Disability – A Capitalist By-Product by two members of UPIAS and Big Flame

Most people think that ‘being disabled’ is just bad luck.

People are unlucky to get impairments, which means they cannot work or be part of their community.

But this idea makes people’s bodies the reason that they are shut out of their community.

But we wouldn’t say that black people are excluded **because** their skin is a certain colour, or that women are excluded **because** they have different bodies to men.

We shouldn’t, then, say similar things about disabled people.

To find out why disabled people are **excluded**, we have to look at what is happening to us now, and what has happened to us in thepast.

Being excluded is when someone is stopped from doing things other people do – like living in the kinds of neighbourhoods other people do, getting a job, or going to a pub or a cinema.

Our world is organised around something called **Capitalism**.

Capitalism is where businesses make money by employing people and selling the things they make or do.

In capitalism, governments do their best to help businesses make more money.

To make the most money, businesses make their employees work harder and faster than they did before.

They also use new machines when they can, which makes people work even faster.

This causes people to have accidents because the work is too fast or too dangerous.

It also means that people who already have something different about their bodies can’t keep up with work that is too fast or changes all the time.

Because of this, people with different bodies or minds find it hard to get and keep work.

Without work, there isn’t any money to pay rent or bills or to buy food.

Because they can’t support themselves at home or pay for the same things others do, disabled people have ended up in separate – or ‘segregated’ – services.

These include care homes, hospitals, and special schools; and also, special transport and clubs that nobody else uses.

This has kept disabled people away from their non-disabled neighbours, in the same way, that black people are kept away from white people in racist countries.

The people who run these segregated services, who are called ‘professionals’, think there’s no problem with treating disabled people this way.

They tell other people that disabled people could not cope without their help, and this convinces other people to be patronising towards disabled people.

This is a big problem for all disabled people – whether they use segregated services or not.

There is a way out of this problem, but it will be very difficult

Lots of new technologies, like machines and computers, have been made in the last 40 years.

On one hand, these technologies have been made to speed up work even more, and might make it even harder for disabled people to find jobs.

On the other hand, this technology can be used in ways that help us – it could, for example, help disabled people work from home, get around more easily, or do things they’d find it difficult to do otherwise.

We have to ask **why** this technology is not being used to help us, and what we can do to make sure it will be used to make our lives better.

Until now, most disabled people haven’t asked that question.

Instead, they’ve been worried about some very real problems – like the fact that many disabled people are very poor.

If lots of people are poor and can’t work, it makes sense to ask the government to give them money. This is what many disabled people did in the 1960s.

The problem with this is that it doesn’t look at **why** disabled people are poor in the first place.

This means that the problem of people being poor doesn’t really get solved.

Instead, we say that we should not treat any problem without understanding where it comes from – which is that disabled people are excluded.

To sort out this problem, we have to get together and decide what we want society to look like and how we can change it.

Other people who are excluded will want society to change just much as we do.

We should help these people who are also shut out of society and treated unfairly – like black people, immigrants, women, and others.

Most of all, we must try to change the world ourselves, instead of hoping someone does it for us.