

## Postscript: The Wind is Blowing

There is a sense in which this book can be read both pessimistically and optimistically. The argument suggests that the dominant view of disability as an individual, basic, medical problem is created by the productive forces, material conditions and social relations of capitalism. The chances of transcending these forces, conditions and relations are therefore intrinsically bound up with the possibilities of capitalism itself being transcended. These possibilities do not appear to be likely to materialise in the foreseeable future, for, even allowing the idea of post-capitalist society, such a society appears more as an extension of capitalist forces, conditions and relations than as a transition on the road to socialism.

However, disability does not appear as an individual, tragic and medical problem in all societies that have existed historically nor in some that exist currently. So it may be that the material conditions and social relations of disability can be improved without waiting upon the possibility of the transcending of the productive forces of capitalism itself. Thus there are grounds for optimism from this more limited view.

The most important factor in this optimism is the rise of a strong, vibrant and international disability movement within a decade. But there are other grounds for optimism also. The sheer size of the disability problem (Martin et al., 1988) with its associated appalling material conditions (Martin and White, 1988) will inevitably mean that some political action will be taken. The criticism of existing service provision that are emerging from even establishment organisations (Fiedler, 1988; Beardshaw, 1988) should ensure that changes take place therein. The contradictions that many professional groups, including the medical profession (Royal College of Physicians,

1986), are experiencing in relation to their obligations to their employers and their duties to their clients, mean that professional practice is being re-evaluated. Finally, the appearance of many more disabled people on the streets and in general social intercourse is beginning to change public consciousness about disabilities.

Marx himself knew that the course of general development was influenced by 'accidents'. The 'accidents'; referred to above have all occurred at a particular historical point, making change inevitable. The wind is indeed blowing; the direction that wind takes will depend upon more than just disabled people themselves.