



Disability: Leadership, Resistance and Culture



DAN



TO BOLDLY GO WHERE EVERYONE ELSE HAS BEEN BEFORE

The Disabled People's Direct Action Network (DAN) was formed in 1993 following the powerful demonstrations against Telethon. The struggle for Civil Rights began in earnest when Disabled People, just like other civil rights movements before them, realised they needed to use tactics of non-violent civil disobedience to push their issues to the top of the political agenda.

DAN's We Will Ride campaign focused on a simple demand for accessible transport. Danners, as they came to be called, handcuffed themselves to buses and trains and brought traffic to a standstill across the UK in over 100 protest actions between 1993 and 1998. They were often arrested for their beliefs, spent many nights locked up in police cells, and frequently received injuries while being forcibly removed by the police – but no police officers or members of the public were ever hurt during these well-organised protests.

By 1998 a new fleet of accessible buses and trains were being commissioned and manufactured to replace existing vehicles and the end was in sight for segregated public

transport in the UK. DAN claimed its first victory. Dan took Disabled People's issues directly to the streets and onto the TV screens. The powerful imagery of Disabled People protesting together created a new political understanding where disability was seen as a civil rights issue instead of an individual, medical problem. Seeing Disabled People demonstrating for their rights instead of holding out begging bowls had a profound effect upon wider society and smashed the common perception of Disabled people as objects of pity – tragic but brave.

Disabled People were no longer willing to smile and say thank you for handouts. They wanted more. They wanted what everyone else took for granted. They wanted their rights!

"I'm not here to make a point, I'm here to make a difference..."

(Disabled Activist interviewed while chained to a bus)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngkx8ASyWaY>