

101 QUESTIONS ABOUT BEING DEAF

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The deaf are an unknown cultural minority.

As teachers of Dutch Sign Language, the writers of this book (who are all deaf) regularly meet hearing people who would like to ask all sorts of questions, but refrain from doing so for fear that their questions may seem hurtful, silly or pointless. This is a pity, since the answers to such questions can provide a good deal of information about what it means being deaf, and about deaf culture and sign language. This book therefore contains answers to 101 questions about deafness and deaf culture. The questions and answers are grouped under eight main headings, including 'Being deaf', 'Social functioning', 'Communication', 'Sign language', 'Interpreters', 'Upbringing', and 'Education'.

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SOME FACTS

1. WHAT CAUSES DEAFNESS?

In about 50% of cases the cause of deafness is hereditary. However, this does not necessarily mean that one of the parents is deaf. In fact, even where there is no history of deafness in the family, the parents' combination of genetic material may just happen to produce a deaf child. In the remaining 50% of cases deafness is acquired, in other words it is caused by illness, the side-effects of certain medicines, or an accident during pregnancy or following birth. For example, children may become deaf because the mother had German measles (rubella) or took certain medicines while she was pregnant. Children can also be deafened by meningitis, usually before the age of five. Lastly, people may become deaf following a fall, or by running into a post or similar hard object and fracturing the temporal bone. In some cases the cause of deafness cannot be determined. Deafness is classified according to the site of the deficiency. Deafness caused by a defect of the middle ear is known as conductive deafness, and deafness originating in the inner ear, the auditory nerve or the brain is known as perceptive deafness (or nerve deafness). While conductive deafness can sometimes be cured by surgery, there is no treatment for perceptive deafness. With both types of deafness there may be residual hearing. People can also be affected by progressive deafness (gradually increasing deafness) and sudden deafness (an abrupt loss of hearing in adulthood).

Finally, deafness is also classified according to the time when it occurs. If children are born deaf or become deaf before the age of two, they are said to be prelingually deaf; if they become deaf after the age of two, they are postlingually deaf. 'Prelingual' means literally 'before language', in other words before the child has completed the first stage of acquiring language skills. This distinction is very important, as - unlike the postlingually deaf - the prelingually deaf are unable to acquire spoken language in the normal way. As a result, they usually have a poorer command of spoken (and therefore also written) language than people who only became deaf after the age of two.

2. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING DEAF AND BEING HARD OF HEARING?

There are various differences between being deaf and being hard of hearing:

- differences in audiogram;
- differences in social functioning;
- differences in culture.

Differences in audiogram.

The audiogram indicates the results of hearing tests. It is a graph with sound frequencies plotted along the horizontal axis and the hearing level in decibels (dB) along the vertical axis. In the Netherlands, children with a hearing loss of between 70 and 90 dB are classified as 'severely hard of hearing' and children with a hearing loss of over 90 dB as 'deaf'. The boundary between what is deaf and what is hard of hearing varies from country to country. In the United States, for instance, those with a hearing loss of between 70 and 90 dB are referred to as 'severely deaf' and those with a hearing loss of over 90 dB as 'profoundly deaf'.

Differences in social functioning.

A person who cannot follow a conversation with one person even with the help of a hearing aid is said to be deaf. Many hard-of-hearing people can understand the human voice, if only with difficulty. This means that they can usually speak much better than deaf people. They are mostly educated at schools for the hard of hearing or at ordinary primary schools. They can also often use an ordinary telephone if it has an amplifier built into the receiver.

Differences in culture.

Most people who are hard of hearing do not know sign language and do not usually belong to the deaf community. They are often halfway between the hearing and deaf communities and are not completely accepted by either.

Some people who are hard of hearing consider themselves superior to deaf people ('in the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king'). However, there are also hard-of-hearing people who feel more at home in the deaf community. So you can have two people with an identical audiogram, one of whom considers himself hard of hearing and the other deaf. An audiogram indicates the degree of deafness or hardness of hearing, but individuals' attitudes and what they do with whatever hearing they have left are another matter altogether.

3. WHAT DOES THE EXPRESSION *DEAF AND DUMB* MEAN?

Up to 1750 most deaf people received no education. They were deaf and dumb - they couldn't speak. They could only communicate with members of their family, using a limited number of 'home-made' signs. In the period from 1750 to 1880, education of the deaf blossomed, thanks to the efforts of various pioneers within the Church. The deaf were taught to read and write, but not to speak. Nearly half the teachers were themselves deaf, and signs were used when teaching.

Following the conference of teachers of the deaf in Milan 1880, the use of signs in education was banned. Deaf people, it was decided, must learn to speak and lip-read. This decision was adopted because deaf teachers at the conference - unlike their hearing colleagues - were not allowed to vote. Ever since then, deaf children have received speech instruction, and most of them do learn to speak, although strangers can usually only understand them with difficulty. Despite this, the public continues to refer to the 'deaf and dumb', an expression most deaf people dislike:

after toiling for years to learn speech, it's a bit much to be called dumb! Sometimes deaf people prefer not to use their voices, as they are afraid that they will not be understood or that people will find their voices disturbing.

Some people think the expression 'deaf and dumb' means that deaf people are stupid. But deaf people are not mentally retarded - they're just deaf. The phrase 'deaf and dumb' is also sometimes used in the mistaken assumption that there are two quite separate disabilities involved: inability to hear, and inability to speak. Yet inability to speak intelligibly is a direct result of being deaf.

4. HOW MANY DEAF PEOPLE ARE THERE IN THE NETHERLANDS?

Of the 15 million people who live in the Netherlands, there are one-and-a-half million people whose hearing is in some way impaired. Of these, over 200,000 are classified as deaf or hard of hearing, and of these some 12,000-15,000 are prelingually deaf. This estimate is based on information from audiological centres, where children with hearing problems go for treatment. Schools for the deaf estimate the number of prelingually deaf to be 8,000, on the assumption that all deaf children go to a school for the deaf. However, there are some deaf children who go to schools for the hard of hearing or even ordinary primary schools. For comparison, the number of totally blind people in the Netherlands is just over 4,000.

5. HOW COME I ALMOST NEVER MEET DEAF PEOPLE?

You often meet deaf people in the street without realizing it. Blind people are immediately recognizable as blind because they have a white stick, special glasses or a guide dog. People in a wheelchair are also visibly disabled. Many deaf people do not wear a hearing aid, so their disability is not visible. In addition, deaf people can in many ways live independent lives. They work, run a home, go shopping, take holidays, play various sports, ride bicycles and drive cars just like hearing people, so most of the time their disability isn't noticed. Only when they begin to speak or sign does their deafness become apparent. Also, the fact that it's so difficult for deaf and hearing people to communicate with one another means that most hearing people know very little about deaf people. Only recently have deaf people come out into the open and 'made themselves heard'.

One result of the liberation struggle within the deaf community has been the training of qualified interpreters who enable deaf and hearing people to communicate with one another more easily.

6. CAN'T DEAF PEOPLE HEAR ANYTHING AT ALL?

About 10% of deaf people are totally deaf - they can't hear a thing. The remaining 90% can hear at least something - they

have what's known as 'residual hearing'. They can hear very loud sounds or sounds of a particular pitch. However, most deaf people cannot hear the human voice, even with a hearing aid. Yet even though some deaf people can't hear anything at all, they sometimes appear to react to sounds. What really happens is that they feel sound through vibrations - they don't actually hear it. For example, they can feel a lorry driving past, a door slamming or a chair scraping over a wooden floor. In the same way a deaf father can 'hear' that his daughters downstairs have turned the radio up too loud. However, not all vibrations are equally perceptible, and it is a common occurrence for deaf people to carry on using the vacuum cleaner without realizing that the plug has been pulled out of the socket.

7. ARE HEARING AIDS OF ANY USE TO DEAF PEOPLE?

A hearing aid cannot help deaf people to understand speech sounds. What a hearing aid does is amplify sound. Whether this is useful depends not so much on the degree as on the kind of hearing loss. Perceptive deafness involves not only loss of hearing but also distortion of sound; in that case, a hearing aid will merely amplify distorted sound. Deaf people may find this unpleasant or even painful. Conductive deafness, on the other hand, only involves loss of hearing, in which case a hearing aid may be of more use.

Not all deaf people wear a hearing aid. Some don't wear one either because it is of little use to them, or because they dislike the distorted sounds they hear. Others don't wear one because they consider a hearing aid oppressive - a misguided attempt to turn them into 'hearing' people. Hearing aids are sometimes misleading. People often think that someone with a hearing aid can understand speech. Some deaf people dislike hearing sound through a hearing aid, because they cannot understand what the sound means. Other hate wearing a hearing aid because it makes their deafness visible. There are also deaf people who like wearing a hearing aid, even though they cannot understand speech. They enjoy hearing at least some sound, since it gives more depth to the reality around them. They dislike deathly silence. A hearing aid makes them feel less isolated.

So some deaf people never wear a hearing aid and others always wear one. There are also deaf people who use a hearing aid selectively, and do or don't wear one according to the circumstances.

8. CAN DEAF PEOPLE HEAR MUSIC?

Most deaf people can't hear music without a hearing aid. With a hearing aid some deaf people can hear certain instruments, depending on the nature of their hearing loss. Deaf people can hear the rhythm of music through vibrations, and may therefore enjoy watching dance performances accompanied by drums. They can perceive the sound in the form of vibrations through the floor and the seats. Deaf people differ in their attitude to

music. Some are very much in favour of it, while others are very much against it. Music has always played a major part in the education of the deaf, and still does. Most deaf children can remember music lessons in which they had to place their hands on the piano to feel the vibrations, or 'listen' to drums. The idea here was to teach deaf children to understand rhythm, which is important when learning speech. Music may indeed be important in developing a sense of rhythm, but more attention should be paid to sources of rhythm which - unlike with musical instruments - can be seen or felt (for example, a printing press, a water pump or a pneumatic drill).

9. CAN DEAF PEOPLE DANCE?

Deaf people can dance, but not to music. When in a disco, they often solve this problem by watching hearing people dance and copying their rhythm. Sometimes the rhythm of the music is made visible by flashing lights or can be felt through vibrations. Just like some hearing people, some deaf people have a well-developed sense of rhythm. Although deaf people sometimes enjoy moving rhythmically, they often dislike dancing. If people around them are dancing to music, their enjoyment of the movement is often spoiled by the fear that they may dance out of time with the music or carry on dancing after the music has stopped. However, rhythm exists not only in music, but also in nature - for instance, waves breaking on the shore, or trees swaying in the wind. Some deaf people like ballet because they enjoy watching the rhythmical movement.

10. WHY DO DEAF PEOPLE HAVE SUCH STRANGE VOICES?

Listening to other people speaking is of vital importance when learning how to speak. Deaf people cannot hear other people's voices and thus have no models which they can copy. They must therefore learn to speak artificially, without being able to monitor their own voices. They cannot hear whether they are speaking correctly, or whether their voices are too loud or too soft, or pitched too high or too low. Often their speech sounds flat and toneless. The rhythm may be wrong. They may speak too slowly, with blurred articulation. They may insert extra sounds, so that a word like 'whisky' comes out as 'whiss-a-ky'. Sometimes their breathing is wrong, or the position of the tongue or lips is incorrect. Words are often mispronounced. For example, Dutch has borrowed quite a few words from English (such as 'service', 'team', 'computer'), and such words retain their original English pronunciation. Lacking speech models to copy, deaf people may mistakenly pronounce such words as though they were Dutch, e.g. 'ser-vi-ce' or 'te-am', with Dutch vowel sounds and the wrong number of syllables. Deaf children spend a great deal of time learning to pronounce certain sounds. There are 40 different sounds in Dutch, only 10 of which are visually distinguishable. Deaf children must therefore learn to speak by looking in a mirror and comparing the movements of

their teachers' mouths with their own, and by feeling the vibrations of their teachers' voices with their hands and comparing them with their own. In order to reproduce a particular sound, they must memorize the feeling the sound produces in their throat, mouth, tongue, jaws and lips. Not surprisingly, it takes deaf children years and years to learn to speak. If deaf people practice daily, they can improve their pronunciation. If they don't, their pronunciation rapidly deteriorates. In order to improve their pronunciation, deaf people depend on being corrected by hearing people. However, the hearing people around them are so used to their voices and way of speaking that they do not correct their pronunciation. When communicating with each other, deaf people usually mouth words rather than speak them out loud, and mostly only use a part of the word. For example, when making the sign for 'communication', they do not pronounce the whole word, but simply mouth a part of it ('com' or 'communi').

11. DO DEAF PEOPLE LIKE USING THEIR VOICES?

Opinions differ about whether deaf people should use their voices or not. When communicating with each other, deaf people mostly don't use their voices, but they do when talking to hearing people. They do this automatically, because they have been taught to adapt to hearing society. Schools for the deaf still concentrate on teaching speech and speech-reading, although signs are now used in most schools. When deaf people work or live with hearing people they may find it easier to use their voices. Some deaf people enjoy using their voices when speaking to hearing people and feel proud if they are understood. Other deaf people dislike using their voices, because hearing people find their voices disturbing or cannot understand them. Still others dislike using their voices because it inhibits them in expressing their emotions. Speaking prevents them from using their own language, which is sign language. Sometimes, however, the voice is used specifically in order to express emotions, for instance when laughing, crying, sighing, roaring with anger or shouting out for joy.

12. ARE DEAF PEOPLE VISUALLY ORIENTED?

Deaf people use their eyes more effectively than hearing people. They notice facial expression and posture, and are more alert to movement, including what they see out of the corners of their eyes. They obtain information from what they see, and pay more attention to visual details. And they find more pennies than hearing people do!

13. WHY DO DEAF PEOPLE HAVE DIFFICULTY READING?

Hearing Dutch children already have a wide vocabulary and know almost the entire grammar of Dutch by the time they first learn to read and write at school. All they then have to do is

learn the written form of a language which they can already speak and understand without difficulty. Deaf children of the same age have a much smaller vocabulary. Words must be learned one by one. Deaf children cannot pick up new words automatically by listening to conversations at home, on the bus, in the playground, in the park or on television. Since it is so difficult for deaf children to learn to speak and understand Dutch, reading and writing are difficult too. If the adults around them (parents and teachers) use signs, deaf children can learn more quickly; signs can be used to explain new words and rules of grammar. However, a small vocabulary is not the only problem. Deaf people often understand the words in a sentence, but fail to grasp the meaning of the whole sentence. They find it hard to follow the structure of the spoken and written language. To make matters worse, Dutch (like other languages) is full of proverbs and sayings. Figurative expressions such as 'he drives me up the wall' or 'I'll eat my hat' tend to be taken literally by deaf people.

About 10% of deaf people can read well, but even they must make a considerable effort. Most deaf people find reading difficult and dislike it. They much prefer visual information, drawings and photographs - like many hearing people, in fact. Deaf children whose first language is sign language have noticeably fewer problems in learning to read. This is because they have been brought up already knowing one language well, namely sign language. Once you have a good grounding in one language, learning a second language is easier.

14. DO DEAF PEOPLE WATCH TV A LOT?

Deaf people watch TV a good deal, because they cannot listen to the radio. Sometimes they have the television on just as hearing people have the radio on, without really listening to it. The radio is really just background noise. In the same way deaf people use television as 'background pictures'. But if they really want to watch television, either the content of the programme must be highly visual (e.g. sport, nature, ballet or mime), or else it must be subtitled. For this reason deaf people often watch foreign films and series, because on Dutch television these are always subtitled. However, the subtitling is not especially designed for deaf people. For instance, it does not indicate who is talking, nor does it give extra information about sounds or noises which are essential to the story (such as 'doorbell' or 'telephone'). Some deaf people also find such subtitling hard to follow because no allowance is made for their limited knowledge of the spoken and written language. Special subtitles for deaf people are provided by Dutch television via Teletext. To receive these subtitles, deaf people must have a television set which is equipped to receive Teletext. The subtitles for Channels 1, 2 and 3 are provided on Teletext pages 199, 299 and 399 respectively. In Groningen (where one of the country's five schools for the deaf is located), the subtitles are transmitted via cable television, making it possible to record them on video. Dutch television has its own subtitling department, which makes a weekly selection of Dutch-language programmes to be subtitled on Teletext. The selection

is as varied as possible. Subtitled programmes are marked with a T in television guides. Live Dutch-language programmes are seldom subtitled. As a result, deaf people cannot follow live chat shows. Current affairs programmes are also rarely subtitled. On the other hand, there is now subtitling for the Children's News (a summary of main news items especially for children) and the main evening news at 8 o'clock. Since these programmes are broadcast live, the subtitling must be simultaneous. The typists who do this use special high-speed typewriters which type whole syllables rather than single letters.

2

BEING DEAF

15. WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO BE DEAF?

Small children don't realize that they are deaf and what that means. The realization that they are deaf comes gradually as they grow older. Children need time to come to terms with the fact that they are different. Most deaf children (95%) are born into hearing families, and some deaf children therefore think that when they are grown-up they will become hearing just like their parents. How children feel partly depends on the parents' attitude to deafness. If children can communicate with their parents through signs they will feel less isolated. Some children are greatly helped by their hearing brothers and sisters, who communicate naturally between them and other children of their own age. It is also important that schools should not be hostile to signing and that teachers should use signs, so that the children can learn more easily. Regular contact with deaf adults provides deaf children with role models. For children who have grown up in the sheltered world of a residential school for the deaf, suddenly having to fend for themselves in hearing society is often too great a transition. As young adults they are likely to feel happier if they can determine their own lifestyles and if they are free to seek a place for themselves in the deaf community in addition to their contacts with the hearing community. Having deaf friends is vitally important.

Living in hearing society raises all kinds of communication and information problems. Contacts with hearing colleagues are often superficial. Deaf people have fewer chances of promotion because they cannot use the telephone, and they are unable to follow discussions or meetings without an interpreter. At parties or family gatherings they often feel left out. People around them give them a friendly nod, or the occasional thumbs-up sign - and leave it at that. Shopping isn't easy either. It's no fun being in a shop and not being understood by the assistant, or having the other customers gape at you. The advent of supermarkets has undoubtedly made things easier for deaf people. Without an interpreter, an appointment with a doctor or a lawyer or a stay in hospital is a laborious undertaking.

Many deaf people feel at home in the deaf community, because there they have hardly any language problems. Deafness can thus be seen as a social rather than a medical problem. Among deaf people, or with hearing people who speak very clearly or can sign well, deafness is not a barrier to communication.

16. DO DEAF PEOPLE MISS SOUND?

People who were born deaf or became deaf before the age of two do not miss sound, because they have no memory of it. However, there is a tendency among hearing people to try and persuade deaf people that they ought to miss sound. Sound is an indispensable part of hearing people's lives, and consciously or unconsciously they communicate this dependence on sound to deaf people. Ideally they would like deaf people to become hearing. They thus give deaf people the unspoken message that there is something wrong with them, which makes it harder for deaf people to accept their deafness. People who are deafened later in life can remember sound and therefore miss it more, particularly music and voices.

Yet the most important point is that, if you can't hear, contact with hearing people is very difficult. It isn't sound you miss so much as the communication and information that sound provides.

17. DO DEAF PEOPLE WISH THEY WERE HEARING?

Most deaf people would sooner have been hearing to start with, but now they are deaf they do not want to be turned into hearing people. Being deaf is not just a question of not being able to hear - it involves a different perception of the world and a different linguistic and cultural background, in other words a different identity. There has been much discussion recently about 'cochlear implants', a form of surgery in which electrodes are connected to the cochlea (part of the inner ear) in order to stimulate the auditory nerve. A cochlear implant cannot make a deaf person hearing, but at the very most hard-of-hearing. The operation enables deaf people to hear more sound, and with training they can learn to use the sound they hear for communication purposes. In the Netherlands, cochlear implants have so far only been carried out on postlingually deafened adults; however, in countries such as Australia young deaf children have also received cochlear implants.

18. WHICH IS WORSE - BLINDNESS OR DEAFNESS?

This is really rather a meaningless question. Yet many hearing people do sometimes wonder whether deafness or blindness would be worse. They often think that being blind would be worse. They draw that conclusion because they know more about blind people than they do about deaf people, and because they can imagine blindness more easily than deafness: you can close your eyes, but you can't shut off your ears. Deaf people have

differing opinions on the subject, but most of them would prefer deafness to blindness. Deaf people are used to using their eyes and are greatly dependent on them. They are horrified at the thought of losing their sight. Moreover, in many ways blind people are more dependent than deaf people. Deaf people can move about freely, drive, travel, go on holiday and enjoy scenery. Blind people often need someone to accompany them. On the other hand, blind people can enjoy full communication with hearing people, since they can learn the spoken language of the hearing majority. They can go to university and are accepted in supervisory positions.

19. DO DEAF PEOPLE HAVE MORE PROBLEMS THAN HEARING PEOPLE?

Research in other countries has shown that three to five times as many deaf people as hearing people have psychiatric problems. Such problems are mostly the result of lack of communication and thus contact. Deaf people can easily become lonely. They run into communication problems in their families, at work, in their contacts with health and social services - in fact, in every aspect of their lives.

20. WHERE CAN DEAF PEOPLE GO IF THEY'VE GOT PSYCHIATRIC PROBLEMS?

Deaf people with problems often were - and still are - dependent on family or friends. This is because the great majority of health and social workers are unable to sign. The only alternatives for deaf people used to be the special social services attached to the schools for the deaf (except in Amsterdam). This meant that deaf adults with problems had to go 'back to school' and thus continued to be dependent on their old school - an abnormal and unhealthy state of affairs. Recently, however, social work for the deaf has come under an independent body known as MADIDO (an acronym based on the Dutch words for 'social services for deaf people').

At the moment there are practically no secondary health or social workers (psychologists, psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, etc.) who are capable of communicating with deaf people. Two psychiatric hospitals are currently setting up departments for deaf people with severe psychiatric problems (one department for adults and one for children).

The Regional Institutes for Further Education and Training (in Dutch, RINO) provide further training for mental health personnel. Recently the RINO in the province of North Holland has introduced a course on 'Psychiatric Services for Prelingually Deaf People'. This course includes basic signing, lectures, study trips and role-playing situations. Deaf people are involved in this course as teachers or advisers.

There is also a body known as the Platform on Psychiatric Services for Deaf People. This includes representatives from the government, the Dutch Deaf Association, FODOK (the Dutch Federation of Organizations of Parents of Deaf Children), deaf

schools and local health services. The aim of the Platform is to help improve psychiatric services for deaf people. A similar body is attempting to do the same at European level.

21. ARE THERE DEAF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORKERS?

For some years now there have been a small number of deaf social workers. They were trained as social workers with the help of interpreters. However, the training provided is designed for hearing society, and no specific mention is made of deaf culture. Nor do the teachers have any experience of the particular problems that being deaf entails. Deaf trainees must therefore translate the content of the course into terms that are relevant to the deaf world. They have one foot in the hearing community and the other in the deaf community. In the hearing community they learn all kinds of complicated terms and theories and must cope with a speech-based approach involving numerous discussions and meetings, while in the deaf community they must be able to switch over to fluent signing once more.

In general, deaf people prefer to be helped by deaf health or social workers, since these use the same language and know what it is really like to be deaf. Sometimes, however, deaf people prefer to be helped by someone who is hearing, either because they think that hearing people know more than deaf people, or because they are afraid a deaf person will pass on information about them to people they know (everyone knows everyone else in the deaf community).

Unlike in Germany and the USA, there are no deaf psychologists or psychiatrists in the Netherlands. However, there is currently one deaf student of medicine who later wants to specialize in psychiatry.

22. ARE DEAF PEOPLE'S PERSONALITIES DIFFERENT FROM THOSE OF HEARING PEOPLE?

Some people (including health and social workers) think that deaf people are distrustful and suspicious, childlike and naïve, aggressive and egocentric. If deaf people do behave in this way, it is mostly due to lack of communication and information. Deaf people often cannot understand what is being said. People around them are talking and laughing, but it is not clear what they are talking and laughing about. This tends to make a person distrustful and suspicious. Deaf people may think that people are talking and laughing about them, just as hearing people may suspect they are being talked about when they are in a foreign country and do not understand the language. And in fact hearing people often do talk about deaf people in their presence. From an early age deaf people get used to seeing their hearing parents talking about them to a hearing doctor or teacher, without being able to follow the conversation themselves. At parties, too, they often notice other people looking at them and talking about them. Hearing colleagues can talk for hours and hours, but when

the deaf person asks what they are talking about, the answer is 'Oh, it doesn't matter' or 'Just the holidays'. And that's all. Lack of contact, attention and respect can lead to aggressiveness. Deaf people want to be listened to and taken seriously. Hearing people often turn away if they discover that someone is deaf. This can create a feeling of helpless anger, which sometimes comes out in the form of aggression. There is nothing intrinsically childlike about deaf people, but they are short of information. They are not always sufficiently familiar with the rules of society. Hearing people obtain the necessary information by studying, listening to the radio, reading newspapers, watching television or going to the theatre. Deaf people often do not know what is or isn't socially acceptable. There are all kinds of everyday things they don't know, because nobody has ever told them. In deaf schools they live in a sheltered world. Often they are insufficiently prepared for hearing society.

Deaf people sometimes seem egocentric, but this is because they do not receive information from other people. Other people tell them nothing about their lives, so deaf people do not know how hearing people live and what their problems are. Deaf people ask hearing relatives for help with their problems, but the reverse almost never happens. Deaf people talk a lot about themselves for the very good reason that other people provide them with little or no information which they can talk about instead. And even on the rare occasions that others do tell them something, they may not be able to understand it. Ultimately, however, there are just as many differences in personality among deaf people as there are with hearing people.

23. DO DEAF PEOPLE RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER DIFFERENTLY FROM HEARING PEOPLE?

People are deaf purely by chance. Deaf people do not choose one another, but are more or less obliged to seek contact with one another by force of circumstances. They certainly enjoy such contact, because it enables them to use their own language, but that is not the same as friendship. Hearing people can choose their friends more easily; for deaf people the choice is much more limited. Deaf people come together because of their shared circumstances. Everyone knows everyone else in the Dutch deaf community, through sports events, parties and meetings. Intermarriage among deaf people is very common. Deaf people in fact form a huge family, a village community. There is a great deal of gossip, but also a strong sense of solidarity. You could even say that deaf people live in a global village. They have regular international contacts, because they feel that they have at least as much in common with deaf people in other countries as they do with hearing people in their own country. They often feel like foreigners in their own country. In general, deaf people are more expressive than hearing people, they touch each other more often, and relate to each other warmly.

24. HOW DO DEAF PEOPLE THINK?

How deaf people think depends on whether they have grown up knowing a language and, if so, which language. Thought is impossible without language. Without language it is impossible to name objects, people, animals or events, and the world is then just a disconnected jumble. Language is necessary in order to remember events and make plans for the future. Without language there is no past, no present and no future. It is a great effort for deaf people to learn a spoken language. It is an extremely slow process. As long as they do not have a full command of some language - it does not matter which - they will be limited in their ability to think. Deaf people who have had an oral education, in which speech was encouraged and signing forbidden, are therefore at a disadvantage. Sign languages can be learned naturally by deaf people. With a sign language they can undergo the same linguistic development just as quickly as hearing children do with a spoken language. Sign language then performs the same function in their thinking as a spoken language does for a hearing person. Some deaf people sign while they are thinking, rather as hearing people talk to themselves. Sometimes deaf people also sign when they are reading a text, in order to understand it more easily, just as hearing people read aloud. And just as hearing people talk in their sleep, deaf people often wake up their partners by dreaming 'out loud'.

25. WHAT IS DEAF CULTURE?

In many respects deaf people live similar lives to hearing people. They eat, live, dress, vote, read, write, marry, etc. in exactly the same way as their hearing fellow citizens. The main difference lies in their language - sign language and everything connected with it (poetry, theatre, story-telling, jokes). Apart from this, deaf people's lives do differ in some ways. They have more international contacts and relate to each other differently (they tend to be warmer and more physical). Often they have shared memories of their time spent at deaf school. Even as adults their shared circumstances lead them to spend at least some of their free time with other deaf people. Deaf people stress the fact that they are first and foremost a cultural minority and only secondly a group of people with a disability.

3

SOCIAL FUNCTIONING

26. CAN DEAF PEOPLE LIVE INDEPENDENT LIVES?

Basically, deaf people can do anything except hear. Deaf people can live independently, run a home, cook, do the shopping, bring up children, manage their money, work, go on holiday, drive, supervise other people, study, etc. However, for this to be possible their living and working environment must be adapted to their inability to hear, so that they are not constantly dependent on hearing people for information and communication.

27. DO DEAF PEOPLE INTERMARRY?

The majority of deaf people (about 70%) marry or live with a deaf partner. Communicating with a deaf partner is much easier because of the shared language and experience.

Of the remainder, about half have a partner who is hard of hearing and the other half a hearing partner. Apart from love, various factors play a part in a deaf person's preference for a hearing partner. Some deaf people want a hearing partner because they want to be part of the hearing world. They mostly do not sign with their partner, but use their voice. Deaf people in this category often have little contact with other deaf people, or actually avoid them. They make every effort not to be 'deaf'. Another reason for having a hearing partner is that the partner can assist the deaf person by interpreting, telephoning, helping to run a business and providing information about hearing society.

Recently deaf people have become more liberated and more aware of their right to equal status as human beings. Some deaf people have relationships with hearing people on the basis of equality. Usually they sign with their partner and the partner is familiar with sign language and deaf culture. Often they both know people in the deaf community and play an active part in it.

28. WHAT KINDS OF JOBS DO DEAF PEOPLE DO?

Basically, deaf people can do any jobs except ones which depend on sound (switchboard operators, radio producers, sound technicians, etc.). In practice, however, deaf people often have manual jobs (as instrument-makers, goldsmiths, house-painters, typists, carpenters, watchmakers, cobblers, upholsterers, gardeners, dental technicians, etc.). The reason for this is that, until recently, schools for the deaf did not provide any alternative; the occupations which they considered suitable for deaf people were all manual occupations. Previously deaf people could not go on to university, as there were no interpreters. Sign language was more or less forbidden. In recent years, however,

interpreters have started to become available in the Netherlands and sign language is increasingly accepted. Deaf people are now studying to become social workers, doctors, psychiatrists, teachers, etc. In the United States there is a university for deaf people - Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. - which is the only one of its kind in the world. There deaf people can study all kinds of subjects: maths, drama, psychology, management, etc. At Gallaudet 30% of the teaching staff are themselves deaf. In the United States deaf professors, mathematicians, psychiatrists, directors, linguists, managers and computer specialists are no longer unusual. 'Deaf people can do anything except hear', said the deaf president of Gallaudet University at The Deaf Way, an international conference held in Washington in July 1989. Deaf people can do anything unless there is proof to the contrary. People should not be too quick to say that someone can't do something just because he or she is deaf. A vital factor is the faith of parents and teachers in the deaf child's abilities.

29. WHAT KIND OF CONTACTS DO DEAF PEOPLE HAVE WITH THEIR HEARING COLLEAGUES?

Individual contacts with colleagues are generally fairly satisfactory. Hearing colleagues make an effort to speak slowly and get used to the deaf person's voice. More and more hearing colleagues are taking courses in signing to make communication easier. However, contacts with colleagues as a group are usually unsatisfactory. During breaks, hearing colleagues often sit talking or playing cards, and the deaf person is left alone. At staff meetings and discussions deaf people usually cannot follow what is being said. Hearing colleagues often forget to involve their deaf colleague in discussions, or fail to summarize things clearly. Hearing people can continue to talk while they are working, since they do not need to look at one another, and deaf colleagues are then left out. Sometimes hearing people talk on the telephone for a long time and the deaf person has no idea what they are talking about.

Now that deaf people are legally entitled to an interpreter for 10% of their working time, part of the problem has been solved. Deaf people can now request an interpreter for discussions and meetings. However, some employers refuse to allow an interpreter to be present at confidential discussions! Deaf people are often dependent on their hearing colleagues when it comes to using the phone. It is now possible to have a text telephone installed at one's place of work. Yet some employers refuse to allow this, either because they are afraid they may have to pay for it themselves - which isn't true - or because they simply don't see the need for it. They think it is unnecessary to have a text telephone merely for private use. Such employers forget that hearing employees sometimes have to use the phone to say they will be home late, to find out how a sick child is getting on, or to call the plumber.

30. CAN DEAF PEOPLE OCCUPY SUPERVISORY POSITIONS?

Yes. In the United States there are deaf managers, directors and departmental chiefs. Mostly they have their own interpreter who accompanies them everywhere. In the Netherlands things have not yet reached this stage. There are still only a few deaf people who have been to university, and even they are not allowed to occupy supervisory positions, on the grounds that they cannot use the telephone or follow speech without an interpreter. There are some deaf people in supervisory positions, but usually in organizations for deaf people, such as the chairman of the Dutch Deaf Association, or officials of deaf welfare organizations. A number of deaf people are self-employed or supervise hearing people, but these are usually people who can speak clearly and are good at speech-reading.

31. DO DEAF PEOPLE HAVE AN ORGANIZATION OF THEIR OWN?

The Stichting Nederlandse Dovenraad (= Dutch Deaf Association) is an organization which looks after the interests of deaf people. The Association has a large number of achievements to its credit: the introduction of Teletext in 1981, text telephones in 1984, TV news for deaf and hard-of-hearing people, training courses for interpreters, the interpreting service, training courses for sign language teachers, sign language courses, and MADIDO (an organization which provides social services for deaf people). Fourteen regional welfare organizations are members of the Association.

32. ARE THERE ANY DEAF ARTISTS OR ENTERTAINERS?

There are deaf painters, actors, mime artists, photographers, conjurers, sculptors, etc. A focal point for deaf artists in the Netherlands is the Hendrick Avercamp Art Society (in Dutch: Kunstkring Hendrick Avercamp), named after a 17th-century deaf Dutch painter. A number of deaf actors have set up the Handtheater (= Hand Theatre), and translate 'hearing' plays into sign language and produce sign language plays of their own. The Handtheater actors also give workshops in non-verbal expression and sign language. The Watertheater (= Water Theatre) and the children's theatre groups Wapper (= Wave your hands) and Klaproos (= Poppy) are attached to the Handtheater. Drama training for deaf children and young people is provided by a group known as Mimelot. There is also Vi-Taal, a company which designs graphic material for visual communication; Vi-Taal's products include two pioneering children's books in Dutch Sign Language, which were on display at The Deaf Way.

33. HAVE BOOKS BEEN WRITTEN BY DEAF PEOPLE?

Henk Betten has written a book called **Bevrijdend gebaar** (= Signs of liberation), describing the life of H. D. Guyot, who founded the Institute for the Deaf in Groningen 200 years ago. The Dutch Christian Union of the Deaf has also published a commemorative volume, written by Jaap Rodenburg. Deaf people have also been involved in the publication of various other books, such as **Het Handalfabet** (= the Manual Alphabet), a book on the history and origins of the manual alphabet, and various publications by the Dutch Deaf Association. In recent years a number of dissertations have also been published by deaf university graduates. Books by deaf people have also appeared in other countries. As long ago as 1779, the deaf Frenchman Pierre Desloges wrote a book called **Observations**. The American Frances Parsons wrote **I didn't hear the dragon roar**, an account of her journey to the heart of China. Leo Jacobs described his experiences as a deaf man in a hearing world in **A deaf adult speaks out**, and David Wright gave an impression of what it is like to be deaf in his book **Deafness**. The book **Deaf in America** by Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, published in 1988, describes various aspects of deaf culture (humour, sign language, poetry, etc.). Finally, there have been countless scientific publications by deaf people in both Scandinavia and the United States on the subject of sign language and deaf culture.

34. DO DEAF PEOPLE HAVE THEIR OWN NEWSPAPER?

Deaf people in the Netherlands do not have their own newspaper, but they do have a monthly publication called **Woord en Gebaar** (= Word and Sign), which is published by the Dutch Deaf Association. This publication contains articles of relevance to the deaf community. Most of the local welfare associations also have newsletters of their own, such as **Doven en Welzijn** (= Deaf People and their Welfare), issued by the Amsterdam Association for the Welfare of Deaf People. Newsletters are also published by the various deaf sports clubs.

35. ARE THERE TV PROGRAMMES BY AND FOR DEAF PEOPLE?

In the Netherlands there is only the News for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing People, which is broadcast several times a day. This is a written news programme. Teletext pages 514 to 518 also contain the following special information for deaf people:

- 514: information for deaf and hard-of-hearing people
- 515: deaf sports
- 516: activities for deaf and hard-of-hearing people
- 517: subtitling (today's programmes)
- 518: subtitling (preview)

Other countries do have television programmes for deaf people, in which topical issues from both the hearing and deaf communities are discussed. In Germany there is a weekly

programme called **Sehen statt Hören** (= Seeing instead of hearing), and on British television there is a weekly programme called **See Hear**. The German programme is produced by hearing people, but deaf people are also involved. The British programme includes deaf presenters.

In the United States the weekly programme **Deaf Mosaic** is broadcast by 100 different TV stations, as well as by a TV station as far away as Tokyo. This programme is entirely put together by deaf people, including a deaf producer and a deaf camera team. The camera monitor simply has an extra monitor on top of it so that the cameraman or camerawoman can see the instructions being signed by the producer. **Deaf Mosaic** has won an Emmy Award (an American prize for television programmes). The Dutch Deaf Association would also like there to be a television programme for deaf people in the Netherlands. This is not such an unusual demand. There is already a special radio programme for the blind, and other cultural minorities have their own radio and television programmes. So far only one Dutch TV channel, VPRO, has broadcast a programme for deaf people: a series called **De Gebarenwinkel** (= the Sign Shop), in which deaf people told stories in sign language. Although the series was basically intended for children, it was also watched by a good many adults.

36. ARE THERE SPORTS CLUBS FOR DEAF PEOPLE?

Sport is very popular among deaf people. In the Netherlands there is the Royal Dutch Sports Federation for the Deaf (Dutch initials KNDSB). Fifty-five sports clubs are members of the Federation, representing such different sports as tennis, football, swimming, waterpolo, volleyball, shooting, table-tennis, bowling, indoor football and chess. The World Games for the Deaf are held every four years, and numerous international exchanges take place in the field of sport.

37. DO DEAF PEOPLE HAVE A SOCIAL LIFE?

Yes, but a rather different one from hearing people. They often visit one another or meet at the local deaf club. Telling stories and jokes is a popular activity. Deaf people enjoy going to the cinema, but not to see Dutch films, since these are not subtitled, whereas all foreign films in the Netherlands are. Concerts and musicals are of course out of the question, but there are some deaf people who enjoy ballet. Only a small number of deaf people go to the theatre, since it is almost impossible to follow without an interpreter. Various deaf youth clubs hold regular disco evenings which are also attended by hearing teenagers, friends or brothers and sisters of deaf teenagers. The music is often very loud or else is made visible by means of flashing lights.

38. CAN DEAF PEOPLE DRIVE?

Nearly all deaf people have a driving licence. They need a car for their social contacts. They also have to go to places personally more often than hearing people do, since they cannot use the phone. Since deaf people function visually, they are very observant when driving. They do not have such things as car radios to distract them, and they have a broader field of vision. They cannot hear if there is something wrong with the engine, but they can feel it. Nor can they hear the sirens of police cars, fire engines or ambulances, but they can tell from other drivers' behaviour that an emergency vehicle is approaching. Deaf people also drive heavy goods vehicles and ride motorbikes. In the United States they even fly private planes, using airfields that do not depend on radio contact.

39. HOW DO DEAF PEOPLE WAKE UP IN THE MORNING?

Deaf people use light and vibrations to wake them up instead of sound. Nowadays there are various types of alarm-clock which work in this way (information is available from the Dutch firms Goedhart and Auditech, whose addresses are given at the end of this book). There are alarm-clocks which operate by emitting bright flashes, as well as a vibrating alarm-clock - a flat pad which goes under your pillow and vibrates when it's time to get up. Deaf children are often woken up by hearing members of the family, but it would be better for children to have their own alarm-clocks from an early age. Every deaf child over the age of five is now legally entitled to an alarm-clock and general warning system. Parents can submit an application on behalf of their child under the General Disability Act. Such systems remain the property of the social insurance board and are lent out to users.

Previously there were no alarm-clocks for deaf people. Some deaf people had a 'biological clock' which woke them automatically at the right time. There was also a deaf woman would drink a glass of water exactly eight hours before she had to get up. She found this a foolproof system.

40. HOW DO DEAF PEOPLE KNOW WHEN THERE'S SOMEONE AT THE DOOR?

Deaf people can't hear the doorbell, so they have to see it. Most deaf people have a flashing doorbell. This may be a separate system with lights fitted at various important points throughout the house (the kitchen, the sitting-room and the bedroom), which flash whenever the doorbell rings. In other cases the bell is connected to an existing floor or table lamp; if the doorbell rings during the day, the lamp goes on briefly, and during the evening it goes off briefly. But occasionally deaf people don't see the bell, because they're in the lavatory (where there usually isn't a flashing light) or in the garden, or because they've fallen asleep.

Previously there were no such technical aids, and so deaf people invented all kinds of systems of their own. Sometimes they fitted a small hinged shelf in the sitting-room, with a heavy stone on it. The bell-pull was connected by a string to a supporting strut under the shelf. When the doorbell was pulled, the shelf collapsed and the stone fell to the floor, which was generally made of wood. The deaf person felt the vibration and answered the door.

4

COMMUNICATION

41. CAN DEAF PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER EASILY?

Sign language is not international. Sign languages differ from each other just as spoken languages do. For example, there is French Sign Language, German Sign Language, Swedish Sign Language and American Sign Language. Yet deaf people from different countries can communicate with each other more easily than hearing people. This is because, as far as we know, sign languages have a number of characteristics in common. For example, the way in which the 'signing space' (the space in which the signs are made) is used is similar in all sign languages.

At the same time, all deaf people make use of facial expression and pantomime. If they see that someone does not understand something, they immediately try and find another way of getting it across. They are used to extracting meaning from apparently incomprehensible language. Hearing people are less adaptable in this respect. Deaf people also have more frequent international contacts and thus end up learning something of each other's sign languages.

42. HOW DO DEAF PEOPLE COMMUNICATE IN THE DARK?

Deaf people do not usually communicate in the dark. Light is necessary for sign language communication. For brief messages, use is sometimes made of signs or fingerspelling on the body (for instance, you can fingerspell the letters WC to indicate that you're going to the lavatory). Some deaf couples have the bedside light on a dimmer switch, and turn the dimmer up if they need to communicate.

43. HOW DO DEAF PEOPLE HAVE AN ARGUMENT?

When deaf people are having an argument, their signing becomes larger and more vigorous. Their facial expressions are very angry. Some use their voices - even if the other person cannot hear them - in order to express their emotions. They stamp on the floor to attract attention, or look away to break off communication. Not looking is the same as not listening. Not surprisingly, sign language also has swear words and insults of its own.

For hearing partners of deaf people, this way of arguing may take some getting used to. They are not used to such violent facial and physical expression.

44. CAN DEAF PEOPLE USE THE TELEPHONE?

To answer this question, a distinction needs to be made between (a) phoning other deaf people and (b) phoning hearing people. To phone each other, deaf people use a text telephone or what is known in the Netherlands as a Visicom. When the telephone rings, a light starts to flash. A text telephone consists of a computer-type keyboard and a two-line display. A Visicom has a keyboard and a full-size monitor. One person types a message and it appears on the other person's display or monitor. Then the other person types a reply. The cost of purchasing a text telephone or a Visicom is refunded by the social services under the General Disability Act. Phoning by text telephone or Visicom is expensive, because it takes longer to type a message than it does to say it. Although all deaf people are pleased with these facilities (which are better than nothing), they still have some disadvantages:

- Not all deaf people can read or write well, so information may be incorrectly conveyed and misunderstandings may occur.
- The text telephone display only has two lines, so information does not remain visible for very long.
- Although the Visicom has a clearly readable monitor, this also means that confidential information can be read over your shoulder by other people.
- You can't always tell how a particular expression is meant to sound; for instance, a phrase such as 'don't be silly' may be angry, friendly or joking.
- Both text telephones and Visicoms are too bulky to fit into a bag or a coat pocket.

Deaf and hearing people can also phone each other. Hearing people can also buy a text telephone or Visicom, but they usually don't, because they are expensive and the social services will only refund the purchase costs if you are deaf. Recently a so-called *Telettoets* (= Tele-key), which is much cheaper than a text telephone, has become available. The Telettoets consists of a keyboard and a headset. The deaf person speaks and the hearing person types. Hearing people can use an ordinary touch-tone telephone in the same way. You have a card with holes cut out for the buttons, which you place over the telephone. Then, by combining the numbers with the * symbol (the bottom-left

button) and the # symbol (the bottom-right button) as indicated on the card, you can turn the numbers into letters, as follows:

* 1 = A, 1 = B, # 1 = C, * 2 = D, 2 = E, # 2 = F and so on.

The hearing person types and the deaf person speaks, which isn't easy for either of them. The hearing person cannot see what he or she has typed, and the deaf person cannot hear what he or she is saying. To make things worse, the hearing person has to type and hold the receiver at the same time. You need a good deal of practice to type quickly and accurately using a touch-tone telephone. One advantage is that you can take the card with you wherever you go. For this arrangement to work, the hearing person must be familiar with the deaf person's voice.

Finally, the Dutch telephone company provides a switchboard service known as Teleplus (the number of which is 06-8410). The Teleplus operator, who is linked to the deaf person by text telephone, types the hearing person's message to the deaf person and tells the hearing person what the deaf person has typed in reply. Teleplus calls cost 40 Dutch cents a minute (two to three times the standard charge). Deaf people do not always like using Teleplus because there is less privacy. Operators have sometimes been known to intervene in conversations.

45. CAN DEAF PEOPLE LIP-READ?

The term 'speech-reading' is preferable to 'lip-reading', because the deaf person reads more than just lips - for instance, the position of the tongue is also important. Most deaf people can speech-read, but that doesn't mean that they can always read everything that's said - far from it, in fact. There are 40 different sounds in Dutch, and only 10 of these (i.e. 25%) are visually distinguishable. Vowels are fairly easy to identify, but many consonants are not. To take some examples from English, there is no visible difference between the words *bay*, *pay* or *May*. The words 'green' and 'red' are also practically indistinguishable (as are *groen* and *rood*, the equivalent words in Dutch). It is impossible to speech-read someone who talks fast, has a stiff upper lip (in the literal sense!) or a drooping moustache, smokes a cigarette while talking, chews gum, has badly-fitting false teeth or is not sitting in the light. To make things worse, many deaf people have an imperfect knowledge of Dutch and so do not understand everything they read. Despite all this, it sometimes seems as though deaf people can speech-read everything. How do they do it? It's all a matter of guesswork. If someone says 'I'm going on holiday in May' and the deaf person recognizes the words 'going' and 'holiday', then obviously the last word is likely to be 'May' rather than 'bay' or 'pay'. The deaf person quickly checks what the possible combinations are. If you know what the conversation is about and have a fairly good knowledge of Dutch, it's easier to guess the meaning. However, deaf people often merely pretend to understand, because they dislike constantly having to ask for things to be repeated. They are afraid that they will be thought stupid, or that they will spoil things for other people by interrupting all the time. Similarly, hearing people often pretend to understand deaf people just to avoid embarrassment. This regularly leads to misunderstandings, missed appointments, and so on.

- throw a paper pellet;
- ask someone near the deaf person to tap him or her on the shoulder.

Remember that people may be startled if you touch them unexpectedly, so always do so carefully.

Hearing people should only stamp on the floor or bang the table if they are well acquainted with the deaf people present.

5

SIGN LANGUAGE

49. WHAT IS SIGN LANGUAGE?

Sign language is the natural language of prelingually deaf people. It is a visual language with a vocabulary and grammar of its own. Most deaf people use a sign language which is influenced by the spoken language used around them. While signing, they will occasionally use all or part of a word from the spoken language. For instance, when making the sign for 'brother', deaf people in the Netherlands will say or mouth the word for 'brother' (*broer*) or part of it (*broe*). This is because, in combination with the appropriate lip movement, the same sign means 'sister'. Dutch Sign Language does not follow the grammatical structure of spoken Dutch. Sign languages have their own separate structure.

50. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SIGN SYSTEM AND SIGN LANGUAGE?

A sign system is not a language. A sign system uses the structure of the spoken language, with accompanying signs borrowed from sign language. In the Netherlands such a sign system is sometimes referred to as 'Sign-supported Dutch'. Schools for the deaf in the Netherlands and elsewhere generally remain opposed to the use of sign language in deaf education, claiming (against the most recent evidence) that it prevents deaf people from acquiring the language of the hearing majority. If they allow signing at all, it is nearly always in the form of a sign system. Most interpreters for the deaf in the Netherlands use a sign system, and hearing people almost always use a sign system when communicating with deaf people, since they find it much easier to use a system which imitates the structure of their own spoken language. For most deaf people a sign system is more difficult, since they usually have an imperfect command of the grammar and vocabulary of the spoken language; however, they are used to having to switch to a sign system - really a foreign language to them - whenever communicating with hearing people (including their schoolteachers). Unlike a sign system, sign language is a proper language with its own vocabulary and grammar which are not derived from the spoken language.

51. HOW OLD ARE SIGN LANGUAGES?

Sign languages have existed for as long as there have been deaf people. They appear wherever deaf people are in contact. For a long time sign language was suppressed. At a conference of teachers of the deaf in Milan in 1880, a majority of the hearing teachers present decided that the use of signs should be discouraged. It was alleged that signing interfered with the development of speech, and also that sign languages were not proper languages, but merely primitive gesturing. Despite this suppression of sign language, most deaf people continued to sign. In recent years there has been renewed respect for sign languages and they are increasingly acknowledged to be languages in their own right.

52. ARE THERE ANY DEAF PEOPLE WHO DON'T USE SIGN LANGUAGE?

Some deaf people do not sign, either because they cannot sign, or because they do not want to. The reason for this can be found in the attitudes of teachers of the deaf. For a long time deaf people in the Netherlands were educated 'orally'. Deaf children had to learn to speak and speech-read, and were not allowed to sign. Sign language was not recognized as a proper language; at best, it was considered an inferior language. The primary aim was to produce deaf people who could speak and who seemed as much like hearing people as possible. So some deaf people have never been taught to sign and prefer to seek contact with hearing people. They have not been taught to develop and accept their deaf identity.

53. ARE SIGN LANGUAGES PROPER LANGUAGES?

Research carried out in the United States into American Sign Language (ASL) has shown that sign languages are indeed proper languages. Sign languages have fixed rules of grammar and a vocabulary of their own. There is not necessarily a sign for every word, or a word for every sign. In other words, there is no one-to-one correspondence between spoken languages and sign languages, any more than there is between two spoken languages.

Unexpected evidence that sign languages are real languages has come from the field of neurology. Just like hearing people, deaf people may suffer from aphasia (i.e. loss of the ability to make or understand signs) after a stroke affecting the language centre of the brain, which controls our ability to understand and use language - whether spoken or sign language.

In the Netherlands it has taken quite some time for sign languages to be recognized as proper languages and for the existence of Dutch Sign Language to be acknowledged. The Dutch Association for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children (Dutch initials NSDSK) has been carrying out research into Dutch Sign Language since 1982. Similar research has been carried out since

1985 by the General Linguistics section at the University of Amsterdam. In 1988 sign languages were officially recognized by the European Parliament as being the languages of deaf people. However, the Dutch government has so far failed to give similar recognition to Dutch Sign Language.

54. IS SIGN LANGUAGE INTERNATIONAL?

At the risk of repeating ourselves, we want to emphasize that sign language is **not** international. Nearly all sign languages are national languages, and even include dialects. Thus there is French Sign Language, French-Canadian Sign Language, Spanish Sign Language, Swedish Sign Language, American Sign Language, British Sign Language, South African Sign Language, Japanese Sign Language, and so on. The American sign for 'father' is quite different from the Dutch sign for 'father'. Perhaps more surprisingly, even countries with the same spoken language are likely to have quite different sign languages; for example, British Sign Language and American Sign Language are mutually unintelligible, despite the fact that Britain and America are both English-speaking countries. Yet deaf people from different countries can follow one another's signing quite easily. How come? Some of the rules of grammar are similar in the different sign languages. All sign languages also have pictorial (or 'iconic') and non-pictorial (or 'arbitrary') signs. For purposes of international contact, deaf people dispense with arbitrary signs as much as possible and mostly use iconic signs instead. In iconic signs there is a link between the sign and all or part of the object or movement concerned. For example, in Dutch Sign Language the word 'ball' is signed by outlining a ball with your hands, 'bicycle' is signed by using your fists to imitate the movement of bicycle pedals, and 'boat' is signed by forming the prow of a boat with your hands and moving them to imitate the boat sailing. However, iconic signs only make up about one-third of sign vocabulary, and not all iconic signs are immediately comprehensible. For this reason deaf people also use a great deal of facial expression and mime. They are accustomed to using their hands and feet to get their meaning across and are not at all embarrassed to do so. They are also used to describing things in various different ways until the other person understands what they mean. So if deaf people from, say, the Netherlands and the United States meet and start signing to each other, they can communicate fairly easily. But if the Dutch people watch a conversation between deaf Americans, they can hardly follow it at all. The Americans are then communicating in American Sign Language, which the Dutch people do not know.

So sign language is not international. At The Deaf Way, an international conference held in Washington D.C. in July 1989 and attended by some 7000 people from 75 countries, there were 330 interpreters interpreting into various sign languages. Gestuno, a language used by some of the interpreters and sometimes referred to as the international sign language, can be compared to Esperanto - a mixture of elements from various languages. However, Gestuno still needs to be further developed.

55. ARE THE SAME SIGNS USED ALL OVER THE NETHERLANDS?

No. There are five dialects which have grown up around the five deaf schools (in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Groningen, Voorburg and Eindhoven). Thus the five regions have four different signs between them for the word 'clean', but on the other hand the same sign is used all over the Netherlands for the word 'back'. In practice, the grammar and most of the signs are the same in all five regions.

For a long time the use of sign language in deaf education was prohibited, and so deaf children did not learn Dutch Sign Language at school. However, since they badly needed to communicate among themselves, they more or less invented their own sign language. The result was that signs differed from family to family, from class to class, from school to school and from generation to generation. Even now deaf children are not taught Dutch Sign Language as a school subject. However, an inventory has now been made of several thousand signs used in the various regions, and attempts are being made to obtain a clearer overall picture of Dutch Sign Language.

56. IS THERE A DICTIONARY OF SIGNS?

Dictionaries of signs have been available from various institutions for a number of years. A dictionary of signs from the Groningen region was published in 1983. A book entitled **Communiceren met gebaren** (= Communicating in sign), published in 1985, lists 400 basic signs used to communicate with mentally disabled deaf children. A book entitled **Handen uit de mouwen** (= Get your hands moving), a dictionary of signs for parents and teachers of young deaf children, appeared in 1988, and 1989 saw the publication of **Basis-Gebarenschat** (= Basic Sign Vocabulary), a concise dictionary containing the signs for 340 different words in the five regions.

So there isn't yet a 'Van Dale' (the Dutch equivalent of the 'Oxford Dictionary' or the 'Webster') for Dutch Sign Language. One reason for this is that illustrating signs on paper is rather a complicated business. Photographs or drawings must be used, but these fail to indicate the movement of the sign, which must therefore be drawn in afterwards. Alternatively, an intricate system of notation must be used. To make matters worse, there is not enough money available to pay for the necessary research into Dutch Sign Language. More extensive dictionaries of signs are available in other countries, particularly the United States.

57. ARE NEW SIGNS BEING INVENTED?

Just as in spoken languages, old signs are dropping out of use and new ones are being introduced. Examples of new signs are the signs for 'Aids', 'computer', 'therapist', 'printer', 'missile' and 'fax'. Since sign language in the Netherlands was suppressed for a long time, the vocabulary of Dutch Sign Language was until recently rather limited. A large number of new signs has

therefore had to be invented in a short space of time. Also, more and more deaf people are taking advanced courses of training in such subjects as psychiatry, social work and computer science. Signs must be created for the new concepts encountered in these new fields of study.

58. ARE SIGN LANGUAGES DIFFICULT TO LEARN?

A sign language is a foreign language for hearing people, and foreign languages are not easy to learn. Sign languages also have a completely different structure from most spoken languages, which makes them especially difficult. Some hearing people feel uncomfortable at having to use facial and bodily expression. At the same time, very little written material is available about sign language, and there is still no detailed dictionary or grammar of Dutch Sign Language. The training for teachers of Dutch Sign Language is still very limited, and there are simply not enough deaf teachers. Education in Dutch Sign Language is only just beginning.

Just as with other foreign languages, practice with native users of the language is essential. You can learn French more quickly by spending a year in France than you can from a book.

Unfortunately there is no country where sign language is the official language. Plenty of contact with deaf people is essential in order to learn sign language properly. Children of deaf parents often find it easier to learn sign language because they are exposed to it from an early age.

Some hearing people think they have a good command of sign language, when all they are really doing is using a sign system: speaking Dutch and making signs from time to time.

59. IS SIGN LANGUAGE A SIMPLE LANGUAGE?

Some people think that sign language is a simple language. This is because they immediately recognize the generally accepted (transparent) signs which hearing people also make; for example 'crazy' (tapping your forehead with your index finger), or 'money' (rubbing your thumb and index finger together). There are also signs known as 'pictorial' or 'iconic' signs, in which there is a clear link between the sign and the object or action it represents: for instance 'milk' (moving your hands up and down as though you were milking a cow) or 'bicycle' (revolving your fists to imitate bicycle pedals). Once explained, the meaning of such iconic signs is easy to remember. However, there are many signs which are neither generally accepted nor pictorial, but simply have to be learned by heart. There are also signs which change in meaning according to the accompanying facial and bodily expression. For example, the signs for 'irritated', 'angry' and 'furious' look identical; the difference lies in the expression, in the size of the sign and in the vigour with which it is made. Such subtleties are often missed by hearing people. Just knowing some signs doesn't mean that you know sign language. Learning the grammar of sign language is what takes longest.

60. IS THERE A SIGN FOR EVERY WORD, AND A WORD FOR EVERY SIGN?

Some kinds of word have no equivalent in sign language. For example, the articles 'a' and 'the' do not exist, exactly as in some spoken languages such as Russian. There is no verb 'to be', and the verb 'to have' is little used. Verbs are not conjugated the same way as in spoken languages. There is no sign for 'very'; the difference between 'nice' and 'very nice' is shown by means of expression. There is no sign for 'too' (as in 'too much'); here again, a negative facial expression is used to convey the difference between 'much' and 'too much'. Nor are there signs for exclamations such as 'well', 'oh' or 'hey'. Sometimes a whole series of different signs correspond to a single word in the spoken language; for instance, there are different signs for the word 'out' in the sentences 'I'm going out' and 'Turn the light out'. Again, there are sometimes different words corresponding to a single sign; for example, the signs for 'practise', 'train', 'rehearse' and 'active' are identical, and the only difference is provided by the accompanying lip movements.

Dutch Sign Language still has some catching up to do. There are still no signs for certain concepts. New signs are constantly being invented. Sometimes there is a sign for a relatively difficult concept, but no sign for another much more simple concept. In other words, there are quite a few 'gaps' in the vocabulary of Dutch Sign Language.

61. IS SIGN LANGUAGE QUICKER THAN SPEECH?

Sign language isn't quicker than speech, but nor is it slower. On average it takes longer to make a sign than it does to utter a word, but sign languages have the advantage of simultaneity, in other words the ability to convey various pieces of information at the same time. The sentence 'I am not ill' consists of four words which must be uttered one after the other. In Dutch Sign Language, the sign for 'I' is followed by the sign for 'ill', while simultaneously the head is shaken to indicate 'not'. So, while speech may be quicker in some cases and sign language quicker in others, in the end it all averages out.

62. ARE THERE SIGNS FOR ABSTRACT IDEAS?

Yes, there are signs for abstract ideas - for instance 'abstract', 'politics', 'integration', 'philosophy' or 'communication'. So in sign language you can talk about anything you like: science, art, religion, politics, philosophy, etc. However, few deaf people in the Netherlands have had a higher education, because until a few years ago there were no qualified interpreters to help them. This is one reason why Dutch Sign Language still has a relatively limited vocabulary. Another reason why sign language has not developed as fully as it might is that it was suppressed for so long. However, the difference is now being made up very quickly.

63. IS FINGERSPELLING THE SAME THING AS SIGN LANGUAGE?

Fingerspelling means using your fingers to form letters. The 26 letters of the alphabet can all be spelled on the fingers. In the Netherlands the Dutch Manual Alphabet is used for this. Manual alphabets are not the same all over the world. In Britain, for instance, the letters are spelled with two hands, while in the Netherlands only one hand is used. Fingerspelling is not the same as signing. For example, you can fingerspell the word 'coffee' (spelling out all six letters in succession), but there is also a single sign for 'coffee'.

64. WHEN DO DEAF PEOPLE USE FINGERSPELLING?

Fingerspelling is used for:

- people's names (when you meet someone for the first time, you spell your name);
- words for which no sign exists;
- street names and place names.

The handshapes used in fingerspelling also occur in sign language, without there necessarily being any connection between the handshape and the Dutch word. For instance, the T-handshape is used in the sign for the Dutch word *wonen* (= living, dwelling). In some cases there is a connection between the Dutch word and the handshape, for instance the C-handshape in the sign for *communicatie* (= communication), the T-handshape in the sign for *taal* (= language), and the D-handshape in the sign for *dinsdag* (= Tuesday). These are known as 'initialized' signs, because the handshape is the same as the initial letter of the word.

Deaf people in the United States fingerspell a great deal, even with words for which a sign exists. Fingerspelling isn't so difficult to do yourself - the real problem is reading other people's fingerspelling!

65. WHY DO DEAF PEOPLE MOVE THEIR LIPS WHEN THEY'RE SIGNING?

Signs are made not only with your hands; bodily and facial expression are also important. These are known as 'non-manual features'. Mouthing or uttering words, or parts of words, is another non-manual feature. Most sign languages have been influenced by the spoken language of the country or region concerned. Sometimes a word is mouthed or uttered because a particular sign has more than one meaning. For instance, the difference between 'brother' and 'sister' (the same sign in Dutch Sign Language) is made clear by mouthing the appropriate word (*broer* or *zus*). Sometimes a sign is accompanied not by an actual word, but by a movement such as sticking out your tongue, blowing, or puffing out your cheeks. For example, the sign for *aanwezig* ('present', i.e. not absent) is accompanied by a movement in which the lips protrude and the sound 'shhh' is uttered.

66. CAN YOU MAKE JOKES IN SIGN LANGUAGE?

Humour among hearing people is based on word play and intonation. Deaf people often cannot understand this kind of humour. Humour in sign language is mainly visual. Jokes are based on movement, facial expression and pantomime. Deaf people are extremely good at imitating people, animals and things.

67. IS THERE SUCH A THING AS SIGN-LANGUAGE THEATRE?

Yes, there is. In the Netherlands the **Handtheater** (= Hand Theatre) was set up just a year ago. All the members of the organizing committee and all the actors are deaf. The aim of the Handtheater is to translate existing plays into sign language, produce sign language plays of its own, and give workshops in non-verbal expression and sign language. The Handtheater performs for deaf and hearing audiences both in the Netherlands and abroad. In other countries there are also deaf theatre groups which use sign language. A well-known example is the National Theater of the Deaf in the United States, whose audiences include a large number of hearing people.

68. IS THERE SUCH A THING AS SIGN-LANGUAGE POETRY?

In other countries, particularly the United States, there are a number of deaf poets. In the Netherlands sign-language poetry is still a very new phenomenon. In March, April and May 1990 there was a series of evenings on the theme 'Poetry in speech and sign language', at which the hearing Dutch poets Ernst van Altena, Neeltje Maria Min and Simon Vinkenoog and the deaf actors of the Handtheater translated each other's poetry and recited/performed the poems and the translations in front of an audience. This was the first time that deaf people had performed sign-language poetry for an audience in the Netherlands.

69. ARE THERE CHILDREN'S BOOKS IN SIGN LANGUAGE?

Seven children's books in sign language are used by the Institute for the Deaf near Groningen in its courses for parents of young deaf children. The books, which were produced by school staff, are only used within the school. A small number of children's books illustrated with signs have also been published; however, these are not in sign language, but instead use the sentence structure of written Dutch. An example of such a book is **Ik ben jarig** (= It's my birthday) by Jetty Krever (published by Leopold in 1984). Two bilingual books were published in 1988: **Foel poes** (= Naughty Kitty!) and **Kom buiten kijken** (= Come and look out here!). These books, which were translated from Norwegian into both written Dutch and Dutch Sign Language, were on display at The Deaf Way. Four fairy stories have been recorded on video for deaf children from 4 to 10 years of age: **Hansel and**

Gretel and Puss in Boots told in sign language by a deaf storyteller, and **Cinderella** and **Little Red Riding Hood** told in Sign-Supported Dutch by a hearing storyteller.

70. ARE THERE FILMS IN SIGN LANGUAGE?

Films in which deaf actors appear alongside hearing actors have been produced in other countries; examples are **Children of a Lesser God**, **Love is never silent** and **And my name is Jonah**. Deaf actors also occasionally appear in television series such as **Cagney and Lacey** and **Dallas**. The deaf actress Marlee Matlin even won an Oscar for her performance in **Children of a Lesser God**. In the Netherlands there have so far been no films involving deaf actors. There have been a number of amateur films, such as **Koffie** (= Coffee) by Tony Bloem. Ruud Janssen and Daria Mohr have also made a series entitled **Een blik op de dovenwereld** (= Looking at the deaf community), which shows conversations among deaf people and between deaf and hearing people, together with some impressions of drama courses and lessons at a deaf school. Finally, the Dutch television channel VPRO has broadcast the series **De Gebarenwinkel** (= The Sign Shop), in which deaf people tell stories in sign language.

71. WHERE CAN HEARING PEOPLE LEARN SIGN LANGUAGE?

The Coordinating Committee for Communication Courses (CCC), which is part of the Dutch Deaf Association, coordinates the development of signing courses and organizes the training of sign language teachers. Sign language teachers are themselves deaf. They receive training in order to teach hearing people. The NSDSK (Dutch Association for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children) has developed two courses on behalf of the CCC: an elementary course, in collaboration with the Institute for the Deaf near Groningen, and a follow-up course in collaboration with deaf teachers. Both courses consist of 12 lessons. In the basic course, pupils learn the signs for approximately 340 different concepts (including regional variants, this amounts to some 700 signs), as well as how to use them in sentences. They also practise fingerspelling, receive explanations of various theoretical concepts, and are given information about the deaf community. The follow-up course approaches the theory and grammar of Dutch Sign Language in greater depth. The courses are given by the Welfare Associations for the Deaf in the various regions. Sometimes teachers also give specially adapted courses for special categories of people such as nurses, health and social workers, police officers, local government employees, and drama teachers and students.

Such lessons are occasionally given by hearing people who have completed the basic and follow-up communication courses. This is quite wrong. Twenty-four lessons cannot give you sufficient knowledge of Dutch Sign Language. Moreover, it is vital that the teacher should be deaf because, in addition to teaching the pupils the language, a deaf teacher can also introduce them to deaf culture.

72. COULD YOU HAVE A SOCIETY IN WHICH EVERYONE KNEW SIGN LANGUAGE?

The book **Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language** by Nora Ellen Groce portrays a society in which most people had a good command of sign language. On the island of Martha's Vineyard, off the coast of New England in the United States, sign language was the main language in addition to spoken English. This was because there had been a form of hereditary deafness on the island ever since the arrival of the first colonists in 1690. There were deaf people in every family, and in some villages as many as one person in four was deaf. Communication between deaf and hearing people was excellent, because the hearing people had grown up with sign language too. Deaf people in this community were not thought of as having a disability. Nor were people labelled as 'deaf' or 'hearing'. Often people could not immediately remember whether a particular acquaintance was deaf or hearing - they had to think about it for a while. Hearing people used a mixture of speech and sign language; for example, someone would begin a story in speech and finish it in sign. Even when the last deaf inhabitant died in 1952, hearing people on the island continued to use signs when communicating. Some deaf people in the Netherlands would like to see all Dutch children, hearing and deaf, learn Dutch Sign Language at primary school. That would make things easier not only for deaf people in the Netherlands - since they could communicate more easily with everyone - but also for hearing people. Knowledge of sign language can often be very useful when abroad, if you don't know the spoken language of the country you are in. Initial experience in the Netherlands with sign language courses for hearing schoolchildren indicates that their response is likely to be very enthusiastic.

6

INTERPRETERS

73. HOW LONG HAVE THERE BEEN INTERPRETERS FOR THE DEAF?

In the Netherlands there have only been qualified interpreters for the deaf since 1985. Before that, most interpreting was done by hearing relatives, particularly hearing children of deaf parents. The first qualified interpreters were often people with deaf relatives. Hearing children of deaf parents have an advantage over others, because they have mostly been brought up with Dutch Sign Language.

74. DO INTERPRETERS RECEIVE SPECIAL TRAINING?

There has been a special course for interpreters since 1985. Originally it was a two-year course, but in August 1989 it was extended to three years. It is a part-time course, consisting of one day of theory and 16 hours of practical training a week. The course is given by the OVDB (a training scheme for health and social workers) in collaboration with MADIDO (which provides social services for the deaf). MADIDO provides the practical part of the course. The diploma is approved by the Dutch Ministry of Education and Science. Those wishing to take the course must meet prescribed educational standards (junior secondary school examination pass with at least a D grade in Dutch, or completion of Level 4 of senior secondary or pre-university school). Candidates must have sufficient contact with deaf people and be capable of communicating with them. They must also have successfully completed the basic and follow-up communication courses. Interpreters are trained in the following subjects:

- theory and practice of Dutch Sign Language
- interpreting theory and methods
- interactive skills
- Dutch
- psychology
- social/careers guidance

MADIDO has a special selection committee which decides whether or not a student can be accepted for the course. The tuition fees are 335 guilders (approximately \$175) a year, not including books and travel expenses.

75. HOW MANY INTERPRETERS ARE THERE IN THE NETHERLANDS?

There are approximately 70 qualified interpreters in the Netherlands, which is far too few. Although more and more hearing people want to become interpreters, most of them do not make it through the selection procedure. The mere fact of having completed the basic and follow-up communication courses is not usually enough to ensure satisfactory communication with deaf people.

76. WHAT DO INTERPRETERS DO?

Interpreters make it possible for deaf and hearing people who do not have a sufficient command of each other's language to communicate with one another. Interpreters are often called in to help with personal matters. For instance, they accompany deaf people when consulting a doctor or a lawyer or attending a church service, a wedding or a funeral. Deaf people may also need an interpreter in work situations, for instance when applying for jobs or attending meetings. Finally, school pupils and students can ask to have an interpreter for lessons or seminars. Interpreters may not omit, add or alter information

while interpreting. Confidentiality is of course essential, and interpreters have a code of practice which, among other things, forbids them to pass on information they have obtained while interpreting. When interpreting for deaf people, it is vital not only to know both spoken Dutch and Dutch Sign Language, but also to be familiar with deaf culture.

77. DO INTERPRETERS USE DUTCH SIGN LANGUAGE?

Many interpreters in the Netherlands do not use Dutch Sign Language, but a sign system: i.e. they speak Dutch sentences clearly and sign at the same time. Some interpreters also use a great deal of fingerspelling. Deaf people who are not very good at fingerspelling find this difficult to follow. There are too few interpreters in the Netherlands with a really good command of Dutch Sign Language. Exceptions here are interpreters who are hearing children of deaf parents and have been brought up bilingually.

In the United States deaf people can choose between various different kinds of interpreter: sign-language interpreters, sign-system interpreters, or 'oral interpreters', who re-peat ev-ery-thing clear-ly without using signs.

78. HOW CAN DEAF PEOPLE APPLY FOR AN INTERPRETER?

If a deaf person's application for an interpreter is approved by the competent pension fund or social insurance board, the application can be submitted to the Dutch Interpreting Service (Dutch initials NTD). The NTD is part of MADIDO (which provides social services for deaf people). The NTD ensures that an interpreter is available at the right time and place. Interpreters must be applied for well in advance. This is a disadvantage, since you don't always know well in advance that you are going to need an interpreter. Interpreters usually work within a particular region because of differences in dialect, and also to cut down travelling time.

79. CAN DEAF PEOPLE CHOOSE THEIR OWN INTERPRETER?

Deaf people can express a preference for a particular interpreter when submitting their application. However, since there is a chronic shortage of interpreters, their preference cannot always be taken into account. It all depends on the availability of the interpreter in question.

'Matters of life and death' take priority over more ordinary matters, and thus an application for an interpreter in a divorce case will take priority over an application for an interpreter at a sports club meeting.

80. DO DEAF PEOPLE HAVE TO PAY FOR INTERPRETERS THEMSELVES?

Since 1988 the costs of interpreting services have been refundable under the General Disability Act (in the case of deaf people who are state employees, similar arrangements are available under the corresponding pension legislation). Prelingually deaf people are entitled to 18 hours of free interpreting services per year for personal matters, and also for 10% of their working time. Deaf people can also apply for extra hours of free interpreting services for educational purposes. Postlingually deaf people are entitled to 9 hours of free interpreting services per year for personal matters. Deaf people over 65 years of age are entitled to free interpreting services only if they have already applied for such services before they were 65.

81. ARE DEAF CHILDREN ENTITLED TO AN INTERPRETER?

There is no lower age limit for entitlement to interpreting services, but there is an upper age limit (65 years). Deaf children can thus apply for an interpreter under the General Disability Act. However, not all applications are accepted.

7

UPBRINGING

82. HOW DO PARENTS DISCOVER THAT THEIR CHILD IS DEAF?

It is very hard to determine whether or not very young children can hear properly. An audiogram test cannot be performed on children of that age. In everyday situations it is not easy to tell whether a child is really reacting to sounds. Parents are often plagued by uncertainty, and not all family doctors handle this as well as they might. Usually a child is somewhat older by the time the parents seriously begin to suspect deafness. For instance, they notice that the child does not react to sound, does not start talking in the normal way, and is startled when people appear unexpectedly. The child does not respond when the parents call, or look up when a rattle is shaken, nor is it startled when a door slams unexpectedly. Sometimes it is the family doctor or the infant welfare centre that discovers the child is deaf. Infant welfare centres often carry out a hearing test when a child is nine months old. If the parents, the family doctor or the infant welfare centre suspect hearing loss, the child is sent to an ear, nose and throat specialist. The specialist decides whether he

can treat the problem and, if necessary, refers the child to the regional Audiological Centre, which has equipment and rooms specially designed to measure residual hearing.

83. WHAT PROBLEMS MAY BE FACED BY HEARING PARENTS OF A DEAF CHILD?

If hearing parents discover that their child is deaf, they are naturally very upset. It's always a shock to find that there's something the matter with your child. Parents often panic because they don't know how to communicate with their child. Most deaf children are born into a hearing family. For parents it is very important how other members of the family and neighbours react and how they behave towards the child. Parents often worry about the risk of accidents because the child cannot hear traffic. They therefore sometimes keep the child indoors and over-protected. Things are even more difficult if the parents cannot sign. If a deaf child tries to explain something and the parents cannot understand, the child may become difficult and aggressive. The parents must have the patience to explain things clearly. Often parents are also very concerned about their child's future (schooling, work and family life).

84. WHAT HELP IS AVAILABLE FOR HEARING PARENTS OF DEAF CHILDREN?

The Audiological Centre determines whether there is hearing loss and, if so, how much. If the hearing loss is between 70 and 90 dB, the child is classified as severely hard of hearing. If the hearing loss exceeds 90 dB, the child is classified as deaf. Most parents of deaf children are themselves hearing and usually know little or nothing about deafness. There are a number of centres which provide family guidance. Most of these centres are attached to schools for the deaf. With the exception of the Institute for the Deaf in St. Michielsgestel, all of them have adopted the Total Communication philosophy. The family guidance centres provide the following services

- parents are taught how to communicate with their child;
- information is given on being deaf, educational facilities for deaf children, parental organizations, and the deaf community;
- parents are put in touch with other parents and with deaf adults;
- practical advice is given on how to bring up the child;
- emotional support is provided where necessary.

The family guidance centres organize discussion groups and communication courses for parents.

85. HOW SHOULD HEARING PARENTS TALK TO A DEAF CHILD?

Nowadays parents can take a signing course. They must learn to sign as quickly as possible, as this is the only way to establish contact with their child. They must speak slowly and clearly, use

signs as much as possible and look directly at their child when communicating. Most parents also have one or more hearing children. They should use signs as much as possible even when talking to their hearing children. In this way their deaf child will be more fully involved in family conversations.

86. WHAT PART CAN THE DEAF COMMUNITY PLAY IN THE LIFE OF DEAF CHILDREN?

Most deaf children (95%) are born into a hearing family. This means that they have hearing parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, uncles, aunts and neighbours. Everyone around them is hearing. Some deaf children never meet a deaf adult, and therefore think that they will become hearing when they grow up. It is essential for deaf children to meet deaf adults from an early age. They can identify with them ('when I grow up I'll be like him/her '). Deaf adults can teach children Dutch Sign Language and give them information about being deaf and about deaf culture.

There is a great difference between deaf children of deaf parents and deaf children of hearing parents. Deaf children of deaf parents learn to sign from an early age and have deaf adults around them as role models. Unfortunately, there are still too few deaf adults involved in the upbringing and education of deaf children. Deaf centres and clubs do organize special activities for deaf children, such as *Sinterklaas* (= St. Nicholas, a Dutch festival just before Christmas, when children are given presents), Carnival (when people dress up in funny clothes), or egg-hunting at Easter. Deaf sports also provide contact between deaf children and adults; however, the children are then usually rather older. Some deaf schools have recently started employing deaf class assistants and group supervisors, but there are still far too few of these.

87. IS THERE AN ORGANIZATION FOR HEARING PARENTS OF DEAF CHILDREN?

In the Netherlands there is an organization known as the Federation of Organizations of Parents of Deaf Children (Dutch initials FODOK). Every association of parents of deaf children in the Netherlands is a member of FODOK. FODOK provides information for parents, organizes conferences, compiles documentation, maintains international contacts and generally looks after the interests of deaf children and their parents.

88. WHAT PROBLEMS MAY BE FACED BY DEAF PARENTS OF A HEARING CHILD?

Deaf couples take it for granted that any child they have will be hearing, unless they suffer from a hereditary form of deafness, in which case they usually know in advance that their child will be

deaf. Usually, then, there are no unpleasant surprises for deaf parents when their child is born. There are also fewer communication problems between deaf parents and their hearing children. Such children are used to their parents' voices from the very beginning. If deaf parents speak to their hearing child and sign at the same time, and if they sign between themselves, the child will grow up bilingual. The problems deaf parents may face with their hearing child are often an indirect consequence of the fact that deaf people are in a minority. For instance, hearing children regularly have to telephone and interpret on their parents' behalf, and this may be too much of a burden on them. They may find themselves confronted with matters which they are not mature enough to deal with. Sometimes relatives will ask the hearing child for information because they find it too difficult to ask the deaf parents. Relatives sometimes interfere in the child's upbringing because they think the deaf parents cannot cope. Problems may also arise when children reach puberty. Parents often cannot give their children sufficient help with their homework, because they themselves have not attended a hearing secondary school and often have an inadequate command of Dutch. Children also take advantage of their parents' deafness. They play very loud music, come home late without anyone noticing, or go off on their own without telling their parents. Some children are ashamed of their deaf parents and don't dare bring friends home, or don't like their parents to sign in the street or while shopping. Some hearing children tend to become self-effacing, because they think of their parents' disability as much more serious than any problems of their own. They don't tell their parents about things that are bothering them, because they don't want to be a burden to them. As a result they sometimes do not get the parental support they need. Contacts between deaf parents and their hearing child's school may be unsatisfactory. Often they are afraid even to go there. In such situations the parents should really be accompanied by an interpreter, because otherwise the child has to act as interpreter. This is a bad thing, since it puts the child in an ambiguous position.

89. WOULD DEAF PARENTS RATHER HAVE A DEAF OR A HEARING CHILD?

Deaf parents are ambivalent about this. Just like hearing parents, deaf parents consider it important that a child should be healthy. However, having a deaf child makes communication easier, because the child feels less 'unfamiliar'. But the parents also know that living in society is hard for deaf people and that deaf children face a difficult future. In any case, if deaf parents have a deaf child, they accept the fact without any difficulty.

90. WHAT HELP IS AVAILABLE FOR DEAF PARENTS?

Just as hearing parents of a deaf child are now entitled to family guidance, deaf parents of a hearing child should also have access to guidance. Unfortunately, almost nothing is done for deaf

parents of hearing children. Deaf parents sometimes think they are inadequate parents if they have problems with their children. They have little or no information about bringing up children and the normal problems that may arise. Also, deaf people are generally less accustomed to applying for, and receiving, help from social services. They tend to feel that they have failed if they have to ask for help. Deaf parents sometimes need to be more aware of the position their hearing children find themselves in, without feeling guilty about it.

91. HOW DO DEAF PARENTS COMMUNICATE WITH THEIR HEARING CHILD?

Some deaf parents speak to their child without signing, because they want to bring the child up as 'normally' as possible. They are often advised to do this by hearing experts. Other deaf parents used Sign-Supported Dutch, while still others sign without using their voices. If children are brought up with signing, they grow up bilingual and can to some extent be considered as members of the deaf community.

Problems are more likely to arise if one parent is deaf and the other hearing or hard-of-hearing. The hearing or hard-of-hearing parent will tend to talk to the child without signing. As a result, there is often more contact between the child and the hearing or hard-of-hearing parent, especially if it is the mother. The deaf parent may then feel left out, because he or she cannot follow everything that is said.

Communication difficulties may also arise if both parents are deaf and they have more than one hearing child. If the hearing children speak to each other without signing while their parents are present, their parents cannot follow what is being said. Some parents take the view that their children should sign whenever they are within the parents' field of vision, since otherwise the parents may end up feeling like strangers in their own home.

92. HOW DO DEAF PARENTS KNOW IF THEIR CHILD IS CRYING?

Deaf parents make a habit of going and looking at the baby more often than hearing parents, or else a hearing child tells them that the baby is crying. In the days before alarm systems, even very young children quickly learned that they must get out of bed themselves and go to their parents if they needed them.

Nowadays flashing telephone and doorbell systems can also include a baby alarm; if the baby cries, a light begins to flash.

8

EDUCATION

93. WHAT SORT OF SCHOOLS DO DEAF CHILDREN GO TO?

Most deaf children go to a school for the deaf. A minority go to a school for the hard-of-hearing or a hearing primary school.

There are five schools for the deaf in the Netherlands:

- the H. D. Guyot Royal Institute for the Deaf in Haren, near Groningen;
- the Institute for the Deaf in St. Michielsgestel, near Eindhoven;
- the Effatha Protestant Institute for Deaf Children in Voorburg and Zoetermeer;
- the J. C. Amman School for the Deaf in Amsterdam;
- the Rudolf Mees Institute in Rotterdam.

The Institute for the Deaf in St. Michielsgestel is Catholic, the Effatha Institute is Protestant, and the other three establishments are non-denominational. The schools in Amsterdam and Rotterdam have no residential facilities. Some children live at the school, others live at home, and still others live with foster families, because the distance between their parents' home and the school is too great. The schools are divided into various sections:

- a nursery section;
- a primary section;
- a school for deaf children with multiple disabilities;
- a school for special secondary education (except in Amsterdam).

94. WHAT KIND OF SCHOOLING DO DEAF CHILDREN RECEIVE?

Deaf children usually receive all their schooling, including secondary schooling, at a school for the deaf. However, if the deaf school does not provide secondary education (as in Amsterdam), they go to a school for the hard-of-hearing instead. Until 1985 the Rotterdam school did not provide secondary education either, but now it does. The usual reason why deaf people go to a school for the hard-of-hearing is that it provides more opportunities. For instance, they can complete their junior secondary education at a school for the deaf, and then go on to receive their senior secondary education at a school for the hard-of-hearing. If deaf children go to a hearing school, they can apply to have an interpreter and receive assistance with their studies from the nearest deaf school. The Youth Committee of the Dutch Deaf Association has written a paper, entitled **Opletten alstublieft** (= Please pay attention), on future training opportunities for the deaf. Before interpreters became available, young deaf people were mostly trained for manual occupations, but nowadays, with the help of interpreters, they can enrol for higher-level training.

95. DO DEAF CHILDREN LEARN SIGN LANGUAGE AT SCHOOL?

Deaf children do not learn Dutch Sign Language at school. Dutch Sign Language is not an official subject (unlike spoken and written Dutch). Not all teachers use signs while teaching. The teachers who do sign use a sign system, not sign language. Signs are mainly used to communicate with young children who cannot yet read or write, and with deaf children who have multiple disabilities. Of course, children do learn to sign at school, but they learn it from one another in the playground or in their spare time at boarding school. The fact that deaf children do not learn to use their own language from the very beginning is a great disadvantage. They should really be taught Dutch Sign Language just as they are taught spoken and written Dutch. This can be compared to the situation of Turkish children in the Netherlands, who learn two languages, Turkish and Dutch.

In 1981, Swedish Sign Language was recognized as the official language of deaf people in Sweden. A new curriculum for deaf schools was introduced there in 1983, prescribing that deaf children must be taught not only spoken and written Swedish, but also Swedish Sign Language. Such bilingual education is currently under discussion in the Netherlands, but even at Gallaudet University (the university for the deaf in Washington D.C., which is attended by three thousand students) the language used is not American Sign Language, but a form of Sign-Supported English. Three researchers at Gallaudet have written a paper in which they call for the use of American Sign Language in teaching. This paper (**Unlocking the Curriculum**) has been translated into Dutch, and the translation is available from the Dutch Deaf Association.

96. DO TEACHERS USE SIGNS DURING LESSONS?

In the early decades of deaf education (from 1790 onwards), teachers did use signs. But following the conference in Milan in 1880, hearing teachers of the deaf decided that signing should no longer be used in deaf education. In recent years, signs have begun to be used again in most schools. The H. D. Guyot Royal Institute for the Deaf adopted the Total Communication philosophy in 1980. This philosophy states that a deaf person is always entitled to communication, and that all available means must be used for this purpose: speech, speech-reading, reading, writing, mime, fingerspelling and signing. Teachers at other schools are also beginning to use more and more signs. Only the Institute for the Deaf in St. Michielsgestel maintains a strictly oral approach. There, signs are only used with deaf children who have multiple disabilities.

97. ARE THERE ANY DEAF TEACHERS?

Only the Rotterdam school has one (postlingually) deaf teacher. Apart from that, there are a few deaf classroom assistants, and a number of deaf people are being trained to become teachers. Far more deaf people should be involved as teachers of the deaf in

the Netherlands. At Gallaudet, the university for the deaf in Washington D.C., 30% of the teachers and professors are deaf. There are also deaf teachers in other countries.

98. HOW DO DEAF PEOPLE LEARN TO SPEAK?

Learning to speak and speech-read are a vital part of the education of deaf children. Most children wear a hearing aid so that maximum use can be made of their residual hearing. Children learn to speak by watching themselves and the teacher in a mirror. They watch the position of the teacher's mouth and tongue and try to imitate them. They use their hands to compare the vibrations in their own throat, cheeks or nose with those of the teacher. Learning to speak takes an enormous amount of time and effort, because the children cannot hear their own voices. Dutch has 40 different sounds, only ten of which are visually distinguishable. It is by no means unknown for a child to take a whole year just to learn to pronounce the letter R.

99. HOW DO DEAF PEOPLE LEARN DUTCH?

Deaf children cannot learn Dutch spontaneously. Hearing children hear language all around them - at home, in the street, on the bus, at the zoo, at school. Everywhere they learn words and hear them used in sentences, and so they learn the grammar of Dutch. You need language in order to make contact, to say what you think and feel, and to get information. Deaf children do not hear language anywhere. If parents, brothers and sisters, other relatives and teachers do not speak clearly and do not use signs, the child cannot learn Dutch. Many deaf people leave school with a poor knowledge of Dutch and never manage to catch up. Although they can read individual words, they often fail to understand the meaning of sentences. Their Dutch vocabulary is limited. Dutch also has a great deal of figurative expressions, similar to English phrases such as 'kick the bucket' (= die), 'make no bones about something' (= not make a fuss about something) or 'that's the ticket' (= that's just what's needed). Deaf people find expressions such as these very hard to understand.

If deaf children start by learning a language which they can see - Dutch Sign Language - they will then find it easier to learn Dutch. Deaf children of deaf parents acquire language skills earlier than deaf children of hearing parents. Deaf children of deaf parents learn Dutch Sign Language from their parents. They understand how language works, and so later on they can learn spoken and written Dutch more quickly, as a second language.

100. WHAT IS THE 'ORAL METHOD'?

The oral method of educating the deaf is based on the premise that deaf people must become as integrated into hearing society as possible, and that they must therefore learn to speak and

speech-read. Signing is kept to an absolute minimum. Signing is alleged to interfere with the acquisition of (spoken and written) language skills and to make integration more difficult. However, research has now shown that, if anything, the reverse is true. In any case, total integration into hearing society is out of the question. The best that can be hoped for is participation, since society will never become completely accessible to the deaf. Deaf people will always live in two worlds - the hearing community and the deaf community. Having a language and culture of their own is essential if deaf people are to participate as full members of society.

101. WHY HAS THE ORAL METHOD PERSISTED FOR SO LONG?

Many people wonder why the oral method has persisted for so long in deaf education. In fact, they often reason that it must be a good method simply because it has survived so long. Yet history has many examples of persistent prejudices, beliefs and methods which were supported by scientists for centuries and yet later turned out to be wrong. For a long time people believed in witches, and many innocent individuals were burned or drowned as a result. In the last century, the psychiatrist Cesare Lombroso branded a whole category of people with particular facial characteristics as criminals, and the influence of his ideas has persisted right up to the present day. Similarly, Galileo was persecuted by the Church for quite truthfully claiming that the earth was not the centre of the universe.

However, this does not altogether account for the persistence of the oral method. There are various factors involved. First of all, deaf people are in a minority. The majority always tends to impose its own way of doing things on the minority, as though it were ideal. Deaf people are mainly brought up and educated by hearing people. Unless they have given the matter some thought, hearing people often believe that deaf people should ideally become as much like hearing people as possible. A second factor is that deaf people have a poor command of the majority language. Until recently there were no interpreters who could put across what deaf people had to say. Furthermore, it was not until 1960 that linguists first showed sign languages to be proper languages with a grammar and vocabulary of their own.

A D D R E S S E S

GENERAL

AUDITECH BV
Herengracht 504
Amsterdam

Telephone: 020 - 620 04 34

The Auditech company supplies flashing doorbell and warning systems and other technical aids for deaf people.

DoCom
Trans 1
3512 JJ Utrecht

Telephone: 030 - 33 22 77

DoCom is a printing company which mainly employs deaf people.

FODOK

Dutch Federation of Organizations of Parents of Deaf Children
P.O.Box 754
3500 AT Utrecht

GOEDHART

P.O.Box 967

3800 AZ Amersfoort

Nijverheidsweg Z 4c

3812 EB Amersfoort

Telephone: 033 - 65 08 80/61 17 46

Text telephone: 033 - 63 75 69

The Goedhart company supplies the Visicom, the Teletoons and other technical aids for deaf people.

HANDTHEATER

c/o John van Gelder

Zeeburgerdijk 13

1093 SK Amsterdam

The Handtheater is an association of deaf actors who perform plays in sign language.

KNDSB

Royal Dutch Sports Federation for the Deaf

Plein '40-'45

1065 SW Amsterdam

Telephone: 020 - 610 62 14

Text telephone: 020 - 610 62 09

KUNSTKRING HENDRICK AVERCAMP

Ursula van Raesfeltlaan 5

6994 BA De Steeg

Telephone: 08309 - 52 921

OVDB

P.O.Box 86

3950 AB Maarn

Telephone: 03432 - 2724

The OVDB provides the theoretical part of the training course for interpreters. The practical part is provided by MADIDO.

MADIDO

P.O.Box 696

3500 AR Utrecht

(Text) telephone: 030 - 31 04 21

MIMELOT

c/o G. Draaisma

Grote Kerkstraat 114

8911 EG Leeuwarden

Telephone: 058 - 12 74 43

DUTCH DEAF ASSOCIATION

P.O.Box 19

3500 AA Utrecht

Trans 1

3512 JJ Utrecht

(Text) telephone: 030 - 31 64 87

NSDSK

Dutch Association for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children

Oranje Nassaulaan 49

1017 AK Amsterdam

Telephone: 020 - 664 21 31

NTD

Dutch Interpreters' Service

P.O.Box 696

3500 AR Utrecht

(Text) telephone: 030 - 34 03 30

PLATFORM ON PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES FOR DEAF PEOPLE

Leidseplein 5

1017 PR Amsterdam

Telephone: 020 - 625 08 03

RINO North-Holland
Leidseplein 5
1017 PR Amsterdam
Telephone: 020 - 625 08 03
The RINO North-Holland provides a course on
'Psychiatric services for prelingually deaf people '

VI-TAAL
Graphic design for visual communication
Stationsweg 93
2515 BK The Hague
(Text) telephone: 070 - 380 17 47

ALLARDSOOG EDUCATION CENTRE FOR DEAF PEOPLE
Jarig van Wielenwei 32
9243 SH Bakkeveen
Telephone: 05169 - 1888

WOORD EN GEBAAR MAGAZINE
P.O.Box 19
3500 AA Utrecht

AMSTERDAM FAMILY COUNSELLING
STICHTING GEZINSBEGELEIDING AMSTERDAM
Oranje Nassaulaan 49
1075 AK Amsterdam
Telephone: 020 - 664 11 51

HAREN
(Groningen)
KONINKLIJK INSTITUUT VOOR DOVEN 'H. D. GUYOT'
Rijksstraatweg 63
9752 AC Haren
Telephone: 050 - 34 39 41

ROTTERDAM
AFDELING GEZINSBEGELEIDING VAN DE KONINKLIJKE AMMANSTICHTING
Ammanplein 6
3031 BA Rotterdam

ST. MICHIELSGESTEL
DIENST VOORZORG INSTITUUT VOOR DOVEN
Theerestraat 42
5271 GD St. Michielsgestel
Telephone: 04105 - 881 11

VOORBURG
CHRISTELIJK INSTITUUT VOOR DOVEN 'EFFATHA'
Effathalaan 31
2275 TH Voorburg
Telephone: 070 - 399 20 21

SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTES

HOENSBROEK
AUDIOLOGISCH CENTRUM 'HOENSBROECK'
Zandbergseweg 111
6432 CC Hoensbroek
Telephone: 045 - 23 96 80

ZWOLLE
STICHTING AUDIOLOGISCH CENTRUM ZWOLLE
Burgemeester Van Royensingel 16
8011 CT Zwolle
Telephone: 038 - 21 87 11

JOH. C. AMMANSCHOOL
Jan Sluytersstraat 9
1062 CJ Amsterdam
Telephone: 020 - 617 86 17

KONINKLIJK INSTITUUT VOOR DOVEN 'H. D. GUYOT'
Rijksstraatweg 63
9752 AC Haren
Telephone: 050 - 34 39 41

RUDOLF MEES INSTITUUT
Ammanplein 2-4
3031 BA Rotterdam
Telephone: 010 - 413 22 80

STICHTING INSTITUUT VOOR DOVEN
Theerestraat 42
5271 GD St. Michielsgestel
Telephone: 04105 - 88 111

CHRISTELIJK INSTITUUT VOOR DOVEN 'EFFATHA'
Effathalaan 31
2275 TH Voorburg
Telephone: 070 - 399 20 21

WELFARE ASSOCIATIONS

STICHTING WELZIEN DOVEN AMSTERDAM
(SWDA)
Stadhouderskade 89
1073 AV Amsterdam

STICHTING WELZIEN DOVEN BREDA
(SWDB)
secretariat: Vioolstraat 29
4876 BV Etten-Leur

STICHTING WELZIEN DOVEN DRENTHE
(SWDD)
secretariat: Schapendrift 91
9411 BM Beilen

STICHTING WELZIEN DOVEN EINDHOVEN
(WESTEINDO)
Kempensebaan 80
5613 JG Eindhoven
Telephone: 040 - 44 18 04

STICHTING WELZIEN DOVEN GELDERLAND
(GEWELDO)
secretariat: Tijgerstraat 77
6531 MB Nijmegen

STICHTING WELZIEN DOVEN LEIDEN
(WELDORIIN)
secretariat: Zijde 170
2771 ES Boskoop

STICHTING WELZIEN DOVEN ROTTERDAM
(SWEDORO)
secretariat: Michelangelostraat 46
3066 NM Rotterdam

STICHTING WELZIEN DOVEN TWENTE
(SWDT)
secretariat: Scholekster 6
7462 ZX Rijssen

ZEEUWSE STICHTING WELZIEN DOVEN
(ZSWD)
secretariat: Paauwenburgweg 119
4384JD Vlissingen
Telephone: 01184 - 6 28 60

STICHTING WELZIEN DOVEN ZOETERMEER
(WEDOZO)
Nicolaasplein 15
2712 AV Zoetermeer
Telephone: 079 - 16 76 49

SAMENWERKENDE UTRECHTSE DOVENORGANISATIES
(SUDO)
secretariat: Zuidwal 8
1274 GV Huizen

STICHTING CLUBHUIS VOOR DOVEN
secretariat: Uranusstraat 13
9742 JR Groningen

STICHTING SOCIAAL CULTUREEL CENTRUM VOOR DOVEN
(FRIDO)
Stationsweg 30 a
8911 AJ Leeuwarden

STICHTING SOCIAAL CULTUREEL RECREATIEF CENTRUM VOOR DOVEN
Westeinde 43
2275 AB Voorburg
Telephone: 070 - 386 59 40

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NSDSK and FODOK Fairy stories on video
HANS EN GRIETJE
(= *Hansel and Gretel*)

DE GELAARSDE KAT
(= *Puss in Boots*)

ASSEPOESTER
(= *Cinderella*)

ROODKAPJE
(= *Little Red Riding Hood*)

Cassette containing two video films available from FODOK
(price 35 guilders)

The films CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD, AND MY NAME IS JONAH and
LOVE IS NEVER SILENT are available from better-quality
video rental shops.

DIFFICULT WORDS

(Translator's note: this section explains various scientific terms
and other potentially unfamiliar words used in the book.)