

Many Labour politicians were absolutely crucial in trying to get us a Welsh office and a secretary of state for Wales, people like Cledwyn Hughes and even Wyn Roberts - a Tory minister. The Welsh office came in the 60s and the first Welsh language act around then. That came from inside the establishment. But mainly it came from a minority, who were regarded as freaks because they regarded Wales as a nation and thought the Welsh language deserved status like any other. About 2000 people who were members of the Welsh Language Society went to jail in the 60s and 70s over the language. The venom they got for those protests, the very first of their kind, it began as the response partly to the fight of Eileen Beesley, in Llanelli. She refused to pay her rates bill because it wasn't in Welsh and in the end was the first woman councilor in Wales for Plaid Cymru. The bailiffs came in the end and took away everything from their house, the toys, the piano...The Beesleys are really important. Then there was "Tynged yr Iaith" (The Fate of the Language) a very famous speech which was a radio lecture given by Saunders Lewis one of the founders of Plaid Cymru, also a playwright. He wrote the plays because he wanted the language to live. There is a famous line "Trwy chwyldro ni'n wneud" (Through revolution will we save the language)

So the Welsh language society was formed in the 60s. I was 13 then.

I spoke English to my mother because my grandfather was from Birmingham. I thought everything Welsh was boring, irrelevant and old fashioned because my mother was an Anglophile. That generation weren't taught Welsh in schools, it had no status. To get on in the world you had to speak English. Then hopefully you could go and live in England. This was at my school where 90% were Welsh speakers but Welsh was looked down on as a peasant language. I still speak to my brother in English, the revolution didn't touch him. Sitting around a table on Christmas day, I'd speak English to my grandmother and brother, Welsh to my grandmother and I would force my mother to speak to me in Welsh. Then the first Welsh language school was established where it allowed children from non-welsh speaking household to have their education in Welsh. Before then it was all quite elitist, like some people still are. We canvassed for Plaid Cymru and we got the first Plaid Cymru M.P. Gwynfor Evans, it was incredible, nobody could believe it. It changed the world. This was 1966. We were the first generation who had had free education in the grammar schools and we had the national health. Some people now had cars, telephone. Everything was changing. People from the Welsh language society were spat on in the streets, people thought their actions and protests were disgusting. I suppose it's hard from us to imagine now, how to protest, to march through the street then was considered really bad, delinquent behaviour. What they were doing - the sit ins, marching, protesting. The first court case was Gareth Miles who had his girlfriend on the handlebars of his bike going down the prom in Aberystwyth, which was illegal, you got a fine and then you would refuse to pay the fine, because your summons had been English, so you go to court you ask for the proceedings to be in Welsh. Which they weren't. You refused to respond so you went to jail. I didn't do that, I was too scared to go to jail. I marched, I went to sit-ins, but I would never have gone to jail. Never.

At the same time, there was a lot of cultural activity - new theatre companies, Welsh language companies being started. Pop music all of a sudden was in Welsh which was unheard of. The first time I heard pop music in Welsh, we were rehearsing a play and a reporter came in, he was one of the actors, it was a youth club, he came in and played a Welsh song by Dafydd Iwan. It was amazing to hear someone singing about our own experiences, more and more did that and there would be massive concerts. Mostly people from university would protest. You would know everybody. Then you had the Eisteddfod, which was the only time you could live your whole life in Welsh. But it was a small minority of people protesting. I don't think it truly became something not to be ashamed of until 1997 - the year of the devolution. In the 60s it was all seen as a ridiculous idea, ludicrous,

outlandish. When the assembly opened and the queen came down (although I am a republican) I thought, I can't believe it, I can't believe we have an assembly. I think it's amazing. Our children take it for granted, as they should, as they should. It still not popular but is seen an acceptable idea, sensible.

The Left suggested that a lot of the Welsh nationalist campaigners were flirting with fascism, trying to get rid of the English. Plaid Cymru moved more to the left in the 1980s. People move around don't they? It had been perhaps culturally right wing up to the 60s. Middle class, Catholic. It was a very different sort of thing. It broke out of that mould. Because of students really, people who had been given an education, were brought up in a home that was very Welsh orientated and aware of the lack of language rights. Suddenly they had an education and we thought for ourselves and said "Hello, this is wrong" and felt that we should do something about it, and it grew and grew from the first sit in. In that first sit in on the bridge in Aberystwyth, it was interesting because some of them didn't want to do it, they were moderate and broke away, then the other half stayed and sat on the bridge and made history. One girl was thrown against the wall repeatedly by a passer-by who said it was disgusting. It's hard to get your head around how awful it was to be seen as standing up for your country. We saw ourselves as Nationalist, it was never a problem. It just meant that you stood up for your own country. It wasn't against anybody else. Not at all, no. I think now people are more aware. At the time people did accuse us and Plaid Cymru of being Nazis. They didn't understand that it was just about raising Wales back on its feet, financing our people properly making sure we had all the benefits the South East has (and still has) just like Scotland now. I think some people don't like to use the word nationalism anymore.

Once older people joined the fight it made it more difficult for the authorities to stand up to it, as these people had proper jobs and weren't just students.