

David Reville – Audio Excerpt D

Well what I thought was that as soon as it was published this people would be outraged and demand change and of course that didn't happen. And I realised what was wrong with the strategy was that, you know, if you write stuff decision makers don't actually read that, hardly anybody reads it. So when I got out of the hospital I wrote an article for the Queens Graduate Quarterly about the pathetic vocational rehabilitation programs and how useless they were and how problematic it was that they were useless. And nobody read that either and I kind of gave up for a while. Then I met Don Weitz and his passion was to start a self-help group somewhat like MPA in Vancouver, and it too wasn't very effective. And it was because I subsequently learned is nobody had a good political strategy. So we would sort of protest, but the protest wasn't connected with any decision-making element. So we went huff and puff and, "Hell no we won't go." And things just went on and on as before.

And it wasn't until I got elected that I began to see what changes could be made. So I started to do something I called interstitial politics, which was finding the little gap in the policy framework and going to work in an area nobody else is working in. The interested that who you're attacking sort of can't see it coming. So I first started to work on human rights kinds of things. Co crazy people didn't used to be able to vote so Don and I went to see the NDP guy in Ontario to lobby him about changing the law. And by an irony how about this - so Don and I probably did that in 1973. In 1985 when I was elected to the provincial legislator a bill came up that would allow people in mental hospitals to vote for the first time and I spoke to that and it was passed, right? So that was 12 years after we had started working on it. So the lesson I took from that was that you have to be in this for the long haul because change is slow and that nobody is gonna hand it to you, you gotta kinda create the environment that allows or sort of forces that change to happen. And that standing outside a mental hospital with a sign doesn't do anything at all. And my friend Don Weitz still doesn't know that, like he's still doing that. I realized that you need to get in there with the lawmakers and show them how they could change the law and why it would be a good idea.