

backwords

Dear Editor...

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ROMA COMMUNITY

I've just read Ciara Leeming's reports about the Roma community in *The Big Issue in the North* (issues 841, 842). As a Romany man and a journalist I'd like to congratulate you on this excellent in-depth coverage of our community. When thousands of our people are being expelled from France it's so positive to hear about the great work to integrate people in Manchester and *The Big Issue in the North's* own stand to help people. Well done for your great journalism and fantastic work to help Europe's pariah nation.

Jake Bowers,
via email

I was appalled at the views expressed by Simon Ashley, the leader of the Liberal Democrat opposition on Manchester City Council, who objects to members of the Roma community selling *The Big Issue In the North*.

He must be aware of the rules restricting members of EU states Romania and Bulgaria in terms of their employment. They would need a worker authorisation document relating to a very restricted category of employment – none of which members of the Roma community are likely to have the qualifications or skills to fulfil. As A2 members of the EU their access to employment can be (and has been) restricted for five years – even though they are permitted to come to the UK and settle here.

But they can be self employed. And, in encouraging this, *The Big Issue in the North* is giving members of the Roma community the opportunity to both provide for their families and prepare them for the world of work by enabling them to develop the habits and skills they will need.

Here in Kendal, Ion travelled from Manchester every day, whatever the weather day in and day out. During his time here, his English improved and he won the support of many of us. His hard work and commitment is being rewarded. I understand he is to

take up paid employment as a bilingual language assistant – one of the few roles permitted to A2 nationals. Both Ion's sister and cousin have sold *The Big Issue in the North* here in Kendal and never missed a day even when they have been quite heavily pregnant. They are a credit to their community

Without *The Big Issue In the North*, a destitute Roma community may have no alternative but to resort to a life on the fringes of society and become involved in the type of criminal behaviour that none of us wants to happen. Congratulations and all the best for the future to *The Big Issue In the North*, the Roma community, Manchester City Council, Greater Manchester Police and all those caring services in Manchester who have been so supportive.

Carole Underwood,
Kendal

ORWELLIAN PARTNERSHIPS

Who in their right mind would oppose Managing Radioactive Wastes Safely?

The cleverly (Orwellian) titled Managing Radioactive Wastes Safely Partnership is designed to stifle any opposition to the geological "disposal" of high level nuclear waste.

We are based in South Lakeland on the border with Lancashire and regularly witness radioactive wastes en route to Sellafield past the RSPB's Leighton Moss reserve, across the Morecambe Bay viaduct on one side and through Greyrigg on the other.

The nasty "partnership" process is aimed solely at steering "volunteer" communities into the acceptance of deep disposal of high level nuclear wastes. The safer option of above ground and retrievable waste management is not even on the agenda. If the "volunteer" process fails then the government "will look at other options" to force "disposal" (Department of Energy and Climate Change, NewBuild RadWaste Summary, Nov 2009, page 23, para 106). We take this to mean forcing an

Why don't we just...

STOP BUYING INTO NEUROSEXISM?



Dr Cordella Fine,
author

They've been around for as long as there has been brain science – claims that the sexes can never be equal because of differences in their brains that, in retrospect, are proved horribly and embarrassingly wrong.

Competition for a placing in the hall of shame is stiff, but my personal favourite is the suggestion by an eminent neurologist that sex differences in the spinal cord and brain stem argue against the wisdom of giving women the vote.

While it's true that neuroscientific techniques have changed enormously since the days when simply weighing a brain was cutting edge, eagerness to "blame the brain" rather than society for sex inequality has stayed. There's surprisingly little convincing evidence for a "male" brain hardwired to be good at

understanding the world and a "female" brain hardwired to understand people. But unfortunately the idea of hardwired sex differences is very confidently presented as fact by popular writers, reinforcing gender stereotypes in ways that have harmful psychological and social effects.

Today's neuroscientific explanations of inequality will eventually find themselves hurled on the scientific scrapheap. And, if society changes as much over this century as it did in the last, women's achievements will make today's neurosexism seem no less silly and prejudiced than that of the past. But before that happens, neurosexist claims become part of cultural lore, and reinforce social attitudes about men and women in ways that hinder progress towards greater sex equality.

Dr Cordelia Fine is the author of Delusions of Gender: The Real Science Behind Sex Difference (Icon Books, £14.99).

underground high level nuclear dump (or more than one dump) on communities.

The Managing Radioactive Wastes Safely process is looking to include new build wastes, and the pro-nuclear Department of Energy and Climate Change is desperate to give the appearance of having solved the problem of nuclear waste in order to go ahead with new build.

In March Nuclear Waste Advisory Associates identified over 100 problems with disposal, and a report published this month by Dr Helen Wallace for Greenpeace International confirms that deep disposal of radioactive wastes has the "potential for significant radiological releases

through a variety of mechanisms".

Clearly deep disposal of radioactive waste is not the best way to protect people from the dangers that these wastes present.

We have formally registered Radiation Free Lakeland's firm commitment to an expression of opposition to the so called Managing Radioactive Wastes Safely Partnership, which is doublespeak for "out of sight, out of mind", whatever the consequences. We urge others to register their opposition and ensure a viable future for Cumbria and the North West.

Marianne Birkby,
Radiation Free Lakeland

Next week...

The Ting Tings, David Thewlis and the Commonwealth Games