

## ORAL HISTORY EXTRACT TRANSCRIPT

### 'Fighting for our Rights' project

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#### Extract 1: social model of disability

I was more interested in getting anti-discrimination legislation and I began sort of developing ideas for that. So I worked very, a lot with Mike Oliver and Stephen Bradshaw, and we began to devise ways in which to get some funding to write the, to write a significant alternative to the idea that disabled people were innately at a disadvantage due to their impairment. So we needed to write not only the concept of the social model but also think about ways in which we could embed that into the infrastructure of society. So we would need to talk about and explain to society that it wasn't individual acts of sort of disadvantage or discrimination, that it was actually systemic to the way in which our society was organised. So we managed, through very, very hard campaigning and writing off for grants, to employ somebody called Colin Barnes to write the book *Discrimination in Britain*, and it was the book that basically was the blueprint of the Disability Discrimination Act. And so I was highly involved in that and became very interested in how we could then legislate for that. So that was when the campaign for the DDA charity began, and that began out of talks with Mike Oliver, Rachel Hurst, Stephen Bradshaw, Colin Barnes, and so we adopted that as the moment as our main area for activity. So there were marches, there were sit-ins, people started chaining themselves to buses saying, well you build a transport system that we can't use, so that is systemic, that is a systemic exclusion of our participation. So unlike America we were very kind of academic about our approach to disability rights. We really deeply analysed what it was that oppressed disabled people, and that was very much inspired by Vic Finkelstein who had been very active in the apartheid movement in South Africa.

#### Extract 2: protests and arrests

So, I was interested in persuading the government, some politicians, others were more interested in going and getting arrested, although I did get arrested on one occasion, which was very exciting, and it was at the beginning when the police did not know what to do with us. So I'm sitting in the middle of Westminster Bridge with about 100 other disabled people, and the police didn't know whether to pat us on the head or arrest us. IN the end they sort of arrested us, took us down to the local police station, which was totally inaccessible, so then they took us across the road to a Holiday Inn where they then bought us all cups of tea and we all insisted that, you know, we wanted our rights read in sign language, that we wanted it to be in braille, that we wanted to go to the toilet, and in the end they just told us to sod off. Later on in our later years they began to take the gloves off because they realised actually that we were very understanding in what we were doing and that we were, absolutely had a right to be doing what we did, so they had to use the same kind of tactics that they used with other civil rights disruptions. When in the early years when I was there it was far more fun because just didn't know what to do.

### Extract 3: meeting Ann Macfarlane

Later on I became quite interested also in independent living, and through probably my personal experience of falling in love, wanting to leave home and live with my boyfriend, if I left home then who was going to get me up? And you know, I couldn't just pay a cleaner like I did at university and rely on the student fraternity to do the rest, it was now much more difficult. That's when I met Ann Macfarlane, because I rang up the local Kingston Association for the Disabled, or I think that was what it was called, and I said, and I talked to her on the phone and I remember saying, "I want a flat, so how am I going to do it?" You know, "Can you not advise me? You are the local disability organisation." And Ann was the one who helped me find my first ground floor flat, and we got to know each other, and my boyfriend was then, once we'd moved in was kind of caring for my needs, but it was far too much for him and we both worked, and I said to Ann, you know, "How do you get up?" And she said, "Oh, well I have nurses," and I remember saying to her, "Well why do you have nurses? You're not sick, you know, why don't they have assistants who will come and help us?" And so then I started talking to people in the movement about, you know, what other people did, and I found out that a few people had persuaded their local authorities to launder money that they would have spent on home care, and through a local disability organisation who would then give the money to the person to employ their own helpers, it was called helpers in those days. So I said, "Well Ann, why don't we start a--, why don't we do that in Kingston?" And she was interested, and that was, I don't know what date it was, Ann will probably have told you because I was more involved on the national stage, she was very much a local, she was a local activity person. She was known locally, everyone knew Ann, so she was very handy when it came to my flat, and sort of over the months of getting my flat, and we met each other and our conversations would develop.