

When I was very young, 8 years old, my mother became secretary of the women's movement in Ely, Cardiff and that opened up all sorts of doors of interests for us. We used to have lots of meetings in my house. We would have all the people assembled in our house on election day, there would be tea and sandwiches, all the family was involved. That was tremendous fun, we'd have the councilors in, there was so much more appreciation for them because of course in those days, they were not being paid. They would go to meetings at the city hall and they would be only be given the money they lost for that day, so expenses but no other payment. So we had three councilors in Ely, people could go and knock on their door at any time. It's different now, the parties lost a lot of the connection with the actual people living in the area. It was a similar thing with the MPs themselves. They were mostly there because they were supporting the miner's union, teachers. All of them virtually had money that was given to them by their workforce, trade unions. The money was given to them to run their campaign. They could not accept money from anyone other than people who sponsored the area. The thing was, there was only a certain amount each candidate could spend on their election. There was a limited amount they were given, depending on the size of the area. They could not spend more than that and if they did they would lose their seat. Much fairer, not a situation whereby only the wealthy could stand for parliament. There were many, many people who were just miners who stood and managed to get in and work for the people in the locality, which was more direct, you know. It meant something. There was something every month that people could pop along and see, if they had a problem. It was far more open and above board. You knew exactly where they had got the money from. That was a much better way of getting the right people for the right job. Now, it's certainly not as much fun and I think people have become disconnected with parliament because it doesn't seem to be dealing with the things that matter most for them and they don't see their MPs as often as we did, they would be walking around the streets, in the shops. There was a much closer union with them and lots of fun and laughter but also lots of really hard work was put in.

I worked for the Labour Party and used to go to conferences throughout Wales. If there was a by-election I would go there. So I went to Carmarthen when there was a Welsh nationalist up for the first time in the late 60s. He was a very well known person locally and he beat the Labour candidate. It was a very aggressive campaign, there was an awful lot of not pleasant sort of meetings because there was an awful lot of people who didn't want to hear anything. A lot of heckling. I think it was Gwynfor Evans, he won the seat much to the awful... because it had been a Labour seat for many years and that really set the cat amongst the pigeons. That actually then grew throughout Wales, because you had an awful lot of English people coming to make their homes here in beautiful areas where the cost of housing was less. It was too much for the local people to afford but they would come from here, there and everywhere – about the 1970s. People began then to accept the fact that there were going to be people of different political backgrounds – the labour party, the Welsh nationalist party and so on. You had people who wanted to become involved but weren't really part of the area. It took a while before these people became known and have an amount of strength to get things done. Somebody of no consequence would find that much more difficult than someone who had a lot of knowledge of the local area, so it took a bit longer for them.

Concerning the language, it was difficult because at that time we didn't have many Welsh only speaking schools. They suddenly started to come up which of course gave an area, which hadn't had that sort of Welsh connection, changes. There were concerts in Welsh out on by the school etc. You had people all of a sudden sending their children to Welsh school there because they would often have a better education. That then carried on throughout different areas and people were becoming much more knowledgeable about

not only the language, but the background of Welsh culture. You had a bit of bother with the Welsh nationalists, burning people's holiday homes. There was a lot of antagonism. So that basically started things off. Then because this happened, the unions in many ways started to lose a little their position, their support within the area. There were other people who could take over and put their position about the Welsh language which of course created a bigger divide than there had been because MPs who were bilingual were doing much better because they were able to get both sides, and there were sides. There was definitely a feeling of aggression, we often went to parties and you would have one little corner where everybody would be speaking Welsh. You would go up and try and introduce yourself and they would not be particularly keen to have a chat with you. Because that meant they would have to leave behind the people who spoke their language. But now, there are so many Welsh schools, all doing incredibly well, still not that many MPs in Wales.

There were times when the actual campaigns were really quite savage and unjust, from both sides. The divide in some ways is getting better, but there is still quite a lot of concern because there are more English speaking people living in Wales, but you still have the Welsh Assembly and every document that they produce is in Welsh and in English. They are constantly saying about the cost of this and it causes a bit of feeling that money could be spent elsewhere. But I value the Welsh people. It brought a cultural variation to Wales and certainly brought visitors. But I would say there is still very much two societies with regard to Welsh in Wales.