

Daisy Payling: activism and activist networks in Sheffield in the 1970's and 80's

Duration: 2:19

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My name's Daisy Paylin and I'm doing a PhD in History here at the University of Birmingham. My research focuses of activism and activist networks in Sheffield in the 1970's and 80's. I'm specifically interested in how old social movements, like the labour movement and trade unionism and new social movements like feminism, gay liberation, the campaign for nuclear disarmament developed and engaged with each other at a local level. I'm also interested in how other forms of local politics like local government interacted with these movements. I look at these movements not as isolated phenomenon, but as inter-active and developing networks that informed each-other and shared tactics, personnel and possibly most importantly funding.

My research focuses on the 1970's and 80's, and that's a time in Britain of great political change, and economic change as well. It covers Thatcherism, and Sheffield at that time went from having a thriving steel industry to having an unemployment rate of over sixteen percent. It's really interesting to look at how a city that was built on industry and on a really strong tradition of labour politics dealt with these economic and political changes.

Sheffield had the nick-name 'the Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire' in its time, and to a certain extent what I'm trying to do is work out what this meant. I'm trying to do this by interviewing activists and looking at archive material – campaign materials from different movements, but also council minutes and see which groups they were most interested in. These ideas also tie into what local politics, local government was doing at these times, and this idea of local socialism and that local government in the 80's was the key site of power for leftist politics