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The Politics of Disablement - New Social Movements

The preceding analysis has suggested that disabled people cannot look to either the welfare state or traditional political activities to effect considerable material and social improvements in the quality of their lives. The only hope, therefore, is that the disability movement will continue to grow in strength and consequently have a substantial impact on the politics of welfare provision. This chapter will thus consider the emergence of new political activities, which have been characterised as 'new social movements', and discuss the emergent disability movement as part of this new phenomenon. The structure and tactics of the disability movement will be considered, along with the role of the state, before, finally, an assessment of future possibilities will be made.

THE EMERGENCE OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Just as earlier social theorists had been concerned to understand the far-reaching changes that were occurring as a result of industrialisation; so after a period of relative stability, from the 1960s onwards academics have once again begun to address this issue of social change (Kumar, 1978). Changes in the economy from 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 sociologists to characterise the end of the twentieth century as the era of late capitalism or to herald the coming of post-industrial or post-capitalist society.

This has had an influence on the political system and since the 1970s there has been the emergence of many new movements comprising of 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 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'.

Before considering the relationship between the disability movement and these new social movements, it is necessary to consider the history of the disability movement in Britain itself. Crucial to this consideration is the distinction between organisations for the disabled and organisations of disabled people. In practice, this centres on the issue of who controls and runs the organisation, and in reality, organisations of disabled people are those organisations where at least 50 per cent of the

management committee or controlling body must, themselves, be disabled. These organisations have emerged in the last twenty years, but this emergence must be placed in the context of the growth of the traditional voluntary organisation for the disabled.

THE HISTORY OF THE DISABILITY MOVEMENT

The rise of traditional voluntary organisations can be linked to the rise of capitalism itself and by the middle of the nineteenth century there was a considerable number of small societies for the blind in existence. This led to the establishment of the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) in 1868, and throughout the latter half of the century similar organisations grew up for the welfare of the deaf and the crippled. The growth in these organisations signified a move away from 'individual concern for the handicapped' to a concern to promote the welfare of particular groups (Topliss, 1979), and such groups were successful in raising public awareness and encouraging the state to take on particular responsibilities.

This trend continued into the twentieth century and it was not until the establishment of the welfare state, with its principle of cradle-to-grave security, after the Second World War, that further changes occurred. Effectively this meant that the state took over complete responsibility for welfare provision for disabled people, though in practice, the state was happy to allow voluntary organisations to continue to provide services, sometimes in partnership and sometimes as sole providers. Ultimately, however, responsibility now lay with the state. There was some concern, at the time, that this might adversely affect these voluntary organisations, but, in practice, the state was never able to assume total responsibility, and voluntary organisations continued to grow at local and national levels, often with state support.

Despite the affluence of the postwar years, coupled with legislative changes and increases in service provision, it soon became clear that disabled people, among other groups, were not having all their needs met and, often, even those needs that were acknowledged, were being met in inappropriate or oppressive ways. The traditional voluntary organisations, locked into a partnership approach with the state, were unable to do anything about this, and disillusion set in, leading to the formation of single-issue groups like DIG. Further, as has already been discussed, this disillusion soon spread to the new single-issue pressure groups, and more and more disabled people came to realise that, if they were going to improve the quality of their own lives, they had to do it themselves, prompting the rise of self-help and populist forms of organisation (Oliver, 1984).

Such groups would not have emerged had the existing voluntary organisations been adequately articulating and representing the needs and wishes of disabled people. Hence, these newly-emerging groups were critical of the traditional groups on a number of grounds. A major thrust of this criticism of organisations run by non-disabled people is that they operate within a framework which assumes that disabled people cannot take control of their own lives and, therefore, require the 'charitable' assistance of well-meaning professionals, voluntary workers or politicians (Battye, 1966; Crine, 1982; BCODP, 1988).

Closely allied to this criticism is the view that people who run organisations for rather than of disabled people operate within a medical rather than a social model of disability which locates the problems faced by disabled people within the individual rather than being contingent upon social organisation (Oliver, 1983). Finally, these groups are criticised on the grounds of the interests they

actually serve, whether they be of the establishment, the careers of the professional staff or the personal aggrandisement of key individuals through the honours system. According to one commentator, these key individuals

> can get sucked into the old boy network, even if they are women, (and few of the big-timers are) and rapidly get out of touch, for example, with life inside the run-down council estates and the mental handicap hospitals. As they get more powerful, they get more out of touch. Life looks different from the inside of a BMW. (Brandon, 1988, p. 27)

There were also a number of external influences on the disability movement, noticeably the similar rise of movements of black people and women, and the passage of anti-discrimination legislation in these areas. Similarly, in some other countries, such legislation had been passed in respect of disabled people, but in Britain, at least, the Government set its face against such an approach (Oliver, 1985). There are two other events which gave further impetus to the disability movement, and helped to give it a sense of cohesiveness at national and international levels.

The first of these was the United Nations plan to designate 1981 International Year for the Disabled. Its very title reinforced the idea that disabled people should have things done for them and it was only after considerable lobbying that the initiative became the International Year of Disabled People. That did not stop many of the planned events from reinforcing the charitable images of disabled people, but disabled people set themselves the task of exploiting the opportunity IYDP offered them and formed their own national, umbrella organisation, the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People, which has gone from strength to strength since then, and now claims

a membership of nearly 50 independent organisations representing over 100 000 disabled people nationally.

The second event was the plan of Rehabilitation International (an organisation for the disabled) to publish its own Charter on Disability, the central aim of which was

> To take all necessary steps to ensure the fullest possible integration of an equal participation by disabled people in all aspects of the life of their communities.

At the very same conference where this Charter was being discussed, the organisation turned down a proposal from a group of disabled people that Rehabilitation International should, itself, become an organisation of disabled people, by making sure that it was controlled by disabled people themselves. So, while integration and participation could be recommended to everyone else, it was not for Rehabilitation International itself. Perhaps it was fortunate that the organisation took this blinkered view, for the decision led directly to the formation of Disabled Peoples' International (DPI), the international equivalent of BCODP.

One final point needs to be made in respect of the history of the disability movement in Britain, and that concerns the coming to power of the Thatcher Government in 1979. This Government was committed to reducing public expenditure, minimising the role of the state and privatising a whole range of services. Throughout the eighties, this has had profound implications for disabled people; inadequate existing services have become even more inadequate, specific political goals like a national disability income and anti-discrimination legislation are further away than ever, and some rights and benefits have been removed altogether. The traditional disability

organisations have been able to do little about this, and this has reinforced the message to the disability movement that the only thing it can do is to 'organise' (Ryan, 1988). Hence for the first time, in 1988 disabled people in this country organised their own opposition to the Social Security Act (1986) and took to the streets in London and other big cities as a way of registering their protests.

This brief history of the rise of disability organisations can be summarised in the following way.

A TYPOLOGY OF DISABILITY ORGANISATIONS

Earlier (Oliver, 1984), a typology of disability organisations was constructed to describe their range and scope and to provide a key to their historical development. With some amendments and additions, the following is intended to provide a profile of such organisations and their historical development.

1. PARTNERSHIP/PATRONAGE

Organisations for disabled people; charitable bodies; provision of services (often in conjunction with statutory agencies); consultative and advisory role for professional agencies; Examples: RADAR, RNIB, Spastics Society, Joint Committee on Mobility.

2. ECONOMIC/PARLIAMENTARIAN

Primarily organisations for disabled people; single issue; parliamentary lobbying and research (mainly on economic issues); legalistic bodies; may or may not be party political. Examples: DIG, Disability Alliance (part of the 'poverty lobby' associated with Child Poverty Action Group, Fabian Society, etc.).

3. CONSUMERIST/SELF-HELP

Organisations of disabled people; self-help projects and other activities aimed at problem-solving and providing services to meet self-defined needs of members; may or may not be political/campaigning groups also; may work in collaboration with local or national statutory and/or voluntary agencies. Examples: Spinal Injuries Association, Derbyshire Centre for Integrated Living.

4. POPULIST/ACTIVIST

Organisations of disabled people; political activist groups; often antagonistic to the partnership approach; primary activities focused on 'empowerment', personal and/or political; collective action and consciousness raising. Examples: UPIAS, Sisters against Disablement, British Deaf Association.

5. UMBRELLAL/CO-ORDINATING

Organisations of disabled people; collective groupings of organisations comprising consumerist and/or populist groups; rejecting of divisions within the disabled population based upon clinical condition, functional limitation or age; may function at local, national or international levels; primarily political organisations aiming to facilitate the empowerment of disabled people by a variety of means. Examples: Greenwich Association of Disabled People, BCODP, DPI.

There are a number of points that need to be made about this typology. First, it is intended to be flexible and descriptive and will not necessarily fit all organisations conveniently within it. Secondly, it does provide a trajectory of historical development, with organisation 1

being the earliest and organisation 5 being the newest on the scene. Finally, and most importantly, in referring to the disability movement as a new social movement, only organisations 3-5 are contained within this definition. It is to the claim that these organisations can be called a new social movement that attention now needs to be given.

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 and neither can 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 by not only a greater willingness to employ a wide variety of form 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/consumerist groups within the disability movement, both in terms of the importance such groups place on personal self-actualisation, and their willingness to follow pro-active 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 and 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 and Hasler, 1987, p. 116).

Hence,

> The self-help movement is … 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, 1987b).

The second characteristic of new social movements is that they offer a critical evaluation of society ... as 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, firstly 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 situation in the United States, where CILs emerged, is different from that in Britain in three important respects. Firstly, the US has a tradition of seeing some problems as human rights issues, both in terms of constitutional history and the influence of the civil rights movement. Secondly, there were very few statutory services available to disabled people in America and thirdly, there was no large, organised voluntary sector of organisations for the disabled. In Britain, there was no human rights tradition, though there were many state services and a large voluntary sector, both of which had proved to be inadequate. Hence, the tactics of CILs in Britain had to reflect this different context and the issue here was more concerned with controlling services than creating them. Thus the change of name from centres for independent to integrated living and the change in tactics also.

> CILs are poised at the fulcrum of the contemporary struggle to tilt the balance of history in favour of a fairer and more equitable future for disabled people. The Derbyshire Coalition argues that the key to social change is the active participation of people who are themselves disabled and that CILs ... can exert a beneficial influence on the existing service infrastructure in Britain. (Davis, 1983, p.16)

More generally, this feature of the Independent Living Movement as a political strategy, prefigures the increasingly dominant view that disability is not merely socially constructed, but socially created as a form of institutionalised social oppression like institutionalised racism or sexism (Sutherland, 1981; Abberley, 1987). The Independent Living Movement by no means circumscribes the disability movement as a whole. It is, however, one of its principal dimensions, both as an underlying ideology and a practical political strategy. Furthermore, its development illustrates the influence on the disability movement of

> other contemporary movements, such as civil rights, consumerism, self-help, demedicalisation/self-care, deinstitutionalisation. The significance of independent living cannot be understood apart from the contributions of these other movements. (De Jong, 1983, p. 5)

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 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 middle-class and 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 DPI's 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 people's 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 discussion so far has indicated that the disability movement can be considered as part of new social movements 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 (Boggs, 1986; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985.) 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. 33-4)

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 re-adjusted 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. The role of the economy has already been considered and somewhat pessimistic conclusions arrived at. However, there is one aspect of economic development that needs to be considered at this point, and that is the role and potential of new technology, before giving consideration to the state, civil society and the possibilities of developing counter-hegemonic political structures.

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 outdated attitudes, moulding technology in particular directions but point to the fact that technology itself will not necessarily produce or equally distribute its benefits (Illich, 1973; Habermas, 1971). These technological developments have not been universally welcomed in terms of health care in general (Reiser, 1978; Taylor, 1979) nor 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 Cornes' 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 be 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, 1986b, 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 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, p. 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 work force 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 cooperating 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 cooperation 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 Person's (Employment) Act, 1944, it has been disablist in its resistance to changing work-practices to facilitate the employment of disabled people and to rewriting 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, 1986, 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, that the social restrictions and oppressions associated with disability can be eradicated. This chapter 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 on to 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)

Perhaps, after reading this book, disablism can be placed at the end of the above quote, for a central theme of it has been that disability merits sociological analysis and demystification in precisely the same way as all the other 'isms. Unfortunately, up to now

> the sociology of disability is both theoretically backward and a hindrance rather than a help to disabled people. In particular, it has ignored the advances made in the last 15 years in the study of sexual and racial equality and reproduces in the study of disability parallel deficiencies to those found in what is now seen by many as racist and sexist sociology. (Abberley, 1987, pp. 5-6)

In eradicating the social restrictions and oppressions of disability, both the disability movement and non-disablist sociology have a part to play.