Rights or Charity, The Future of Welfare by Ken Davis

## Time for Change

Over the last 10 years, Ken Davis says that the **Welfare State** has had its funding cut quite a lot.

The **Welfare State** is all the benefits and services the government provides its citizens for free.

It is paid for by something called **taxes**.

**Taxes** are payments that the Government collect from the wages of workers, products and services sold in the UK.

Taxes are used by governments to pay for public services, such as healthcare, schools and the Welfare State.

Ken Davis says that the right-wing politicians in power and newspapers have described the Welfare State in a very negative way.

They say that the Government spends too much money on support for disabled people and it is a waste of money.

Because of the negative way the Welfare State is being spoken about, more ordinary people seem to think that Britain cannot afford to fund the Welfare State.

Lots of professional people at the moment are talking about the future of welfare in Britain.

They don’t include disabled people in their talks and often speak in a way that is hard to understand.

Disabled people are most likely to use welfare and will feel the effect of the cuts to services.

Ken Davis thinks disabled people should join together and speak about what life is really like for people who use the welfare state.

Lots of disabled people think the way welfare is sorted out is outdated and needs to be changed.

This is because the Welfare State was created by non-disabled people and can treat disabled people badly.

Some disabled people think that the way the Welfare State is set up at the moment makes non-disabled people feel sorry for disabled people.

Disabled people have challenged negative ideas like this before, for example with **charities.**

**Charities** can do good work but some charities that look at disability issues try to make non-disabled people feel sorry for disabled people so they can raise money.

This money is then not given to the disabled people used to raise the money in the first place.

Disabled people have challenged how welfare acts like a charity towards disabled people and do not agree that disabled people’s basic needs should be met through charity.

Ken Davis talks about how disabled people are not wanting to be treated like this anymore and more disabled people are getting involved to change things.

This has been done in many ways such as direct action, protesting and even being arrested. This is how seriously the Disabled People’s Movement wants to change things.

Ken Davis says that disabled people have been forced to do these acts to try and change the welfare system.

Ken Davis thinks that the Welfare State needs to be changed around a new idea based on **civil rights**, not charity like before.

A person’s **Civil Rights** are their right to not be discriminated against, and their right to live their life the way that they want to without anyone else trying to stop them.

Ken Davis says that makes sense to give Disabled People their civil rights, but the government are ignoring what disabled people want.

Right-wing politicians think that disabled people are too reliant on the welfare state for support and that the services should be cut.

The politicians think that they can get away with this big change without anyone putting up a fight or disagreeing.

Ken Davis says that these right-wing politicians want to remove any Welfare support and leave it up to something called the **Free Market.**

**The Free Market** is based on something called supply and demand and the government doesn’t get involved to stop anyone from selling or buying anything.

In the free market, poor disabled people who need things like mobility aids or someone to support them might not be able to afford these things and miss out as they are no longer provided.

Instead, disabled people will have to rely on their families, friends and charities to step in and help out.

Ken Davis warns that these cuts will affect everyone, not just disabled people.

This is because the government and right-wing politicians think that using taxes to spend money on the public for things like healthcare and other services is a waste of money.

Cutting the Welfare State means the government can cut taxes for the mega-rich.

The government also wants fewer people to get help with benefits as they think people are lazy and rely on it.

This will force lots of people into badly paid and unsafe work just to afford the basics.

Ken Davis thinks that this will be like the Victorian times when there was lots of poverty and problems caused by a big gap between rich and poor people.

With all this going on for everyone, Ken Davis says it is harder for disabled people to have their voices heard.

Disabled people are trying their best with protests, which involve making signs with slogans and causing disruption to get people talking about what is going on.

One of the slogans used is - **Independence, Choice and Control.**

Ken Davis thinks that is funny that the Disabled People’s Movement has some similar slogans to the right-wing politicians.

They say these things for very different reasons and want the outcomes to be very different from each other.

Despite this, it is clear that disabled people need to get their civil rights.

Lots of disabled people have been involved in schemes set up by other disabled people and want the Welfare State to be based around these schemes.

An example of this could be **Centres for Independent Living**. **Centres for Independent Living** are organisations run by and for disabled people, which sort out services like personal assistance, peer support, and advocacy.

Ken Davis says that the new Welfare State could be based on these schemes that have been tried and tested by disabled people.

This would get rid of any ideas of disabled people relying on the state for help, without getting rid of the right support everyone can need if things go wrong.

Ken Davis says that the point of the Welfare State should be to reduce problems like discrimination, not make people’s taxes lower and cut services.

## Roots of State Charity

The way disabled people are treated in this welfare system is something that needs to change.

A group called the **Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation** once said that welfare is the state’s version of charity.

**The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation** were a group of disabled people in the early 1970s that grouped together to change the way that society saw disabled people.

They said that charity relies on other people to give spare money to help out a cause because they want to help or feel sorry for the people they are helping.

The Welfare System is a type of state charity and can be taken away at any time, no matter how important the service they fund are.

Some of these cuts were happening when Ken Davis gave the talk this essay is based on.

He says that it is not good enough for disabled people’s lives to be supported through charity.

It is wrong for disabled people to be given any spare pennies to have services funded, rather than giving disabled people power to control the services that support them.

Disabled people should have laws in place to ensure full participation in society.

Ken Davis points out that disabled people also pay the taxes that fund these services, just like non-disabled people.

Ken Davis thinks we need to look back at the history of Welfare and look at why it was set up in the first place, how it got to where it is today and the problems that have been there since the beginning.

The Welfare State was set up by a man called Baron Beveridge, a politician that set up the Welfare State to get rid of: “want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness”

Ken Davis says that he thought that the government were interested in making life a bit better for poorer people.

He thinks this was because it helped the rich and the government, rather than because they thought helping poor people was a good thing.

He says that the government created the welfare state to stop the poor from becoming angry and demanding bigger changes in society.

Giving poor people things like benefits protected rich and privileged people, because angry poor people might want to take more things from them and be violent.

The politicians who helped to make the welfare state said themselves that they were doing it to protect rich people.

Ken Davis says that, for disabled people, the government has always been more interested in helping the rich than solving their problems.

Ken Davis uses more examples in history, such as the 1550s, when there were lots of poor people and disabled people who were forced to beg to survive.

Lots of rich people were worried that there were too many beggars. This is because rich people wanted beggars to work for them instead.

At first, they tried to punish people for begging. They also tried to fine anyone who gave beggars money. This didn't work very well.

People who were ill, blind, or couldn't move very quickly couldn't do the jobs that rich people wanted other beggars to do.

There was no point stopping these people from begging, so rich people said they could carry on since they couldn’t work for the rich people.

The government set up different ways to decide which people should and shouldn't be stopped from begging.

Eventually, the government let churches and some local people decide who was allowed to beg, and set up special places for them to live.

This was the beginning of the idea of disabled people being kept hidden away from the rest of society.

If you couldn’t look after yourself or had a family to support you, you were dumped into a facility to keep you away from begging.

These institutions to keep disabled people separate were common up until the 1960s and a lot of the same ideas of charity are the same after 400 years.

## More of the same

In the 1940s, when the UK created the welfare state, it benefitted disabled people as it raised awareness and put pressure on councils to make changes to support them.

However, a lot of disabled people were segregated before the welfare state and it was hard to change what had been happening for the past 400 years.

Ken Davis goes through ways in which the UK’s Welfare State was going to deal with the issues of “want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness.”

Poverty was meant to be dealt with by giving people benefits.

The problem was that disabled people had to pay for more things than non-disabled people do - like equipment, taxis, or special kinds of help.

This meant that the benefits that were standard for everyone were too low for disabled people to live on.

Squalor was to be dealt with by social housing built by the Government.

But Ken Davis says that disabled people’s housing is not accessible and often has barriers and is dangerous.

Even if a disabled person can get a proper house, the neighbourhood they live in might be very inaccessible for them.

This has forced disabled people to live in separate homes where only disabled people live. These are run either by charities or local councils.

The Welfare State doesn’t help all disabled people and the system misses them out.

Whatever the law has been called or how history has dealt with welfare, disabled people are still suffering now.

Disabled people say that anyone can become ill or have an accident which can cause an impairment and that they would want support to be there if that happened.

## Farming the Disabled

Now, the government thinks that it’s better for rich people if we get rid of the welfare state.

The government’s new plan is called Community Care. It doesn’t give disabled people independence, choice or control over their lives, and will make many of them even worse off with less benefits and less support

The government views disabled people as powerless and helpless. It thinks they can’t fight back, and that they can’t make real decisions for themselves.

Ken Davis says that the government’s plan to set up community care shifts the power from the local councils to private businesses.

The government says its new Community Care plans will give people more choices about where they live and the care they get. This isn’t what has actually happened.

89% of the disabled people the government have used their plan on were put into institutions in the first few months under this system.

Ken Davis says that this is a way for the government to use taxpayers' money to give money to the rich people that run private institutions.

This separates disabled people from society again.

Ken Davis says that the government treat disabled people as children who are not allowed to make their own decisions.

The Government give the power to service providers who do not know what it is like to be disabled.

If the government really thought disabled people were grown-ups and wanted to make care services a free market, it would give disabled people the money to buy their own support.

It hasn’t done that, which shows that it looks down on disabled people.

In the free market that the government keeps suggesting, companies will try to do things as cheaply as possible so the government picks them to provide care.

Disabled people won't get asked what kind of help they want, or what they want their lives to look like.

This is bad news for disabled people; they'll have to put up with services they never asked for and which are done on the cheap.

Ken Davis says that this isn't just bad for disabled people.

The people who work for these care companies will get lower wages. Most of these workers will be women who are already paid very little.

The only people who benefit will be the care home bosses and the disabled.

Ken Davis compares how disabled people will be treated under this scheme to the way some farmers treat animals.

Some farmers keep their animals fenced into tiny spaces so that they can make more money off of them.

Ken Davis thinks that the government lets disabled people be dumped in private nursing homes for the same reason.

## Support our Democratic Voice

Some local governments and councils also think that the government’s ideas about care are dangerous.

Some of these councils have been helping disabled people to work out their own ideas about care and support, by giving money to **Disabled People’s Organisations.**

**Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs)** bring disabled people together and let them work out how they want things to be done.

If disabled people know what each other think, and have a chance to discuss new ideas, this means they are very clear about what are good ideas and bad ideas.

The most important thing is that they let disabled people speak for themselves. Under the government’s plans, only private companies and the government can decide what’s good for disabled people.

Ken Davis thinks that more local councils should support these DPOs. If disabled people are united, then they can help councils fight against the government’s plans.

Then disabled people can help the councils to improve their services.

Ken Davis says that if the UK Government was serious about treating people equally, they would also fund DPOs.

All disabled people also need to take DPOs seriously, we need to be strong enough to stop bad changes from happening.

It’s clear that things will have to change, the old welfare state isn’t good enough for disabled people. The problem is that the government’s new ideas are even worse!

If disabled people are united and strong, they can call make decisions on what should change and what should not.