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The Politics of Disability: a new approach

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It is only in recent years that the issue of disability has been transformed from a purely medical problem to a political one, in Britain, at least. Central to this transformation has been the rise of the disability movement and the coming war welfare consensus. Unfortunately, however, this politicisation of disability has not resulted in the development of a new understanding of the position of reduced to a consideration of pressure group and party political activity. This paper will argue that this is an inadequate basis for understanding either the historical significance or the current relevance of the disability movement. It within the rise of a whole range of new social movements which are is only by understanding that the disability movement is centrally placed within the rise of a whole range of new social movements which are characteristic of post-capitalist society, that its significance can be grasped.

THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF DISABLED PEOPLE

That disabled people constitute a potentially powerful political force there can be no doubt. According to Fry (1987), a recent MORI poll found that 9% of the public (18+) considered themselves to be disabled and 27% said that another member of their family was disabled. This study (Fry, 1987) looked at the political participation of disabled people in the 1987 General Election and found that many disabled people did not even appear on the electoral register; others, particularly blind and deaf people, were denied access to all the information necessary to make an informed choice; and other disabled people, postal and proxy voting notwithstanding, found the problem of transport and physical access to polling stations too daunting to allow them to exercise their right to vote.

There are two further ways in which it is difficult for disabled people to participate within the Party system. First, many local constituency headquarters are inaccessible and hence it is very difficult for them to become grass-roots activists and to feed in disability issues at this level. Secondly, although there are examples of disabled politicians at the local and national level, it is also very difficult for many disabled political activists to

offer themselves as candidates at local or national elections, for the problems of both campaigning and door-to-door canvassing may prove to be impossible.

Even if these barriers to political participation were removed, it would not necessarily mean that the disabled population would cohere into an active political force to which all political parties would need to take notice. There are a number of reasons for this.

> To begin with there is a great deal of variety within the disabled population as a whole differences in social class, age, sex, family circumstances and clinical conditions-as well as the fact that disability may have developed after political commitments had been established. In addition, many disabled people do not necessarily regard themselves as disabled, or even if they do, would not contemplate joining an organisation of disabled people. Finally, as a consequence of disability, some people may disengage from political activity, either because their physical impairment poses limitations of a physical or psychological kind, or because they are aware that in many contexts they lack any basis for exercising power, e.g. through the withdrawal of their labour. (Oliver, 1984 p. 23)

Extending this analysis, it has been suggested also that the medical approach to disability has fostered artificial divisions within the disabled population (Borsay, 1986).

But these divisions do not arise simply from the medical approach, for the State also provides services in such a way as to foster divisions within the disabled population. Hence, it gives tax allowances to blind people but not to other categories of disability, mobility allowances to those who cannot walk but not for those who can, and higher pensions and benefits for those injured at work or in the services than for those with congenital disabilities or those who have had accidents. This is not an unintentional consequence of State provision but a deliberate tactic which the State has developed in its dealings with other groups and can be summed up as `divide and rule'.

This idea of disabled people as a group divided amongst itself has obvious implications for any notions of class based political activity.

> The myriad of disability-specific programs and policies, the segregation of disabled people, the inability to gain access to organised society, to experience an integrated and adequate

education, to obtain meaningful employment, and to socially interact and participate has resulted in a politically powerless and diffuse class of people who are unable to coalesce with other groups of disabled people on common issues, to vote, to be seen or heard. This class has accepted the stigma and caste of second-hand citizenship and the incorrect judgement of social inferiority. (Funk, 1987, p. 24)

This description of the political situation fits in neatly with the `underclass thesis' developed to explain the political situation of black people.

The usefulness of this idea of an underclass is still being debated and centres around the issue of whether an underclass is a subgroup of the working class or a group relegated to the margins of society on the basis of personal or group characteristics. In either case disabled people as an underclass are likely to remain powerless and marginalised, at least as far as organised political activity is concerned.

Thus it is unlikely that disabled people can expect the party political process to serve their interests well. We take the issue of anti-discrimination legislation, as an example. While it is true that this issue has been forced onto party political agendas, and indeed, several bills have even been introduced in parliament, all of these have been defeated, usually covertly, but on one occasion overtly, through the operation of the party political system; that is through a sustained campaign by Conservative whips to ensure that their party members voted it down (Oliver, 1985). Hence, disabled people can hardly expect to articulate and achieve their political ends through the party system, and this raises the question of whether they can expect pressure group activity to serve them better.

POLITICS OF PRESSURE GROUP ACTIVITY

From the mid-1960s onwards, it became clear that, despite rising affluence, a number of groups were not sharing in the new material and social benefits that were being created, and that traditional political activity was not even getting these issues onto the political agenda. Hence

The creation of new kinds of pressure groups like Shelter, the Disablement Income Group and the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination, as well as the Child Poverty Action Group, in the mid-1960's, was more than a sign of the times. It was a reaction to what was perceived to be the fraudulent character of British democracy. There were of course special conditions which

explained the new expressions of protest. Public expectations had been running high. The policies of successive Governments had been built on relatively full employment and steadily increasing national wealth. This meant that the views and interests of workers, pensioners and others were believed to weigh more heavily than they had done before the war in the conduct of national affairs ... Some groups-like the elderly, one-parent families and sick and disabled people-were observed to have been left behind in the race for prosperity. (Townsend, 1986, pp. i-ii)

If, then, disabled people could not get issues onto the political agenda through the normal processes of political participation, then this raises the issue of whether the avenue of pressure group activity was likely to be more successful? The most sophisticated analysis of this so far is provided by Borsay (1986) who draws heavily on the framework provided by Cawson (1982). Cawson suggests that pluralist analyses of pressure group politics are now inadequate because of the nature of the `corporate state', and that it is necessary to distinguish between competitive groups, whose members share a common interest, and corporate groups, whose members share a common position within the division of labour. Needless to say, it is the latter who have most influence on the political decision-making process. As most disability organisations are of the former kind, their partnership with government (Oliver, 1984) is unlikely to have much influence.

This partnership does not inevitably banish the needs and opinions of physically disabled people from sight, but the allegiance of corporate professional interests to economic development stacks the cards against their faithful representation in the shaping and administration of policy. (Borsay, 1986, p. 15)

It is not, however, simply the structural location of these disability organisations that leads to such pessimism. As most of these organisations are registered as charities, direct and overt political activity is precluded. But more importantly, these disability organisations have, over the years, built up a relationship with the State, or the `establishment' as Borsay calls it, which gives them credibility, but little power.

The string; of more formal voluntary organisations or charities, which for many years have doubled up as pressure groups in the field of physical handicap, meet the same structural barriers to change, but the status which flows from their long traditions and their connections with the `establishment' give them a credibility and aura in government circles which more recent (and perhaps

more radical) groups of disabled people cannot easily imitate. (Borsay, 1986, p. 16)

This credibility has been based upon history and tradition rather than the claim to representativeness of these organisations, whose `key decisionmakers' are usually salaried professional staff who articulate their own assumptions about the needs of disabled people rather than the needs of disabled people as they themselves express them. Two recent examples of this are the attempts of the Government with the public support of RADAR to abolish the Quota, established under the Disabled Persons' (Employment) Act 1944, and the opposition of the Spastics Society to anti-discrimination legislation. Pressure from individual disabled people and from organisations controlled and run by disabled people forced public about-turns in both cases.

There is one further aspect of the politics of disability as pressure group activity that needs to be considered; that of minority group politics. In the wake of the Civil Rights and Women's Movements in the United States in the 1960s, it was suggested that disabled people should seek to articulate and claim their rights to full citizenship on the basis of their own particular needs as a minority group (Hahn, 1986). However, there are problems with this approach for:

> The minority group approach basically argues that disabled people should be brought into the American political system as another interest group. The structure of decision making isn't attacked. Instead the idea is to improve the odds that the disabled will be recognised as having legitimate demands. (Liggett, 1988, p. 271)

Using what she calls "an interpretive approach", based on the work of Foucault, Liggett takes her criticisms further than this and argues that the politics of disability is structured by certain discursive practices. Thus the minority group approach

> . . . is double-edged because it means enlarging the discursive practices which participate in the constitution of disability. In other words, the price of becoming politically active on their own behalf is accepting the consequences of defining disability within new perspectives, which have their own priorities and needs. The new perspectives then become involved in disciplining; disability. (Liggett, 1988, p. 271)

Thus, accepting disabled people as a minority group also involves the accepting of the disabled-nondisabled distinction; accepting the `normalising' society.

This has implications for disabled people seeking to gain control over their own lives for

> . . . in order to participate in their own management disabled people have to participate as disabled. Even among the politically active, the price of being heard is understanding that it is the disabled who are speaking. (Liggett, 1988, p. 273)

While not disagreeing with this analysis of the politics of disability as minority group activity, Liggett's problems arise when she suggests alternative political strategies. These strategies involve `reflection' and sometimes the acceptance and sometimes the rejection of disabled identities depending upon the specifics of particular situations.

However, such strategies would inevitably look like special pleading and further, move away from the strategies disabled people have chosen for themselves; that is the personal and public affirmation of disabled identities and the demands that disabled people be accepted by and integrated into society as they are; that is, as disabled people.

Thus, the structural position of these organisations, their relationship to the State, their non-representativeness in terms of the needs and wishes of disabled people and their acceptance of the normalising of society, lead to the inevitable conclusion that

> . . ., for disabled people,. . ., the chances of immediate and radical reform of social policies are slim. (Borsay, 1986, p. 19)

It is hard to disagree with this conclusion when analysing disability pressure group activity from a pluralist, corporatist or minority group position, but an analysis based upon the idea of `new social movements' within late capitalism can lead to very different conclusions indeed. However, that is the subject of later sections of this paper and no discussion of pressure group activity would be complete without some discussion of the single, most sustained example of pressure group activity within the field of disability; the campaign for a national disability income.

A NATIONAL DISABILITY INCOME

The campaign for a national disability income began in 1965 with the formation of the Disablement Income Group (DIG) by two disabled housewives. This group provided a major focus for pressure group activity and published plans for a national disability income comprising two elements; a disablement costs allowance and an income maintenance scheme. A decade later, the Disability Alliance was formed, initially comprising over 50 voluntary organisations, which has now grown to over 90, and they put forward their own proposals which were broadly similar to those of DIG. Recently both have updated their plans (DIG, 1987; Disability Alliance, 1987), which are again broadly similar, except that the Alliance proposals plan to incorporate a separate, independent benefit for those who care for a disabled person, whereas DIG argue that if disabled people were given a proper, adequate income, it would be unnecessary to pay carers separately.

There are difficulties in assessing the success or failure of these pressure group activities over the last 20 years, though it has to be said that a national disability income has not yet become a reality. On the other hand, all of the major political parties have made public commitments to the establishment of such a scheme (Disability Alliance, 1987, pp. 4-5), but have couched these pronouncements with get out clauses such as `when economic circumstances permit' and `as a matter of priority'.

> Despite these expressed commitments, no substantial progress has been made towards the introduction of a comprehensive disability income scheme. The past decade has instead seen a series of piecemeal changes which, although sometimes useful, have failed to correct the longstanding anomalies in social security provision for people with disabilities. Furthermore, in a number of vital areas, benefits have been cut and new anomalies created. (Disability Alliance, 1987, p. 5)

So, during the past 20 years there have been some incremental improvements, usually connected to the performance of the economy, but there have also been reversals.

There are a number of reasons why this sustained campaign has been unsuccessful. To begin with, both DIG and the Alliance have suffered from the problem already referred to, in that as registered charities, they have been unable to campaign in an overt political way. They have therefore found it necessary to divide their organisations into two component parts in order to retain their charitable status and to continue with political activities. In

addition, both organisations have found it necessary to set up information and advisory services in order to steer disabled people through the maze of benefits and to help individuals to receive all the benefits they are entitled to. Finally, they have carried out research to demonstrate that the financial position of disabled people is considerably worse than that of their able-bodied counterparts. Hence, neither organisation has been able to concentrate solely on pressure group activities.

Both groups can also be criticised for taking a somewhat naive view of the political process in that their campaigning is based upon three assumptions: that evidence must be produced to show the chronic financial circumstances of disabled people; that proposals for a national disability income must be properly costed to show that the burden on the economy will be marginal; and that sustained pressure must be mounted to hammer these points home to the political decision-makers.' This approach has been called `the social administration approach' and has been criticised for its assumptions about consensual values, rational decision-making, its unproblematic view of the State and its failure to acknowledge, let alone consider the role of, ideology. Perhaps the only thing that can be said in its favour is that

> If the empiricist study of consensual solutions to defined social problems did not exist, it would be necessary to invent it: democratic welfare capitalism presupposes the social administration approach. (Taylor-Gooby &Dale, 1981, p. 15)

What the income approach to disability fails to understand, therefore, is that political decisions are not made on the strength of particular cases, but in ways whereby the capitalist system itself benefits, regardless of the appearance of consensual values concerning the need for a national disability income. The establishment of such a scheme implies the paying of one group of people a sufficient income for not working to enable them to have a quality of life comparable to another group of people who do work. This, of course, has enormous implications for any system which requires its members to produce sufficient goods and services to sustain the material life of the population, and indeed for its ideological underpinnings which emphasise the value of those who do work and denigrates those who do not. In short, the fundamental question of whether a national disability income is achievable within capitalism has never been addressed.

It is this failure to address fundamental issues which has brought criticism of both DIG and the Disability Alliance from the more `populist' organisation, the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS). The two major criticisms of this approach are that it concentrates on a symptom (i.e.

the poverty of disabled people) rather than the cause (i.e. the oppression of disabled people by society), and that both organisations have moved away from representing disabled people and instead presenting an `expert' view of the problem. The logical conclusion to this approach, according to this analysis, is to make things worse, not better.

> Thus in practice the Alliance's assessment plans, developed logically from the narrow incomes approach, can be seen to increase the isolation and oppression of physically impaired people. We would be required to sit alone under observation on one side of the table, while facing us on the other side, social administrators would sit together in panels. We would be passive, nervous, deferential, careful not to upset the panel: in short, showing all the psychological attributes commonly associated with disability. It would be the social administrators who would gain strength, support and confidence from colleagues on the panel. A token number of the more privileged physically impaired people might be included, as they are in the Alliance. But the whole approach would *reinforce* the historical and traditional situation whereby physically impaired people are made dependent upon the thinking and decisions of others. (UPIAS, 1976, p. 18)

This debate about `expert or `mass' representation in respect of pressure group activity has continued into the 1980s, with Townsend (1986) claiming that these groups can only be `representative' in certain senses.

> But what they can do is commit themselves unreservedly to the interests of millions of poor people, call representative injustices to public notice and exchange blow with blow in an expert struggle with the Government over the effects, implications and constitutional niceties of policy. (Townsend, 1986, p. v)

But like UPIAS before it, BCODP denies the claims of such groups to be representative in any sense, suggests that expert representation can only be counter-productive and argues that the only way forward is to fully involve disabled people in their own political movement.

If this analysis is correct, then it is, perhaps, fortunate that a national disability income is likely to be unachievable within capitalist society. The crucial issue from a political point of view, however, is whether the traditional, single-issue, pressure group campaign for a national disability income is, any longer, a relevant tactic for the post-capitalist world to which we are moving. The following sections will suggest that the politics of disablement can only be

properly understood as part of the new social movements which are a part of post-capitalist society and that this casts severe doubt on the relevance of single-issue pressure group politics.

THE EMERGENCE OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Changes in the economy to one driven by consumption rather than production, the rise in technology, changing occupational patterns, social ' disorganisation affecting family and social life, increasing crime and hooliganism, crises in the welfare state, the ecological crisis and various kinds of political unrest have all been features of capitalism in the late twentieth century. This has led some commentators to characterise the end of the twentieth century as the era of late capitalism or to herald the coming of postindustrial or post-capitalist society.

This has had an influence on the political system and since the 1970s there has been an emergence of many new movements comprising neighbourhood groups, environmentalists, the unemployed, welfare recipients, minority groups and "the generally disenfranchised" (Castells, 1978; Touraine, 1981; Boggs, 1986). These movements have been seen as constituting the social basis for new forms of transformative political action or change. These social movements are `new' in the sense that they are not grounded in traditional forms of political participation through the party system or single-issue, pressure group activity targeted at political decision-makers.

Instead, they are culturally innovative in that they are part of the underlying struggles for genuine participatory democracy, social equality and justice, which have arisen out of "the crisis in industrial culture" (Touraine, 1981). These new social movements are consciously engaged in a critical evaluation of capitalist society and in the creation of alternative models of social organisation at local, national and international levels, as well as trying to reconstruct the world ideologically and to create alternative forms of service provision. It is in this sense that Touraine (1981) defines such movements as "socially conflictful" and "culturally oriented forms of behaviour".

THE DISABILITY MOVEMENT AS A NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT

There are four characteristics of new social movements that can be considered as relevant to the disability movement as a new social movement. The first of these is that they tend to be located at the periphery of the traditional political system and, in fact, sometimes they are deliberately marginalised (Hardin, 1982). This is certainly true of the disability movement which does not have the same relationship to the State as do the organisations for the disabled,

either in terms of consultation procedures, lobbying, or indeed resourcing. For example, RADAR, the umbrella `organisation for', is usually given a grant of £225,000 per year by the DHSS, whereas its `organisation of' counterpart, BCODP is lucky to get £10,000 per year.

However, this does not mean that the political significance and meaning of the disability movement can be taken to be marginal, nor, indeed, its transformative potential. New social movements in general do have great significance and meaning in the changing political circumstances that are currently occurring.

> The changing nature of political interests is most clearly focused around what have come to be termed as `new social movements' .... The new social movements are characterised not only by a greater willingness to employ a wide variety of forms of political action, but also by an underlying orientation towards political values that have widespread ramifications. In particular their underlying scheme of values stress the importance of political participation and personal self-actualisation in ways that have implications for the forms that political behaviour takes. (Weale, 1988, pp. 1-2)

This definition accurately fits in with the emergence of self-help/populist groups within the disability movement, both in terms of the importance such groups place on personal self-actualisation, and their willingness to follow proactive strategies towards what, ultimately, become political goals.

> Self-help groups were slow to develop ... but they have flourished and have become a powerful source of mutual support, education and action among people affected by particular health concerns or disabilities . . . while learning and working together, disabled people can combine their power to influence social and political decisions that affect their lives. (Crewe & Zola, 1983, pp. xiii-xiv)

However, the development of self-help strategies can initially be purely practical, rather than explicitly political. One case study highlights the way in which the self-help approach is often a response to the perceived failings in professional service provision. Thus while the initial impetus was to encourage disabled people "to solve their problems themselves and not have them solved for them", there was also a further aim which was `to identify the needs of the membership as a whole and articulate them, both to statutory agencies and political parties at both a local and a national level" (Oliver & Hasler, 1987, p. 116).

Hence,

> The self-help movement is, however, but one part of the struggle. It is a pre-requisite for change, but neither the sole nor the sufficient avenue. We must deal as much with social arrangements as with self-conceptions; one, in fact, reinforces the other. (Zola, 1979, p. 455)

This link between the personal and the political is often an integral feature of these new social movements

> To varying degrees and in varying ways the new movements also seek to connect the personal (or cultural) and political realms, or at least they raise psychological issues that were often submerged or ignored ... (Boggs, 1986, p. 51)

A specific form of self-help, more or less unique to the disability movement and, perhaps, the clearest practical illustration of the ways in which the disability movement corresponds with general definitions of new movements, can be found in the increasing numbers of Centres for Independent and Integrated Living (CILs) being established both in the UK and in other countries, including the United States, Australia, Canada and Japan. CILs represent both an attempt to achieve self-actualisation, and a form of direct action aimed at creating new solutions to problems defined by disabled people themselves (Oliver, 1987).

The second characteristic of new social movements is that they offer a critical evaluation of society as a part of "a conflict between a declining but still vigorous system of domination and newly emergent forms of opposition" (Boggs, 1986, p. 4). Ideologically, the Independent Living Movement, which led to the establishment of the first CILs in California and other parts of the United States in the late 1960s, also represents an explicit critique of prevailing social structures and the position of disabled people within them. The rationale behind the Independent Living Movement was that the obstacles to self-actualisation were perceived to be the result of living in hostile physical and social environments and the fact that what services were provided were restricting rather than enabling. The movement set about attempting to change this situation, first by redefining the problem in this way and then by setting up alternative kinds of service provision under the control of disabled people themselves.

The third characteristic of new social movements resulting from fundamental changes in the constitution of the political agenda has been

an increasing predominance of ... 'post-materialist' or 'post-acquisitive' values over those that have to do with income, satisfaction of material needs and social security. (Offe, 1980, p. 12)

While it is certainly true that the disability movement is concerned with issues relating to the quality of life of disabled people, it is also true that many disabled people still face material deprivation as well as social disadvantage and the movement is centrally concerned with this. It would be inaccurate to attempt to characterise the disability movement as stemming from a middleclass, disabled elite concerned only with their own quality of life, as Williams (1983) attempts to do in his critique of the Independent Living Movement.

A final characteristic of new social movements is that they sometimes tend to focus on issues that cross national boundaries and hence they become internationalist. This is certainly true of the disability movement and at Disabled People's International (DPI) Second World Congress, the objectives and strategies underlying the international movement were clearly defined around the central issues of empowerment and of disabled people acting collectively to achieve collective goals. It was noted by the Congress that

> ... political action aimed at governmental bodies-or at private groups or individuals, was more likely to produce results than through a legislative or constitutional route. Countries which had passed legislation favourable to disabled people, did not necessarily find that improved conditions followed-or that disabled people had more control over their lives as a result. The prerequisite for successful action lay in the proper organisation of disabled persons groups, and the development of a high level of public awareness of disability issues.... This did not necessarily mean that disabled peoples organisations were in an antagonistic relationship to established organisations which were not controlled by disabled people. But it did mean that our own organisations should assert that they were the true and valid voice of disabled people and our needs. (DPI, 1986, p. 21)

The significance of these other social movements is that they are taken as evidence of the emergence of a 'post-materialist paradigm'. The common denominator amongst these movements, including the disability movement, is that they typically emerge as a response to the perceived failure of existing political institutions and strategies to achieve the objectives of a particular

social group as they themselves define them. This has been particularly true in the United States where the civil rights tradition has profoundly influenced the disability movement.

> The civil rights movement has had an effect not only on the securing of certain rights but also on the manner in which these rights have been secured. When traditional legal channels have been exhausted, disabled people have learned to employ other techniques of social protest. (De Jong, 1983, p. 12).

Lacking such a tradition in Britain, and not even having basic rights enshrined in law through anti-discrimination legislation, the disability movement in this country has been more circumspect in terms of tactics, although the lessons of the American movement have been noted and there have been a few organised boycotts, sit-ins and street demonstrations.

The discussion so far has indicated that the disability movement can, indeed, be considered as part of a new social movement generally. The crucial question this therefore raises is what does it mean for political action in general and the possibility of improving the quality of life for disabled people in particular?

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Thus far, attempts to consider the meaning and significance of these new social movements generally (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Boggs, 1986) have usually taken place within a framework derived from the work of Gramsci (1971). Within this framework there are three discrete areas that need to be considered-the economy, the State and civil society-all given a sense of unity by the concept of hegemony. For Gramsci, the economy referred to the dominant mode of production; the State consisted of all State-funded institutions including the political, the bureaucratic and the means of violence; the term civil society

> connotes the other organizations in a social formation which are neither part of the processes of material production in the economy, nor part of state funded organizations, but which are relatively long-lasting institutions supported and run by people outside of the other two major spheres. (Bocock, 1987, pp. 33-34)

The importance of the concept of hegemony in Gramsci was that it claimed that dominance, or leadership of all the people, could never be simply reduced to dominance in the economic sphere, but could be established

within the State or civil society. Thus, politics, not economics, can have a central role in the establishment of hegemony, and within Gramsci's framework this politics can take place both within the State and civil society, although

> The borderline between state and civil society is a constantly shifting one and one which has to be negotiated, maintained and continually readjusted over time. (Bocock, 1987, p. 34)

To put the matter simply, political activity within the State comprises traditional party politics and corporatist pressure group activities; political activity within civil society comprises the activities of the new social movements. The crucial issue for these new social movements thus becomes one of how far they can effect political and social change, either by shifting power across the borderline and away from State political institutions, or by exerting greater and greater external influence on these existing institutions. It is within this framework that consideration can be given to the significance of the disability movement as a new social movement.

A major factor to be considered in the development of post-capitalist society is the influence of new technological developments on the economic, social and material needs of disabled people. Finkelstein (1980), while not specifically calling Phase 3 of his model post-capitalism, is clear where both the problem and the solution, lies.

> Disabled people, also, no less than able-bodied people, need to express their essential human nature by moulding the social and material environment and so influence the course of history. What stands in the way, (at a time when the material and technological basis for solving the human and material needs of disabled people have mostly been solved), is the dominance of phase 2 attitudes and relationships. Such attitudes take society and, indeed, the dependency relationship as given. (Finkelstein, 1980, p. 39)

But not all commentators see the issue as one of out-dated attitudes, moulding technology in particular directions but point to the fact that technology itself will not necessarily produce or equally distribute its benefits (Habermas,1971; Illich, 1973). These technological developments have not been universally welcomed either in terms of health care in general (Reiser, 1978; Taylor, 1979) or disability in particular (Oliver, 1978). Zola, writing from his own experience, has suggested that

> Technology can do too much for those of us with disabilities. The
> machines that technology creates may achieve such completeness
> that they rob us of our integrity by making us feel useless. (Zola,
> 1982, p. 395)

And he applies this analysis not just to the development of machines, gadgets
and prostheses, but also to what he calls "the over-technicalization of care".

> To be handled by a machine or animal, where once I was handled
> by a person can only be invalidating of me as a person. (Zola,
> 1982, p. 396)

Further, in terms of its effects on the work system and the material and social
environments, it may be oppressive rather than liberating. In a review of
changes in the work system in what he calls "post-industrial society", Cornes
(1988) discusses both the optimistic and pessimistic views of the effects of
new technology on the work opportunities of disabled people. He suggests that
such developments can be viewed optimistically,

> New jobs and new opportunities to organise and locate work on an
> entirely different basis using new technologies are increasingly
> being perceived as offering even more grounds for optimism. This
> is because such new jobs, in which physical requirements are
> replaced by electronic skill, strength and precision are particularly
> suitable for people with disabilities, and because new
> developments in communications have increased opportunities for
> home-based employment. (Cornes, 1988, p. 15)

But he then sounds a cautionary note, suggesting that many disabled people
may not have the educational opportunities or training potential to take
advantage of such opportunities. Further, the new skills that will be required to
master new technology may require a degree of confidence and independent
thinking that many disabled people currently lack. Finally, he suggests that
many disabled people are already falling behind in the mastery of these skills
"because of problems of access, mobility, finance and discriminatory attitudes"
(Cornes, 1988).

He agrees with Finkelstein's (1980) analysis that the problem is that while we are
in Phase 3 in terms of economic and technological developments, we,
nonetheless, remain locked into Phase 2 attitudes, or in his terms, that "existing
policies, programmes, attitudes and expectations may be too dependent on the
institutional arrangements, values and ideals of an industrial society" (Cornes,

1988). And he goes on to locate the solution as being in the hands of the disability movement itself.

> Their successful participation in all spheres of life within post-industrial society economic, cultural and political-will depend greatly on the extent to which they themselves and their supporters can lay claim to and exercise that right not only during the transition from school to work but throughout their lifetimes. (Cornes, 1988, p. 17)

If then, the disability movement is central to ensuring that technology is used to liberate rather than further oppress disabled people, then a clear understanding of its double-edged nature needs to be developed within the movement. A start in this direction has been made by recognising that the mentality which allows technology to be used for evil purposes is the very same mentality which facilitates the oppression (and indeed, even the creation) of disabled people.

> Relentlessly, the connection between disability and the bomb becomes clear. The mentality that made Cheshire a compliant participant in the mass creation of disability at Hiroshima is the same mentality which made him the instigator of the mass incarceration of disabled people in a chain of segregated institutions. In the first case he went over the tops of the heads of disabled people in a B29 bomber, in the second he went over our heads in the name of charity. Increasingly, over the years, both actions have come to attract our abhorrence ... we have to find the strength to INSIST that our representative organisations are fully involved in decisions about the dismantling of disabled apartheid. And we have to add our INSTANT voice to the clamour for WORLD DISARMAMENT-with the aim of removing for all time, this particular and horrifying cause of unnecessary disability. (Davis, 1986, p. 3)

But in order to challenge what might be called attitudes (Finkelstein, Cornes), mentality (Davis) or more properly, in the context of this analysis, ideology, then clearly the disability movement must work out an appropriate political strategy. As has already been indicated, this cannot be done through traditional political participation in parties or pressure groups, but has to be addressed in terms of the relationship between the disability movement and the State, the second element within Gramsci's (1971) framework.

The relationships of these new social movements in general to the State have been considered in some detail and raise crucial issues of political strategy.

If social movements carry forward a revolt of civil society against the state-and thus remain largely outside the bourgeois public sphere-they typically have failed to engage the state system as part of a larger democratizing project. In the absence of a coherent approach to the state, political strategy is rendered abstract and impotent. (Boggs, 1986, pp. 56-7)

On the other hand, to engage in an uncritical relationship to the State, is to risk at best, incorporation and absorption, and at worst, isolation and marginalisation and perhaps, ultimately, oblivion.

Leaving aside the question of whether the State represents specific interests or is relatively autonomous, the disability movement has to decide how it wishes such a relationship to develop. Should it settle for incorporation into State activities with the prospect of piecemeal gains in social policy and legislation with the risks that representations to political institutions will be ignored or manipulated? Or, should it remain separate from the State and concentrate on consciousness-raising activities leading to long-term changes in policy and practice and the empowerment of disabled people, with the attendant risks that the movement may be marginalised or isolated?

In practice it cannot be a matter of choosing one or the other of these positions, for the disability movement must develop a relationship with the State so that it can secure proper resources and play a role in changing social policy and professional practice. On the other hand, it must remain independent of the State to ensure that the changes that take place do not ultimately reflect the establishment view and reproduce paternalistic and dependency-creating services, but are based upon changing and dynamic conceptions of disability as articulated by disabled people themselves. Such is the nature of a crucial issue facing the disability movement over the next few years and the complexities of the task should not be underestimated.

In order, however, to develop an appropriate relationship with the State, all new social movements, including the disability movement, must establish a firm basis within civil society.

The important point is that these movements, as emergent, broad-based agencies of social change, are situated primarily within civil society rather than the conventional realm of pluralist democracy. Further, the tendency toward convergence of some movements (for example, feminism and the peace movement) gives them a radical potential far greater than the sum of particular groups.

> Even though their capacity to overthrow any power structure is still minimal, they have begun to introduce a new language of critical discourse that departs profoundly from the theory and practice of conventional politics. (Boggs, 1986, p. 22)

Thus, because these movements are developing within the separate sphere of civil society, they do not risk incorporation into the State, nor indeed do they need to follow a political agenda or strategy set by the State. Hence, they can engage in consciousness raising activities, demonstrations, sit-ins and other forms of political activity within civil society. Further, they can develop links with each other so that their potential as a whole is greater than that of their constituent parts. Finally, the relationship to organised labour needs to be renegotiated, which means that labour will have "to confront its own legacy of racism, sexism and national chauvinism" because

> The complex relationship between labour and social movements, class and politics-not to mention the recomposition of the workforce itself-invalidates any scheme that assigns to labour a hegemonic or privileged role in social transformation. (Boggs, 1986, p. 233)

As far as the disability movement is concerned, its growth and development have been within the realm of civil society. It has used consciousness and self-affirmation as a political tactic and has begun to be involved in political activities such as demonstrations and sit-ins outside the realm of State political activities. By reconceptualising disability as social restriction or oppression, it has opened up the possibilities of collaborating or co-operating with other socially restricted or oppressed groups.

But it has also crossed the borderline between the State and civil society by developing its own service provision, sometimes in conflict and sometimes in co-operation with State professionals, and has, on occasions, engaged in interest representation within the State political apparatus. The issue of crossing the borderline to the economy and establishing links with organised labour, however, has yet to be properly addressed. It could be said that as well as overcoming its racism, sexism and chauvinism, organised labour has to overcome its disablism too. While the labour movement has been broadly supportive in wishing to retain the Quota, established by the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, it has been disablist in its resistance to changing work practices to facilitate the employment of disabled people and to re-writing job specifications to enable disabled people to get the kind of personal support they need to live better lives in both the community and residential care.

COUNTER-HEGEMONIC POLITICS

The concept of hegemony is a unifying one in that it contextualises the relationships between the economy, the State and civil society. While hegemony may be exercised in all three realms,

> In any given historical situation, hegemony is only going to be found as the partial exercise of leadership of the dominant class, or alliance of class fractions, in some of these spheres but not in all of them equally successfully at all times. (Bocock, 1987, p. 94)

And this of course raises the possibility of counter-hegemonic tendencies emanating from civil society rather than from traditional political institutions or changes within the economy, for

> Contemporary social movements are thus hardly marginal expressions of protest but are situated within the unfolding contradictions of a rapidly changing industrial order, as part of the historic attempts to secure genuine democracy, social equality, and peaceful international relations against the imperatives of exploitation and domination. (Boggs, 1986, p. 3)

And it is not unrealistic to suggest that only when peace, democracy and equality have been secured, can the social restrictions and oppressions associated with disability be eradicated. This article has suggested that the disability movement has a central role to play in the eradication of these restrictions and oppressions as part of the emergent new social movements.

It has to be admitted that nowhere in the world have these new movements been successful in overturning the status quo. Their significance has been in placing new issues onto the political agenda, in presenting old issues in new forms and, indeed, in opening up new areas and arenas of political discourse. It is their counter-hegemonic potential, not their actual achievements, that are significant in late capitalism.

> To say that the new movements have a counter-hegemonic potential is also to suggest that they have emerged in opposition (at least partially) to those ideologies that legitimate the power structure; technological rationality, nationalism, competitive individualism, and, of course, racism and sexism. (Boggs, 1986, p. 243)

It is a pity that the ideology of disablism has not been incorporated into this quote, for clearly this has been central to the issues that the disability movement has begun to address. In its short history, the disability movement has had considerable impact on policy formulation and is beginning to influence service provision in Britain. This process will undoubtedly gain in strength in the next few years and its significance within changing political processes will gradually emerge. This will have a wider significance in that it will challenge the dominant ideologies of individualism and normality upon which post-capitalist society is based. Hence, the disability movement will come to have a central role in counter-hegemonic politics and the social transformation upon which this will eventually be based.

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