

Bedside Conversation 1 of 5 with Liz Crow as part of the *Bedding Out* performance

Wednesday 10 April 2013 2.30pm with panel members and audience from a disability arts symposium held at Salisbury Arts Centre

Liz: – it's called Bedding In rather than Bedding Out.

And at the time, I felt a really strong sense of digging in. The work is my response to the changes in the social security system, the way that benefits are being assessed in very different ways, and new benefits are coming on line and there are major cuts being made.

I have seen the sharp end of what that is doing to us as disabled people, and I needed to make a response to it.

So I was debating whether or not to do some kind of performance. And then a particular newspaper article made me decide. This was an article that was in the Sun. But it could have been in any number of papers, particularly at that time. Because the kind of narrative that it was spinning was something that was in virtually every newspaper.

It told a story about a woman who was photographed on a rollercoaster. She was on that rollercoaster with her children. She was also a claimant of Employment and Support Allowance, which is for people who are not well enough to hold down paid employment on a regular basis.

So she was accused of fraud and she was taken to court and she was found guilty of fraud.

Now I don't know anything about that woman's circumstances. I don't know whether she was a legitimate claimant or whether she was claiming fraudulently.

But I looked at that story, and I thought, but that could be me.

I have a child and those are the kinds of things you try and do with your kids. It's important to do that. Last summer, I went on a horse for the first time in my life because my daughter was desperate to go on a horse and she wanted to go with me.

But the woman in the rollercoaster: I don't know what kind of preparation she had had to put into doing that day. And I don't know what recovery time she had had to put in afterwards. Just as, how I was before and after that very short horse ride is something that nobody knows either. Because that wasn't in the public realm. It wasn't visible to anybody apart from me and my immediate family.

And that story had a really big impact on me when I saw it in the newspaper. It really shook me. Because I realised how incredibly vulnerable it made me. I don't see myself as a vulnerable person. But suddenly, I was being subjected to other people's ideas of what it is to be a disabled person that didn't bear any relation to my own experience of my life. Or experiences I know of other disabled people I've met.

Those ideas were being put out in a huge forum, in a national newspaper with a massive circulation with very splash headlines, accusatory headlines. And whilst, in theory, the story was about a single person, in reality, I knew it was going to reflect potentially on all disabled people.

And in the time of these huge changes, in a time where hate crime has doubled, it seemed like an incredibly road to be taking.

So that's what brought me here in an attempt to start to look at the picture behind the public face that we present. To try and show some of that preparation and recovery and to give a much more three-dimensional picture of who we are and how we live in the world and to start to reveal the dangers of not understanding that. That if we don't build that complex picture into the systems that we have, the benefits systems and the social services and all the different structures that we have in our society, and into the judgements we make about each other, then we start along a very dangerous road.

So I don't know, just to open this up now to a conversation, whether that strikes a chord particularly with anybody here?

- 1: Yes. Earlier on, when you were talking, when you started at 2 o'clock and I was listening and you were talking about the hidden disabilities: people who have chronic illnesses. Chronic illness, or chronic pain, ME, MS, spinal condition, kidney condition. And as you say, you have this face. You prepare. Because people do not want to believe that you are any other than the face that you've tried to present. And having hidden disability means that you can have good days. And you can have really bad days. But on the really bad days, you are not in public view.

So this is a question as you say, this woman on the rollercoaster, we don't know her story. But I mean, what did it take for her to go on that with her children? What happened afterwards? And I think that's really, really very important. The perception of disability in people's minds, it's all to do with Paralympians. It's all do with sports and people physically, and at the top of their mental and health form, that actually achieve things.

But for people like you, for people like me, and others that I know, you know, we are hidden away.

And then you have the perception from the benefits system, from the DWP, where if

you can do something one day, it means you can do it for the rest of your life, or for three weeks or for four weeks. They do not understand.

The Bedding Out is a fabulous idea. I'd like to think it could go nationwide as a big protest or a campaign to show what happens when we are in our own home, when we are struggling, when we don't have the care or the carers or the support around us to help us get our socks off or to help us get into the bath. Or we're too exhausted to go and get something to eat and there's no one around to help.

Liz: I think it's really interesting that you picked up on the Paralympians. Because I started last summer to look at this kind of collective picture in the mind of what it is to be a disabled person. And I realised that the Paralympian is a particular kind of disabled person in that typically they have very quantifiable impairments, very often visible impairments, and impairments that are predictable. So what was yesterday is today is tomorrow.

What I realised was that the benefits system is based on that type of body.

Now, if you look at Paralympians, of course, the majority of Paralympians are in fact benefits claimants; they claim Disability Living Allowance, shortly to become PIP, already becoming PIP. But that is a benefit for people in or out of work, earning or not earning, to defray some of the costs, the extra costs, associated with impairment.

Typically, however, they do not claim employment or support allowance, which is for people who are too ill to hold down regular work.

However, if you look at the way that the Employment and Support Allowance assessment process is built, it's actually modelled on the ideal of the Paralympian's body.

So you then have a different kind of impairment, one that is largely invisible, changing from maybe hour to hour, certainly week to week or month to month, that has a lot of sort of unquantifiable stuff, like pain and feeling ill, that the only person who can actually make a judgement is inside here [points to own head]. Because there is no way of measuring it.

Then what you end up with in ignoring that is a system that means the people who most need that kind of support are the ones who are most likely to fall through the gaps. Which is precisely what's happening. Which is why so many people are being made distraught by what is happening and why we are having such colossal numbers of appeals going through, and costing vast amounts of money, ironically. (Laughter)

1: Sorry, could I just add something about the whole process of having an illness where you can have a good day or you can pull yourself together to present a different face, as you were saying yourself.

I mean, it took me three years to get Disability Living Allowance and even though I had all the medical reports – you know, this has been going on for years.

But because my condition fluctuates, because I could still manage to do things, because of the strength of character to say, “I will make myself walk, despite everything,” I hit a brick wall. And I know other people who just could not get past even the local tribunals and were in appeal upon appeal.

And as you say, those people back at home, within their own homes, they do not have the support when they are very ill, when they really need it.

Liz: You say your Disability Living Allowance took three years to come through. Mine took two years to come through. It required seeing a number of medics and supplying an awful lot of evidence of my needs. And yet, this week, on the news, the Minister for Disabled People, Esther McVey, made a statement to say that for DLA, there are no medical assessments.

So you’re back to the rollercoaster story. The misinformation that is being put out there, that is hugely damaging, is not only in the press but is actually coming from central government too.

Sonia: That’s the starting point. I think you’re a lot kinder about it than I am. I think it’s really political. I think it’s been going on for a long time.

For me, I’m really very much into symbolism, and the fact that Margaret Thatcher, who was very instrumental in setting sail all the things that have taken effect, and the fact that she died on the day that PIP came into place, was really symbolic. I thought it was very interesting. This is something that’s been going on for decades. Tony Blair also put his pennyworth in. He got it moving along as well.

And the truth is that David Cameron and his team, they were determined to get these measures through by hook or by crook. They pretty much overruled every piece of advice they were given from public consultation to the BMA doctors who said “No, you can’t be doing this, people will die. You can’t do this.” And so what we have, as a journalist, and I think about it all this time, is that the press play a part in demonising people.

So the truth is, as you say, we don't know the background story to the woman on the rollercoaster. There's every chance to believe that that took her everything that she had, every fibre of her being to get her up there with her children. Because as parents, we will do things, even if it endangers us. That's just part and parcel of what comes with the territory.

And I really object to the demonisation of people. It is propaganda. It is something that the government absolutely peddles, and then the press go along with it. And everybody assumes that it's only the right-wing media that goes along with it, but that's not true either. Because even shirker conversations, they think that's are preferable to the scrounger rhetoric, but actually it all comes down to the same thing. It's this idea that you're either a Paralympian, so you're a super hero, or you're a shirker. There's no middle ground. So it's angel or demon, saint or sinner.

Liz: Those are the two primary categories. But also what I've noticed in the last few years is a third category that's come up. All of which that are, again, really just symbols of what people might be, not bearing in reality to real life. The third one, for me, is victim.

Sonia: For sure

Liz: And we see a lot of disabled people, desperately trying to justify themselves against this onslaught of propaganda. So it's as though the only thing to resort to to disprove you are a fraud is to say, "Look how bad my life is. Look how desperate and awful and you wouldn't want a life like this, would you?" But there is no room in that for the complicated lives that we lead, where there is light and there is dark and it's this complicated process of negotiating, a grown-up process of negotiating and saying, "You know what, going to the rollercoaster with my kids is something that's really important to me, so I'm going to do a calculation and I know there'll be payback, but I'm making this decision for myself."

Within this whole new structure of benefits, there isn't room to be a grown up and to manage our own lives. And I wonder what that means for young disabled people growing up, where, as a teenager, I got to push the boundaries and experiment and make mistakes, and nobody pointed a finger at me and said, "You're a fraud." Just in the way that nobody points the finger at non-disabled people who perhaps decide to stay out late on a work night because there's a party they really want to go to. The next morning they feel awful and sometimes they phone in even and miss work, which I guess is fraudulent. But the fact is they make those decisions for themselves and they take the consequences. But they're reasonable consequences. They're about them having to have an early night to get over the late night. They're not about their entire

life risked being turned upside down or their reputation being in tatters, or potentially facing a fine or imprisonment.

Sonia: The control from the Central Office is obscene. This whole idea of welfare cards and vouchers and all these different things. But it's all about control.

And I object to it, and I think that as people, disabled or not, I think we all have to oppose it. Because there's obviously the old rhyme that we all know: 'First they came for....', but that is a reality. And we shouldn't, as you said to me earlier, we shouldn't be complacent. Complacency is really something that we really need to avoid now, because it is becoming clear that some of our most vulnerable people are not just being bullied, but are effectively being driven to all manner of things. I've reported on people who've committed suicide. People are having to weigh up whether they can afford to eat or heat.

We shouldn't be living in a society like that when we can spend billions on a Jubilee party and all manner of other things and I oppose all of that.

Liz: Sixth wealthiest nation. What is this claim that we're a poor nation and that we need to make cutbacks? And why is it that we're watching, last week, the income of the poorer people in society being cut whilst we were watching the income tax of the richest members of society being cut. In the meantime, the whole corporation tax loophole is not being closed.

2: It's because the richest people are actually running the country. And I'm sorry but that's the bottom line really. Poor folks just don't get a look in. I mean financially poor folks. You can be rich spiritually, but financially, you're knackered, really. Those at the top, couldn't give a flying. about those of us at the bottom. -All they do is just beat us with a big stick, really.

1: Hassan, earlier on, was talking about Charles Dickens and going back to Victorian times and I've often thought that that is what is happening. What is happening, in my view, is it is absolute callousness. It is cold-hearted. It is almost as if this is a deliberate attempt at a kind of genocide. Get rid of the weakest.

Sonia: Some people believe it is...

1: Well I'm not sure if it's going a bit far, but as you say, you are strong. You struggle, you achieve. I'm like that. But as you were saying earlier on, there are so many people who end up making the choice between eating, heating, isolated in their own homes, without the support to go anywhere, to do anything and just fall right down that black hole of despair, of depression, of total vulnerability.

When I was going through my process, and god only knows I fought like hell, I really did fight, there was one thing, one word that I clung on to. Because through the whole benefit process, through every single person I met regarding Disability Living Allowance, regarding the appeals, regarding anything, the one word was what they were trying to take away from me: dignity.

Dignity.

I had the social services come around and I was in a really bad way, a very bad way. I could hardly walk. I was crawling on the floor. I was really sick and ill. And they said, "Would you like ready meals?" I say, "No! I want some *help!*" I want someone to help me cook a meal. I like cooking. They were trying to impose this template on me to become a vulnerable member of society who eventually could be called a shirker.

You can fall into a black hole. I can understand how people who go into drink, or whatever, because how can you face life as a dignified human being if you are being pushed into that gutter like in Victorian times?

Liz: The other thing, for me, that has a really big impact in the last year, going through Employment and Support Allowance assessments and waiting nine months for tribunal and so on, was this terrible sense of loss. Because I felt that what I had achieved over 30 or 40 years was a very fragile sense of security within a benefits system that was always very difficult to negotiate and was incredible inflexible. But now facing a system where there is suddenly no certainty at all, where I could be assessed at any time. At any day, yet another of those brown envelopes comes through the post and your heart rate goes up. So many people now are talking about dread of the brown envelopes, because you never know what they're going to herald.

I think the thing that I personally resent, more than anything, is that loss of a very fragile security that I had. That I can't tell what my life is going to do. And I can make plans for the projects I do, and there always has to be that flexibility built in. I won't be able to work in a regular, paid way, partly because of the culture of how we work in a society doesn't fit around work, partly because of discrimination, partly because of health.

But within all those parameters, I kind of knew where I was. I managed my home and managed my parenting, and all of those elements. And now, suddenly, with Employment Support Allowance, that's gone.

Now PIP has come in, and at some point I'll be reassessed for that. And I certainly think there is some risk that I'll lose the mobility component and therefore that's my wheelchair accessible van gone. And I think there's an extreme risk that I'll lose the personal care component. Having employment personal assistants for 20 years, the gateway to that funding will be gone.

And then I don't know what comes after that. It's actually too terrifying to contemplate in any real way. So when it comes to being reassessed, I have to fight tooth and nail for that. And I suppose the one thing that makes me feel some small resilience in that is the extent to which disabled people are coming together and increasingly alliances are being created with other groups. So that no longer am I have to do it entirely on my own.

But it's a heavy battle ahead.

I guess for me one of the ways I survive is to try and put it in that broader context, to see how I can use it to create broader change. But that loss of security seems so cruel.

1: It is. It is torture. I went through that for three years and it was absolute hell. From a very active, professional person working with the community, I ended up, as I said, crawling on the floor. And the NHS system in my region was absolutely hopeless: crawling, with no one, and having to try and manage a home at the same time as managing what health I had. That is a total loss of identity.

For me it was very sudden, so there was no gradual entry into the ill health and the adapting. It was from one day to the next. I lost everything. I should be retired now anyway. They kindly gave me three years before I retired.

But I had always been active and that is the most terrifying and the most horrible thing to go through. It is a black hole of despair. Because, as you say, you've built up a fragile tissue of you know who you are, what you can do, that kind of security around you. And from one day to the next, I had nothing of myself left. It took me three years to get out of that health-wise, and I fought tooth-and-nail.

But, I come back to the point, there has to be something to be done with this. Because people who have degenerative conditions, people who have chronic illnesses that will never be cured, never get better, could possibly only get worse, why should they go through a six-monthly assessment?

You said earlier, "I went through the appeal and a couple of weeks later, I got my other assessment." It's crazy.

Sonia: And it's the hypocrisy as well.

The truth is when David Cameron needed all of this assistance for his son, he made sure to take advantage of it. Not that he took advantage of it, because if you're entitled to it, you're entitled to it. But if you, as a millionaire, and your wife is independently wealthy, and you still take free nappies, DLA, everything going, and yet you would then deny it to people who genuinely need that help, I find that beyond repulsive.

So I have real big issues with the government. I don't think we should think for a second that any of this by accident, that any of these things have just slotted into place. Blah blah blah.

Or Esther McVey has suddenly been peddled out. And you notice that it's two women they've had, on the Conservatives, and both of them are absolutely ridiculous. They say anything. They're absolute puppets.

Both Maria Miller and Esther McVey, they'll say anything they're told, just to get on. But they all operate on the same line. Their language is very loaded, extremely loaded. It's always, about "These people who want to come and take..." And it's all about divide and conquer. Once they're done and dusted with the sick and disabled, then "Let's quickly turn our attention to the immigrants as well, because 'they're taking your jobs'."

My job, my role, is just to keep shouting as loud as I can, and saying, "This isn't by accident, what they're doing here! Let's not think that this is okay. It's not okay."

My brother was extremely healthy for 40 years and then it was discovered that he had the family kidney disease, which killed my mum, grandmother, my aunty. My brother had a kidney transplant when he was about 42, that was over 10 years ago now. Since then, he's had skin cancer, minor heart attack, diabetes, depression. You name it and he has it all.

I go off for a very short, short dog walk with him. I've got a Westie, so we're talking little small legs, so we're not talking about a dog that walks a long way. My brother basically walks to the Church, to the school in his village with me, which is probably a five-minute walk. He's completely out of breath. And yet there are people in his street who say, "He's walking around. Why has he got a mobility badge?" and all of these things and it makes me really angry.

But then some people say, "Well, he's paid all these taxes." No, that's not the point. If you need help, you must have help. It doesn't matter what you have or haven't paid. So that's my position on it. It made me very, very mad. I see it like a battle. And I think in many respects, I think it's wonderful that many of the activists are actually sick and disabled themselves. But in many other respects, it's wrong. Because how many other campaigns do you actually have people who are right on the knife-edge of that campaign? Quite often it's people who have no association with the campaign. That's

often the way. I think it's a unique situation with sick and disabled people.

And I love the way I've seen people come together over the past year. It's been really fantastically heartening. Also from an artistic perspective, Liz, there's nothing like adversity in a climate to bring out all the best in you.

Liz: I remember in the end of the Thatcher era, and then subsequently when 'New Labour' came in. And in the Thatcher era, there'd been this hard wall to hit against and there was an extraordinarily strong community of activism in the country but plenty of reason for rage, but somewhere to direct it. And then the Labour Party came in and it was like blancmange and suddenly all the activists lost momentum because there wasn't anything to hit against.

Now it's shifted again. At one level, we've certainly got reason to be so angry, and yet, picking up on what you said about division, because so much is happening on so many fronts, it's different from under Thatcher, when there was 'that' target and then there was 'that' target, so you could hit one thing at a time. Because this has been on all fronts, wholesale, it's moved from one community target to another, to another. First they came for disabled people, and then, yes, it's been immigrants, single parents, people not earning enough money, and so on and so on. Because it's been on so many fronts, it's actually splintered any opposition.

So there's some incredibly strong, vibrant opposition out there. But it's only been able to fight its own corner each time.

There sea change I feel that's happening at the moment... For me, there's been two things that have been biggest hopes coming out of this. One is that it has reinvigorated the movement of disabled people that had lost its way for a time. And it's brought in disabled people who were not actively involved before, because we were out of that core group. Pre-social media, those of us who were not well enough to be out in the world couldn't be a part of it. But suddenly a lot of the prime movers in campaigning now are doing it from their beds and from their homes, from their hospital beds, in some instances.

And looking at the way this group of people were – Disabled People Against the Cuts, Spartacus, Black Triangle and other groups - the kind of skills they've brought to it and the alliances they've built, and the completely passionate way of working has left me completely in awe. And what they've created is, frankly, a model of what a good society is like.

Sonia: Indeed.

Liz: And we'd really do well to look at those workings. The other thing that gives me more hope is the sense that all of these disparate groups are starting to realise that we are very weak if this lot argue for disability benefits and this lot argue about the tax stuff and this lot argue for something else.

That the only way to do it is to look beneath the individual events that are happening and realise that underneath, as you say, this is no accident. That if you look at the values about different levels of equality, different levels of human worth, and the bigger picture of what politicians are going for, that actually we have to organise at that level and create a much more united voice. And that's our hope.

2: I think it's that is bigger-picture stuff because the government we've got at the moment are purporting to be almost ideologically free. They're presenting their agenda as being the only way, the only option. "Reasonable, rational, we have no choice. Some cuts have to be made."

And yet if you look at where those cuts are made, they're made with the most vulnerable people. They're not being made where they could be made, with the wealthy, in tax.

And I think that probably the biggest difference in terms of the government we've got now and looking at Thatcher, who was very overt about her ideology, you knew where your enemy lay. It was very clear.

I think the danger we've got is that we've apparently got a facile pleasantness corresponding with actions which are deeply callous, deeply cruel. And cutting across society, actually deliberately setting out to turn people against each other, as you said, to demonise the most vulnerable.

And those kind of stories that, predominantly I would say that it is the right-wing press that are supporting those kinds of myths and stories that are communicating this notion of "Look at the worst in human behaviour". Let's look at the worst, but it isn't in those vulnerable people. It's in someone who would seek to just benefit themselves and their own cronies.

What you're doing here is articulating, "There is an ideology here. Look, recognise it, don't be blind to it. Don't think it doesn't exist, it's there." And it's actually just as dangerous as Thatcher.

If not more.

Sonia: I totally agree with you. And I think what's also interesting is that this, as an exhibition, what it reveals is the strength and the weakness, on the vulnerability rather than the weakness. It reveals you as an individual, standing up as an activist, but also as a human being, with the frailties that go along with that as well.

And I absolutely agree with you. Thatcher was much more overt and they do have this sort of PR front. And it all seems very nice until you start to strip away the layers and see what kind of people we're dealing with and, as you said, they don't relate to us.

There are 17 millionaires on the front bench alone. And I would argue that I'm not sure you can't even represent people with that volume of money.

2: They haven't got a snowball's hope in hell.

Sonia: It is possible to be very wealthy and compassionate. But you have to make certain leaps to do it. The fact that they're even being paid just to come back and debate, pay tribute to Margaret Thatcher, they're all being paid £3,700 expenses each to come back and debate that.

1: That's disgusting.

Sonia: We're talking about people who are beyond---. But they're not clueless.

It's really important that we don't see them as clueless. They're not clueless, they know exactly what they're doing. And I totally agree with you. It's a real PR front that they've got.

Liz: That idea, that sense that rather than ideological, they're neutral, allows so much to slip under the radar. And in the same way as "No, they're not stupid," actually, the general population isn't stupid either. They've been sold lies, very, very cleverly. Majorly PR-ed lies, that are given with a veneer of reasonableness and so it's actually very hard to counter them.

And unless you actually really research your facts well...

2: Some of us don't have the energy to do that research. That's the biggest kick in the teeth really.

Liz: Absolutely. And that's where the collaborative stuff comes in, because if we can each play to our strengths. There are people who are compiling that research. It's now there and they're compiling it in central resources so it becomes easier.

We have to fight fire with fire. That every time somebody says, like some of the early headlines were, '75% of disabled people are faking it'. Well, that's immediately 200 times more than the actual fraud rates on what was Incapacity Benefit - and those figures came from the Department. So every time a statement like that is made, we have to call it. We have to make sure that that member of our family or friend who says, "Well it is a period of recession, it is a period of austerity, fraud rates are high," we have to say No no no, *here's* the counter information and, more subtly, here are the counter stories. Here's what the real lives are like beyond the symbols and the 2D versions.

And we have to be incredibly vigilant about picking up on the propaganda that's out there and bring people around to this way of thinking, so that they're prepared to be advocates as well.

We're coming around to the end of his session now. But for me that's probably the biggest thing we need to do. I guess personally I've gone past the point of writing to my MP and thinking that he is going to shift. He's made it very clear which way he's voting on everything. And I feel, for me now, that it's a bad use of my energy. But what I think is a good use of my energies is to start putting out these counter stories. These truths of the complexity our lives and to start talking to people.

And I think that what I actually want to do, what I'd love everybody to do, is actually find three people who at the moment are either being taken in by the lies, or too kind of overwhelmed themselves to speak out, or they just don't do that sort of thing, and try and give them the truth of the situation. Because if every single activist brought three more people along, we'd have trebled the numbers of people who are creating an opposition. In time, we'd become quite powerful.

There's an urgency to it of course. But if everybody here, and everybody watching on the internet and through twitter, was prepared to take that up as a challenge, we'd start that shift happening.

Sonia: I believe there's a cause for great positivity on it, because we're living in an era like never before. We've never been able to link up like-minded people in the way that we can now. That in itself already tells me that these, I wouldn't even call them misleading, I would say these blatant lies that the DWP issue against people for an end game. I love the fact that many activists are standing up and they're getting onto newsrooms and saying, "No! I'm coming on to the show and I want to do it." And that is happening and it is really wonderful to see it. So I do think that the fightback has long started. All of this is all part of it.

In many years' time, we'll all be able to say, "Gosh! We were all sat around that bed with Liz and we were a bit hopeful that things could change but look how they have changed!"

And I'm not an optimist. I'm a realist. So I say that with all the knowledge that I've garnered so far, and I truly believe that we can change it. Right-minded, like-minded people can change it. I do believe it's happening.

The world is not made up of Iain Duncan Smiths.

2: It's about re-politicising people, isn't it?

Because you often hear people, "Oh, well. It's all the same. Oh, it doesn't make any difference. I won't vote or I won't do anything because everyone's the same." But that actually isn't true. That really isn't true. Ideologically, everybody isn't the same. This is very specific and very focused on pushing through the capitalist cause. That's what it's about. It's very simple.

It's not about creating a more humane, compassionate, socially aware society. It's about furthering late capitalism.

I work with young people within a university and, although I teach arts education, I often say, "My main agenda is that by the end of the year, you're questioning what you read, what you see, what you hear. And you're going out to find out more information. Whether you're doing that through the arts, whether you do that through education, through the internet, whatever. But, question what you hear, what you see."

I think that, predominantly, is inevitably, re-politicising. Because if you start questioning, you start feeling empowered. If you don't question, "Everything is the same, there's nothing I can do," it's hugely disempowering and sapping of people's energy.

So this activity thing you're doing, apparently lying, is a massively empowering activity – which is re-politicising, not necessarily party political, I don't know where your agenda is there, but in terms of that process of questioning of getting people thinking, questioning, acting on what they believe.

1: And I think it is very urgent to do something. Because, as we said, there are lies, there's callousness, it's becoming more and more obvious that it's like a hidden agenda that is being fed to the population.

We all know from history, that in times of economic depression, there will always be scapegoats. We all know from the 1930s how things turned out. I'm very interested in

history and I can see so many parallels.

Liz, you used two words that I was thinking about: propaganda and counter-information. And there is one thing that we do have for campaigning to raise awareness, is in fact social media. It's the facility to communicate, to come together, to put things out.

I'll repeat it – I'd love to see a national bed-in, Bedding Out.

2 Well, that may well happen.

Liz: Well, we should talk some more about that...

I do have to bring this to a close. But just picking up on what you said. There is a phrase from the German which translates to 'beware of the beginning'.

There's often a debate about, if you draw parallels between what's happening now and Nazi Germany, a lot of people immediately close down the conversation. I'm not getting into a discussion about whether what happened there could happen again. But I don't think there's ever any room for complacency.

However, if you look at that history, the holocaust did not come from nowhere. It was a slow build of events and people did not 'beware the beginning' back then.

If you look at the eight stages of genocide, they're mapped out very carefully. We've already made it up to at least level three in what is happening now. The need to act, and to act together, to counter the propaganda that happens, that's out there, is as urgent as it could possibly be.

I'm going to end this conversation there.

That was the second of five bedside conversations. And our next conversation, I hope you can join us, is at noon tomorrow and that is going to be an entirely twitter-based conversation, which is going to be an experiment. We have something like 70 people signed up to that. If you're not already signed up, do sign up and pitch in.

Thank you all very much.

All: Thank you. Have some rest between now and then.

Bedding Out created and performed by Liz Crow

Participants include journalist Sonia Poulton

Tweetmeister Dawn Willis

BSL interpretation by Emma Sanders

Transcripts Marian Cleary

Production CoQuo

www.roaring-girl.com

info@roaring-girl.com

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