

6 FINISHING TOUCHES

'Let me pass, I have to follow them, I am their leader.'

(Alexandre Auguste Ledru-Rollin, trying to get through a crowd during the French Revolution of 1848).

In whichever state shop they are marketed models sold to the public are often only a source of fame, privileges, honours and even emancipation for the elite. The disabled grassroots purchaser, on the other hand, may have to pay the price of continuing dependency on the model vendors. A production line run by disabled educationalists and researchers producing well-packaged models in a 'modernised' learning materials university factory might in reality only be selling fashionable entertainment toys underneath the academic wrapping. Once opened the 'consumer' may find few pieces to assemble, no finishing touches to add and little to admire or discover before familiarity breeds disillusion and indifference. Is the privileged disabled social model-maker, we have to ask, becoming no better than the much criticised parasitic professional with abilities?

If models are constructed to help us gain insight into situations which otherwise are difficult to *begin* explaining a rectified social model of disability which actually services the needs of the Chartered State may have an immediate appeal but a short use life. This in turn will drive the academic factory into producing and marketing an unending range of 'modernised' models. The formation of a guild for advanced model makers may be the only real material gain achieved by the learned promoters of such social models of disability. No wonder, then, that there is a growing disability elite, consorting with influential people with abilities, and competing for student 'consumers' in the new supermarket for a swish new-fangled social model of disability. What is really needed for our emancipation, however, is a tool which will enable disabled people at the grassroots level gain insight into their major and decisive role in the creation of a non-disabling society rather than a model which merely clones the current social fashion for their entertainment. When opening a modelling kit we should ask, then, what revelation might it provide in constructing the future or, at the very least, in providing insight into the past?

For example:

The 1944 Disabled Persons (Employment) Act introduced the 'quota system' where organisations employing more than twenty people were obliged by law to ensure that three per cent of the workforce were registered as 'being disabled'. This should have resulted in increased employment for disabled people. It never did, and the legislation was not enforced. Opening my modelling kit I would locate this legislation within the administrative model for service provision in the Welfare State. Looked at from the angle set by this model the 'quota system' now appears fundamentally inconsistent. On the one hand the quota should encourage secure financial *independence* through employment while on the other hand the Welfare State assumes disabled people are permanently *dependent* on others for their security – a contradictory and unreliable formula for intervention. With hindsight we should have expected that a scheme to make the 'socially dead' independent through employment could not really be viewed by employers or the Welfare State regulation enforcers seriously and would, therefore at best, only be implemented in a half-hearted way. As we move into the Chartered State the quota scheme becomes redundant because it can be replaced by an emphasis on equal opportunities law. A similar predication of failure could have been expected for the Welfare State's approach to a National Health Service – *health*, of course, embraces all aspects of people's lifestyles and cannot be *serviced*!

Looking forward, for another example, we could focus on the ‘national amelioration service’ piece of the kit’s social model of disability in the Integrated State:

This service, I have suggested, could be provided by Centres for Integrated Living (CILs). An amelioration service would work *with* rather than *for* the community as in the Welfare State, or rely on aggrieved individuals obtaining assistance from an *extant* (legal) profession for their equal opportunity rights in the Chartered State. In the Integrated State assistance would come from *new* professions created by, and allied to, the community (PACs), employed in CILs and managed by representatives from all sections of the community. Working with disabled people (or other population groups) PACs could:

- help individuals identify important personal short and long-term lifestyle aspirations,
- assist people obtain the necessary resources to realise self-defined objectives,
- collaborate with other social agencies and services to remove social barriers impeding diverse personal goals,
- obtain the necessary resources to enable individuals realise their aspirations (in a non-disabling society),
- assist individuals cultivate skills to achieve specific targets signposted by their lifestyle preferences, and
- above all, work with individuals commensurate with their abilities and subservient to their management choices.

What, no *needs assessment*? Yes... Unwrapping the kit and fitting the parts together reveals that an entirely new piece is required to complete the social model of disability – a new profession with different objectives, lines of management and ways of working with the community. The model does then, I hope as models should, provide new insight into our predicament. Clearly to translate the model into a working reality we need to cultivate grassroots consensus in a long-term campaign for our own profession alongside an escalating boycott of collaboration in the maintenance of Professions Subservient to Medicine (PSMs). Here now is a creative role for the disability cultural movement. Nothing short of a revolution in grassroots consciousness is required because it is only from this direction that academics in ‘disability studies’ can be brought under control to *serve* disabled people by creating qualifying courses for the new profession. Left alone they become an elite capable only of interpreting the world in various ways; the point is to change it.

Our organisations *of* disabled people are *vehicles* for change
Our unionised profession allied to the community is a vital *engine* for social change