people's suffering  
This much we have learned. They simply do not listen and only pretend to care  
Cut after cut after cut

[2017/12/02 06:59] Gentle Heron: John, is there talk in the UK as there is in the US of people with disabilities not "deserving" government handouts? That we are "slackers" who are wasting public resources?

[2017/12/02 07:00] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): Absolutely

[2017/12/02 07:00] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): sounds very familiar  
Gentle, it's a societal attitude

[2017/12/02 07:01] Gentle Heron: What can we as people with disabilities do to show that this is not true?

[2017/12/02 07:01] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): That was the propaganda device they used to make the British public support these unconscionable cuts

Now disability hate crime has increased exponentially

[2017/12/02 07:01] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): The UK has become a much nastier unkind place

[2017/12/02 07:01] Gentle Heron: How do we combat this misinformation?

[2017/12/02 07:01] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): the media would be a good place to start

[2017/12/02 07:02] ShylatheSuperGecko: I disagree Dowager, as much of the media slants portrayals of us as well

[2017/12/02 07:02] Gentle Heron: I have a severely physically disabled friend. She provides employment for 4 aides. Surely that pays back into society!

[2017/12/02 07:02] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): The right wing and broadcast media will not report on it adequately if at all

The UK media is overwhelmingly biased towards the right and opposed to the left

[2017/12/02 07:03] Mook Wheeler: As someone living in the UK, who keeps an eye on disability rights issues, I agree with everything John is saying

[2017/12/02 07:02] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): Absolutely John

[2017/12/02 07:02] ShylatheSuperGecko: and if we are seen in public, the public says, "See, they are not disabled!"

Unless we have mobility devices or something "they" see as qualifying us as disabled...

[2017/12/02 07:03] 01 (01.hifeng): Oh, so true, Shyla

When you look fine you're 'healthy'... yeah, right

[2017/12/02 07:04] Gentle Heron: It is really hard for people with "invisible disabilities" isn't it?

[2017/12/02 07:04] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): absolutely Gentle

[2017/12/02 07:03] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): And we need to reach those people

So that we get out of our "echo chamber"

[2017/12/02 07:04] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): And now we have all these TV programmes which actively attack those receiving assistance, the media is owned by Tories, they have no interest in our futures

[2017/12/02 07:04] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): Yes, It's hard for us all no matter what impairments or conditions we have

[2017/12/02 07:05] Gentle Heron: Is there something we with visible disabilities can do to help our disabled friends with invisible disabilities?

[2017/12/02 07:05] Stepin (stepinwolf.darkstone): This is where things are going in the US as well.

[2017/12/02 07:06] ShylatheSuperGecko: We should take an example from GLAAD - as opposed to requesting attention, we should voice our opposition to misrepresentation by media, television and film (GLAAD, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), but we must include politician statements too.

[2017/12/02 07:06] Mook Wheeler: John, the 'thousands' of avoidable cuts-caused or cuts-related UK deaths is approximately 3000, is that correct?

[2017/12/02 07:06] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): all we can do is rise, I have stickers on my car, not all disabilities are visible

[2017/12/02 07:06] ShylatheSuperGecko: we may not be able to march, but we can call, create social action networks and educate

And let those of us who can march or wheel, do so :)

[2017/12/02 07:07] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): Yes Shyla and alas yes Mook

[2017/12/02 07:07] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): It's impossible to say precisely  
But one death is too many

Then long-term poverty eventually grinds people down

[2017/12/02 07:07] Gentle Heron: Shyla, you are saying we need to become more active

[2017/12/02 07:08] ShylatheSuperGecko: yes, when I hear disabled folks say they don't want to get into the politics, this is where we end up, we are political beings, we can no longer let ableism define our outcomes.

We did not choose this, but we must overcome it - empower ourselves and create a more positive image

[2017/12/02 07:08] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): If we don't do politics the Tories will do it for us

[2017/12/02 07:08] ShylatheSuperGecko: Yes John, sadly, and I know we are exhausted, but it CAN get worse

[2017/12/02 07:09] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): It's going to with the new "Universal Credit"

[2017/12/02 07:09] Mook Wheeler: 30,000 deaths in UK linked to cuts:  
<http://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2017-02-20-30000-excess-deaths-2015-linked-cuts-health-and-social-care>

And also this: 2800 deaths from being found 'fit for work':  
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/aug/27/thousands-died-after-fit-for-work-assessment-dwp-figures>

[2017/12/02 07:10] ShylatheSuperGecko: we need to send Mook's article to all US media outlets

[2017/12/02 07:09] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): the Scottish government has a policy and scheme to encourage disabled people into politics That is why the UN investigated, Mook

[2017/12/02 07:11] Gentle Heron: The UN investigated the UK system

[2017/12/02 07:10] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): I'll be blunt - the next four years are going to be a tribulation - hell - for people with disabilities

[2017/12/02 07:11] Gentle Heron: We need to stay in communication, to help each other through it

[2017/12/02 07:12] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): Our sister organisation DPAC Disabled People Against Cuts instigated that investigation Feeding the Committee on the Rights of Disabilities all the information from what was going on here on the ground

[2017/12/02 07:12] ShylatheSuperGecko: And the UK govt minimized the investigation, played it down, as if it was over-reaction

[2017/12/02 07:13] Gentle Heron: The UN listened to DPAC

[2017/12/02 07:13] ShylatheSuperGecko: Which proves our voices can make a difference

[2017/12/02 07:13] ShylatheSuperGecko: thank you DPAC :)

[2017/12/02 07:13] Gentle Heron: Exactly Shyla!

[2017/12/02 07:13] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): We - Black Triangle met with them when the rapporteurs came to Scotland I was at the UN in Geneva in August

[2017/12/02 07:18] Mook Wheeler: This is one piece on the UN/UK report:  
<https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/uk-faces-un-examination-government-cuts-caused-human-catastrophe/>

This is one report on the UN/UK issue from BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-37899305>

17/12/02 07:14] ShylatheSuperGecko: It is so scary, because we are afraid if we say the wrong thing our benefits will be taken away

[2017/12/02 07:14] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): exactly Shy, too afraid to demonstrate sometimes too

[2017/12/02 07:14] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): We all live in fear today That we will be reassessed and face the chop

[2017/12/02 07:14] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): Yup

[2017/12/02 07:15] ShylatheSuperGecko: Ai Wei Wei, a Chinese able-bodied activist is often asked how he can be so brave to speak of the Chinese govt's atrocities. His response is not that he is brave, but that he is afraid, more afraid than others of what COULD come if what IS is not stopped.

[2017/12/02 07:15] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): God knows life is hard enough on what we get

Meantime the rich get richer and taxes are cut and mega corporations don't pay.

[2017/12/02 07:15] Gentle Heron: Sounds familiar

[2017/12/02 07:16] Stepin (stepinwolf.darkstone): Corporate welfare is what they voted for in the Senate last night.

[2017/12/02 07:16] ShylatheSuperGecko: I refuse to be hopeless, and I do get scared, a lot. They surveil and send pics to my drs to cut my private ins benefits, but I know I can't stop, no matter how afraid I am, because I have to think of what they will do to the next person, the person beside me.

[2017/12/02 07:17] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): well said Shyla

[2017/12/02 07:16] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): The scary thing is that this seems to be becoming a worldwide phenomenon

[2017/12/02 07:16] Gentle Heron: Is it similar in other countries? I see folks from Italy and Malaysia here.

And Canada

[2017/12/02 07:17] Elliot2020: I am from Australia. Pretty similar

[2017/12/02 07:17] Gentle Heron: Sad to hear that Elliot

[2017/12/02 07:18] Elliot2020: It is hard

[2017/12/02 07:17] 01 (01.hifeng): Poland - I lost my disability status when I had terminal diagnosis, haven't tried to regain it since

[2017/12/02 07:18] Slatan Dryke: In Italy our system is free and works quite well, but for that we pay high taxes, and the attention to people with disabilities is very focused

[2017/12/02 07:18] Elektra Panthar: I don't know about benefits for the disabled, tbh. Here the economic crisis affects the public health system, yes, making it less and less efficient. For now though one doesn't risk bankruptcy to go to a doctor (In Italy)

[2017/12/02 07:19] Slatan Dryke: right Elektra I was referring to my area, not in general

[2017/12/02 07:18] ShylatheSuperGecko: We make up the largest minority (at least in the US) together we are a strong force - they try to pick us off one-by-one, we should stand strong together, unite

[2017/12/02 07:19] James Heartsong (peacefuljames): I wonder, what is the percentage of Able Bodied Folks, vs us? And is that why we do not get enough attention when it comes to dividing up the Government Funds / Tax \$ ?

[2017/12/02 07:19] ShylatheSuperGecko: When you add up all the taxes paid by citizens in the US, it turns out to be very high as well, we segment them, but they add up to a high percentage - where does it all go? How can Italy have a system that works and we have one which fails so horribly.

[2017/12/02 07:20] Slatan Dryke: North part of the country is more developed compared to the south where there are big issue with the public health

[2017/12/02 07:20] ShylatheSuperGecko: 56.7 million of Americans are disabled, James. That is about 19% of the population.

That gives us a very strong voice...any group over 10% can have a very strong voice.

[2017/12/02 07:21] James Heartsong (peacefuljames): Ah! Thank you Shyla! That answers my question. :)

[2017/12/02 07:21] Gentle Heron: John, is there a country anywhere that has been doing things right for their citizens with disabilities?

[2017/12/02 07:22] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): I think Scandinavia - Denmark, Sweden

[2017/12/02 07:22] Gentle Heron: What are they doing differently? How do they afford it?

[2017/12/02 07:22] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): yeah that's what I was going to say John

Their attitude towards diverse communities is also much more open

[2017/12/02 07:22] Elliot2020: Their economic model really benefits disabled people. It's called the Nordic model if anyone wants to research further

[2017/12/02 07:23] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): They are highly taxed but do not see that as a bad thing

They would rather everyone in society was cared for than fill individual bank accounts with money, it's a mind set

[2017/12/02 07:23] ShylatheSuperGecko: I find it interesting, when I googled, an article from 2014 in the Guardian says Britain is the best place for disabled people to live, but read the article, and it is an effort to change that, referring to the 'supposed plight' of disabled persons in the UK: [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/simon-stevens/britain-is-the-best-count\\_b\\_4765332.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/simon-stevens/britain-is-the-best-count_b_4765332.html)

[2017/12/02 07:23] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): Yesterday I visited Auschwitz-Birkenau. Yehuda Bauer the Holocaust scholar said that after the Holocaust we needed to add three commandments to the other 10

Thou shalt not be a victim, thou shalt not be a perpetrator, but, above all, thou shalt not be a bystander

[2017/12/02 07:25] Gentle Heron nods

[2017/12/02 07:25] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): Amen to that John

[2017/12/02 07:25] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): We have to hope that enough people are good in our world today to join us in not being bystanders

Most people tend to be bystanders, I'm afraid to say.



[2017/12/02 07:26] ShylatheSuperGecko: There are people who know me here, and know that sometimes I must 'pull back' because of the struggle, but I am grateful those times pass and I find the strength to make calls and write letters again (as I can...we do what we can, we don't push to our own destruction, we must care for ourselves so we can write letters at all).

[2017/12/02 07:27] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): Well said, Shyla

[2017/12/02 07:25] Elektra Panthar: I'd be curious to see the percentage of corruption in the aforementioned governments. Usually people don't mind paying higher taxes if it means a better service

[2017/12/02 07:26] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): Elektra, I think that is back to media perception, it has a lot to answer for

[2017/12/02 07:26] Slatan Dryke: the Scandinavian countries are a good example, but they have a smaller population so easier to deal with it

[2017/12/02 07:27] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): Greed is seen as a bad thing in Scandinavia

[2017/12/02 07:28] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): It used to be seen as a bad thing in the UK until the Thatcher years

Neoliberal capitalism is destroying the planet :-(

[2017/12/02 07:27] Stepin (stepinwolf.darkstone): I sort of like the Canadian model for healthcare.

[2017/12/02 07:28] Slatan Dryke: I have some cousins living in Denmark and the government provides a free full service for the grandma who is in need of care, and the service is 24/7

At home!

[2017/12/02 07:28] Elliot2020: They also have low corruption in many Scandinavian countries. According to transparency.org

[2017/12/02 07:29] Slatan Dryke: agree Elliot

[2017/12/02 07:29] Paladin Xue: Sadly, too many folks around our churches seem to forget that Greed is one of the "Seven Deadly Sins".

[2017/12/02 07:29] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): After the referendum I wanted to move to Denmark

[2017/12/02 07:30] Slatan Dryke: lets arrange a bus then :)

[2017/12/02 07:30] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): Why should we be forced to be refugees from our own countries?

We just need to keep on keeping on I think

[2017/12/02 07:30] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): We should John, but we know the score

[2017/12/02 07:30] Suln Mahogany: I wonder what will happen with our Veterans who are disabled,

Will they be affected as well or more than they already have been.

In my experience, depending on where the treatment was given,

The VA (Veterans Administration) gave no help and I felt lost

When it came to the huge bills piling up.

Is this what we all in the US are looking at?

[2017/12/02 07:30] James Heartsong (peacefuljames) smiles at Suellen.

In fact, the VA said to me, "Your MS is all in your head." So they would not consider that in my Disability Rating. When I mentioned that to my Neurologist, he pulled up my most recent MRI, started pointing at a lot of spots in my brain, and mentioned that each of them were MS Lesions. "So, in way, the VA was right. These are all in your head. But there are doubtless more in your spine as well."

[2017/12/02 07:32] Stepin (stepinwolf.darkstone): I have never been so angry at the government of the US as I am at this time.

[2017/12/02 07:31] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): John what are your thoughts on the change to benefits in Scotland next year

[2017/12/02 07:32] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): Thanks. No - The Scottish Social Security Agency will not be ready to administer Disability Living Allowance until 2020 but we are being reassessed now

We are lobbying the Scottish Government for bridging arrangements

[2017/12/02 07:31] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): It was good to chat.

I can meet you all here again one day

[2017/12/02 07:31] Suellen Heartsong (suln.mahogany): that sounds great John

[2017/12/02 07:33] Gentle Heron: John, I think your statement that "We have to hope that enough people are good in our world today to join us in not being bystanders" is a perfect way to end the discussion and for us to thank you sincerely for persevering in the face of overwhelming tech issues. Your persistence is exactly what we need to be as persons with disabilities. Keep trying, keep moving forward, help each other and stick together.

Audience, please join me in thanking John for his information and example today.

[2017/12/02 07:33] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): Thanks

I hope you all have a great day and a lovely weekend

[2017/12/02 07:34] Mook Wheeler: We will see you again, John, thank you so much for today

[2017/12/02 07:34] Slatan Dryke: thank you John!

[2017/12/02 07:34] James Heartsong (peacefuljames): Oh! Thank You John!

[2017/12/02 07:34] Stepin (stepinwolf.darkstone): Thank you John, I didn't realize this was bigger than what is going on in the US.

[2017/12/02 07:35] Mook Wheeler: nods at Stepin. Most of the world thinks that the UK is very supportive of human/disability rights

[2017/12/02 07:34] Elliot2020: Thanks John

[2017/12/02 07:35] Suellen Heartsong (suln.mahogany): Thank you John, you as well

[2017/12/02 07:35] Alex4VAI: Thanks John

[2017/12/02 07:35] Dowager Jess Clarkson (jessie.skeldergate): thank you John

[2017/12/02 07:35] John McArdle (vaipresenter7): Solidarity to each and every one of you. Be strong and keep up with your activism.

[2017/12/02 07:35] Carolyn Carillon: <<transcription ends>>