**Maggie and Ken Davis section from "Proud to be Disabled" (Birmingham City Council Equalities, 2004)**

[Narrator] UPIAS led the first important debate on the definition of disability, describing it as a form of social oppression, and casting off the old definition of disability as a medical and personal problem. Ken and Maggie Davis were two of the people who originally responded to Paul's letter in 1972.

[00:17]

[Maggie Davis] Well, I had a car accident while I was nursing in Beirut, and I ended up, because I couldn't go home, and I really didn't want to go home then. My house was - my mother's house was inaccessible. There was no care in the community. There was no real question of going back to work, because it just wasn't acceptable in the 60s. And so, I was at Stoke Mandeville, and they didn't know what to do with me, so they kept trying to ship me off to various institutions. And eventually I ended up in the hostel at Stoke Mandeville, and that was deemed to be - you were deemed to be very lucky if that happened to you. But I was sort of really, because I think the accident turned me, flipped me from an able-bodied person to a disabled person in a split second sort of thing, I became really aware that there was something very wrong with society, because it didn't want me. You know, I just suddenly realised that I wasn't wanted any more. And that really sort of got me thinking, and I hadn't actually - I'd known Ken sort of because a friend in the hostel, you used to sort of -

[Ken Davis] Yeah

[01:43]

[Maggie Davis] - cheer up by sending a tape, so I used to talk to Ken on these tapes, and then Ken was passing through, weren't you, one day, and we sort of got to know each other, and our friendship started, and then we decided we'd like to be together, but we had nowhere to go. So that meant, you know, we had to start thinking up some sort of solution in the community. And it seemed really so simple to us, that all you needed was somewhere to live and somebody to help you with the physical things that you couldn't do, yet there was just nowhere. There weren't even home helps or anything like that. Probably the best you might have got was a community nurse coming, but that would just be for, you know, sort of bowels or something like that. So that's how we started our, you know, working towards getting a place outside. But it was whilst I was in the hostel, and realising - and getting very angry, because I was beginning to get persecuted because I'd started speaking out and that, that I saw this - what paper was it, Ken?

[Ken Davis] The Guardian.

[Maggie Davis] It was in the Guardian. It was from Paul Hunt, and he was sort of saying if anybody's in the same situation as me, because he was at Le Court, suffering the same sort of persecution, and oppressiveness, please get in touch with me. And it really - it just felt like somebody was holding out a hand of survival, and I wrote to him, and he wrote back, and then obviously more people had contacted him. And that really was the beginning of the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation.

[Ken Davis] UPIAS was a very important development personally, for me. It radicalised me significantly. It helped me, in the process of discussion that went on in that organisation, to resolve the difficulties I'd been having with the kind of world I'd suddenly been pitchforked into as a result of the accident, and the... and it helped me really get my head together about what needed to be done. So once I was straightened out, it made life a lot simpler, with regard to knowing what to get on and do about it.

[04:35]

[Maggie Davis] I think just one thing. A person who was very valuable was Vic Finkelstein. You know, because of his experience of apartheid in Africa, and being in jail in Africa, he - you know, would enormous discussions we had with Paul, him, Dick Leaman, many others, you know, we - and internal newsletters that we sort of sent round to each other for discussion. We were able to clarify an awful lot of things, weren't we.

[05:13]

[Ken Davis] Yeah, we were. It was the most important thing, and most people that got involved in the Union, and stood the rigours of - the intellectual rigours that were involved in working out just what the political situation was for disabled people - the political and social situation... Yes, I think everybody would probably, everyone that's still alive that was involved then probably would agree with me that it was a significant step in their lives, a turning point probably.

[05:54]

[Interviewer offscreen] What was the relationship between UPIAS and - there were some existing national groups, like DIG, Disablement Income Group, and Disability Alliance as well formed around that time.

[Ken Davis] Yeah

[Interviewer offscreen] What - how was UPIAS a departure from those sort of other groups at the time?

[Ken Davis] Well, it... I think basically the two groups you mentioned, DIG and the Disability Alliance, were focused on relatively a single-issue thing, to do with income, a national disability income was the slogan really, of both organisations, or that seemed to be their main point of focus. And the - our analysis, in the Union, was one of social exclusion. The problem wasn't to give people more money to carry on being oppressed in a society that was constructed to serve and perpetuate able-bodied people's interests. The task was far wider than that, and it was a political task, and much wider in its scope.

[07:14]

[Maggie Davis] And there was the other, I think at that time we were beginning to talk about the social model, weren't we?

[Ken Davis] That was coming out of a meeting - a very significant meeting that was held between the Union and the Disability Alliance, and the publication that emerged from the conclusion of that meeting, actually set down in words for the first time a definition, a social definition of disability that hadn't been seen, as far as I'm aware, anywhere else before. And it was that, reworked and re-enacted in different organisations, that flowed from that point, 1976 the publication of Fundamental Principles, as that analysis of the meeting between UPIAS and Disability Alliance. It formed and shaped the character of the movement from that point on. Not that there weren't later influences, but that were equally powerful, but the social definition of disability as we developed in the Union was a milestone in the history of disabled people, as I would see it.

[08:52]

[Narrator] The Derbyshire Coalition of Disabled People was set up in 1981, the first International Year of Disabled People, and the same year that the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People came into being. Founding members of the Coalition had in many cases spent the early years of their lives in institutions, and were inspired by the independent living movement emerging at that time in Berkeley, California. The first International Year of Disabled People slogan, "Full Participation and Equality", was made the theme of a conference held in Derbyshire in February 1981. The Coalition was born out of this meeting, and once established was quick to promote the social model of disability, and soon became a hotbed of political activism in this country, and an inspirational model for others to follow over the next decade.

[09:40]

[Ken Davis] The main event, as far as the main disability organisation in the county was concerned, the one that used to be influenced, to some extent, the County Council's policies on disabled people, DAD - DAB, DAD, the Derbyshire Association for the Disabled, which was really a kind of umbrella of lots of village-based social clubs for disabled people. I mean their event for the International Year was to hold a county-wide craft competition, to find out the best sort of disabled basket-weaver, and you know, that just seemed to be too much of a joke in the context of the slogan of the International Year, "Full Participation and Equality", oh yeah, like who weaves the best baskets...

[10:42]

[Ken Davis] So, there were a lot of things going on that led to the Coalition emerging. And with the small organisation DIAL, Derbyshire, which had brought together the opportunities for disabled people locally to speak to each other, we were taking every advantage of that. And we were bringing together a nucleus of people who were sufficiently keen to advance the idea of the formation of a Derbyshire Coalition of Disabled People. And that was done at a conference that Social Services, jointly with DIAL Derbyshire, agreed to set up with County Council funding.

[Interviewer offscreen] Was that in 1981?

[Ken Davis] That was in '81, yes.

[Interviewer offscreen] International Year of -?

[Ken Davis] Yeah, the beginning of 1981, at Cressy Fields, the institution. And the Derbyshire Coalition was born from a meeting that was held, and to which, or everyone with an interest in disability, right across the county, were invited, and... the resolution was put forward at that meeting, a motion was passed to form a coalition of disabled people.

[Interviewer offscreen] What sort of reaction did you get from other disabled people? Especially I suppose I'm thinking of those that were involved in the activities of DAD, Derbyshire Association for the Disabled. Did you get sort of labelled at all as being the activists and not necessarily -

[Maggie Davis] Crazy left!

[Interviewer offscreen] - representing everybody?

[Maggie Davis] Yeah.

[Ken Davis] Yeah, labelling - being labelled as militant -

[Maggie Davis] Militant -

[Ken Davis] Cause over the way, it's a typical tactic to write people's ideas off, yeah, and I mean there was quite a bit of that sort of thing going on. Ah, these people don't represent the majority of disabled - sensible disabled people, moderate and reasonable people. These people are on the fringes, they're extremists... therefore we can ignore them. And I mean we - we tried to build ourselves deliberately into the mainstream of the decision-making wherever we could. And where - even where we were denied access, we went, much to the consternation and the surprise of the people who were making decisions about disabled people, behind their backs basically.

[13:40]

[Interviewer offscreen] So, 25 years after being very active in setting up the Derbyshire Coalition, and the CIL in Derbyshire as well, do you feel a sense of pride as individuals, in having participated that, in what is now, you know, historic events?

[Maggie Davis] I - I mean it might sound vain, but I think there is a certain amount of satisfaction, maybe is the word, more than anything, that you know, in some way we helped to start the ball rolling, you know, stop segregation, and dehumanisation of disabled people. That's how I feel.

[Ken Davis] I always feel that there's so much more left to do.

[Maggie Davis] Oh, yeah.

[Ken Davis] And so, any sort of fleeting feelings that you might have that are about that, are rendered nearly to nothing when you consider how much more work yet remains for people.

[video ends at 14:56]