

ORAL HISTORY EXTRACT TRANSCRIPT

'Fighting for our Rights' project

Surname Lawrence

Given name Jane

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Extract 1: Independent living and campaigning

We got up, went to work, came home, I cooked the food, he put the washing on or the Hoover round or whatever, same as most couples. And it stayed like that for many years, until my husband contracted cancer and died in 1993, so it was a long time ago. And then, I knew as soon as he died that I would have to have help, so I knew Ann, I was then chair I think of KCIL, I think I was, I'm not sure if it was then that I was chair, yes, I was chair. And so of course I knew all about the independent living scheme because Ann and Jane Campbell had really fought to get it going and we were quite an early borough, in fact I think we were maybe the earliest. But long before that, as soon as I was, away from home, I was very aware of the lack of facilities for anybody using a wheelchair, that was my stage because I had a manual wheelchair and I couldn't get anywhere, so I had to buy a car otherwise I couldn't have gone to work. So, you know, things like that you don't realise how much bearing they have on you until you are older and look back. And I remember that going to the cinema was a huge undertaking because every cinema manager used to say no, we can't have wheelchairs 'cause of the fire regulations. I don't know if you've had that from any of your other--, but it was a big thing, going to the cinema, 'cause they took your chair away, you had to get out of your chair and they took it away because it would've been a fire risk in the corridor. So you were going to be the first one to be burnt to death anyway, I learnt that very early, that being disabled meant you went first and I suppose really it's quite funny looking back. But that was one of the things that we campaigned about, was access to public buildings. I've honestly campaigned on so many things in my life and now I feel quite distraught that my life has been in vain because so much is disappearing. And--, and I'm going to say it on record, a Conservative government is not for a disabled person and never will be. I found that and getting around--, I was very caught up with the Disabled Drivers' Association and I chaired that, was national chairman of that for three years, and I found that very worthwhile to do, because things were opening up and we were actually getting interviews with Cabinet Ministers and properly being recognised for what we were trying to do, and there were a few people who were listening to us. And therefore, to see it go backwards is very hard, very hard.

Extract 2: Understanding finances

I'd like to see a realistic understanding of what our little bit of money means to us and, we're allowed, just about, to pay £10 an hour and some of the work is hard, it's difficult work, it's detailed work and it's caring for people's bodies. It's not the easiest job in the world and to say well you can pay £10 an hour, well I pay £12.50 and pay for the rest out of my own money because I can't see keeping staff at £10 an hour, and I can't pay any more than that--, any more than the £2.50 that I add to it, because I have a lot of hours so it works out quite expensively. I've just about now gone through any money that I ever had and, you know, you save all your life and you do this and you do that, and then you're said well, you know, you'll have to go into a home if you can't afford to pay. And you think no, I don't have to do that, I'm an individual, I'm fairly intelligent, I understand what's

going on, why do you have to boss me around? And I find that incredibly thoughtless and uncaring, uncaring is the word.

Extract 3: Lobbying by networking

We did a lot of lobbying on various campaigns that I was on, so I should think I've been up there half a dozen times at least and lobbied MPs. If you can get it organised properly with enough people, it's worth it, it's much better, I think, personally than lying down in the street. I find that degrading, and I think it's degrading not only for disabled people but for anybody else who does the same sort of harsh campaigning if you like. We did a lot of fundraising not only in the street but by using paper campaigns for both--, both the big organisations that I belong to, both KCIL and the Disabled Drivers' Association as it was then. And we've still got a group of the disabled drivers, the same group that I joined when I was 19, I still do all the transport and paperwork for now once a month, so it's still--, and that's, you know, I joined in 1963 and what is it now, 2017, that's a long time. So yes, I've done a lot of, not lying down on the pavement but a lot of meetings with MPs, meetings with authorities here and talking, talking, talking. I think that's probably the best way to get your thoughts and ideas through to the people who need to know, is by networking.