
Part two of interview with Mrs Molly Byrne, the first Labor woman elected to the South Australian Parliament in 1965 representing the seat of Barossa and later the seats of Todd and Tea Tree Gully until 1979. The continuation interview is recorded by Dr Margaret Allen at Seacliff Park, South Australia, on Thursday, 15th March 2007.

RECORDING COMMENCES.

Right. Now, we should be getting that now.

I can't say that they'd be agreeable, but what I'm saying is they are still alive.

And they'd be possibly able to be interviewed?

Yes – well, if they agreed to it. They might be. I think I looked up a list, didn't I, and I don't know whether there was anybody else. Oh, I think I said Gavin Keneally?

You mentioned Gavin Keneally; Cec Creedon you mentioned.

Yes, Cec.

Don Banfield you suggested.

Yes.

Bob Bakewell – – –.

Well, I think he's someone who could give you far more information than probably any of us could, because he was up there in the Premier's Department.

That's right.

And there's Steve Wright. Now, he was Don's personal secretary. A lovely person, Steve.

Yes, yes. The thing is, that's great. So we have done one interview with Bakewell, but some of them – you know, there's so many years, and when you talk about them properly it takes quite a long time, doesn't it?

Yes, that's right, because lots of things you can't remember anyway.

Well, that's right, yes.

Because it's so long ago; and you can't remember them in their right sequence, too.

Well, it doesn't matter necessarily, because we can index this later and say, 'This was at this page and this is at that page' and we can find our way through it. But can you remember your first day in Parliament?

Yes, I can remember that first day, that the bells rang and I came down straight away, which I needn't have done because they start five minutes before the session opens. And I can remember there was a Liberal Member, he was new and he came down too. And other than that, well, I didn't ask any questions, I just sat through Question Time because I knew that I had to eventually give that address and reply speech.

But what I did find, as time went on, was that you had to bow to the Speaker when you came in and when you left the chamber, and of course when he entered. That seemed to be easy enough, but when I had to leave the chamber I just felt I couldn't bow (laughs) to the Speaker, and so I used to sit at my chair and I'd often sit there too long, although I might have wanted to (laughs) go out for some good reason like going to the toilet, but I just felt I couldn't bow, that everyone was looking at me. But then, after a while, I got used to that and it was just a custom that you just did without noticing that you were doing it.

One of the rules of the place.

Yes. But that's about all I can remember. Except in those days, when I can remember listening to what people said and I can remember thinking, 'I don't know whether I'm good enough to be here.' But then, after a while, I sort of got used to the way business was conducted and the way people spoke on the bills, *et cetera*, and so it just become commonplace.

Yes. And did you write all your own speeches?

Yes, I wrote them. Yes. We did have like the Parliamentary Library, you could go there to do some research, but you might get some ideas from doing that or from what someone else had said in the past. But no, I wrote them and they weren't ---. I didn't give a lot of speeches because of the fact that we were on the Government benches, and our job was to get the legislation through Parliament; and so, as backbenchers, we weren't encouraged to speak because at that time in like the committee stage of a bill Members could speak as often as they liked and consequently sometimes the Opposition would filibuster to hold the legislation up, so

us backbenchers, as I said, we weren't encouraged to speak. So I mainly concentrated on questions, mainly concentrated on questions to do with my electorate. And what I did was, after I got a reply, I used to put a copy of those answers in the letterbox of the constituents that were interested in that particular subject – might have been a road-widening, it might have been extension of sewerage to that area, it might have been something to do with the school – so if those constituents were going to be affected, well then I put a copy of that answer in their letterbox, and that's mainly what I did. (dog starts barking) But apart from that, of course ---. (leaves to investigate barking, closes door) Makes a lot of noise next door. He's going to put a fence up and he's had somebody there measuring.

That was the dog, yes.

What was I saying? Oh, yes. Well, apart from that, my time was spent – well, first of all, we didn't have an electorate office, and I had one in my home which meant I had people coming to my home and ringing my home. Then, later – and I'm not sure of the time; I think it might have been about 1970 – Don, who was then the Premier, said, 'We should have electorate offices in the electorate,' so we got an electorate office with a secretary, but before that, as backbenchers, we just shared some secretaries at Parliament House. Of course, I did have an office at Parliament house as well, but people mainly came to your office in the electorate.

So they come to your home.

Yes, and then later, as I said, I got an electorate office. And gosh, it was a great advantage having that. Well, apart from that, of course, so I used to get a lot of problems from constituents, which I was glad to help them if I could, I always tried. At times you didn't have success, but I always tried at least. And also, of course, you went to all sorts of functions in your district and school sports, things like that. So at the beginning there was hardly anything that took place on Sundays – perhaps only something to do with churches – but later, entertainment and sporting events took place on Sundays, so I found often I was at functions or something that took place in the electorate on a Sunday. So it was a busy life, because quite often I went to three functions of a Saturday: I might go to a fête in the afternoon and then, say, a

presentation of trophies, say, about six o'clock at a sporting function, then perhaps go to a ball, because initially there were lots of balls – but then they gradually dropped off, too. So it changed, really.

And in the electorate office then you had a staff member working for you there?

Yes, I had a secretary there and that made a lot of difference because, when the Parliament was sitting, you had someone there who could take notes. What I tried to do, I tried to interview everyone myself, it wasn't always possible but I tried to do that. But of course also, apart from parliamentary sittings, you had obligations to your political party, so you had meetings to attend; and of course to do with parliamentary sessions you had caucus meetings; but also, after I got elected to Parliament, I got elected to the State ALP Executive and I was on that for about ten years. But in the end it all got too much for me (laughs) and I had to take three months' leave, but I only really took six weeks. I didn't stay in my house to keep away from people coming to the house and ringing out of hours, although I had an electorate office, and I used to come down from where I was staying and meet my secretary and sign any letters or anything that I felt I had to do.

So when did you have your three months or six weeks off?

That was after I'd been in Parliament ten years.

Right.

So I resigned from the State ALP Executive too, to reduce the workload. Because what happened with that area is that it kept growing, you see. So I started off as the Member for Barossa and then in 1970 I become the Member for Tea Tree Gully and then it got too big again, you see, and it got divided again into Newland and Todd. And so often I was really doing about two people's work, because of the build-up of population. And of course, being a growing area, all sorts of facilities were needed, and so there was a lot of development going on – not just in housing, but of course people needed facilities that were provided by the State Government.

There was a lot of haphazard development, I think, to start with.

There was to start with, but after that it seemed to fill in.

And how did you manage all that with having a child? Did it really mean that you had to be out a lot?

When I got endorsed, my daughter was two. When I got elected, she was four. And so I got a part-time housekeeper: she used to come, say, at two o'clock and then, latterly, when my daughter went to primary school, when she went to Modbury Primary School, her children went there too so she used to pick my daughter up with her children and come home and put on an evening meal. So either I'd be home by six o'clock or my late husband would be home by six o'clock. Then, in 1970, he died and so my parents then let their house – I think they subsequently sold it – and they came and lived with me, because I was out a lot at night, not only with parliamentary sittings but going to functions in the district, functions and meetings. So they lived with me and my mother sort of took over then, because when I started off there wasn't the child care that there is today. So I had to have someone there, I couldn't have managed otherwise.

And I notice that often, just looking through Hansard, some of the issues you brought up were about child care and kindergartens and those sorts of issues for young families.

They were things that dominated people's minds in the electorate, so that was why I spent a lot of time, I suppose, as far as kindergartens were concerned. And there weren't many child care centres, I think, latterly there might have been one or two started up privately. But as far as kindergartens were concerned, first of all I can remember there was a private one and then, later, others got established, I think – I don't know whether they called them 'kindergartens', but something I can remember was established like ancillary to a school, to a primary school.

So how long were you in Parliament altogether?

I was there for fourteen and a half years.

And how many elections did you fight?

I fought seven, which was rather exhausting.

My goodness – seven elections!

And the last one, of course, I got defeated. That was 1979.

And I remember you said that you had a feeling that people were saying why was there going to be an election.

That's right. I sensed that I was going to be defeated, because I was knocking on doors and people would say to me, 'Why are you having this election?' And I couldn't give a satisfactory answer. That was after Don Dunstan resigned through ill health and then Des Corcoran took over as Premier, and this early election got called which the people didn't support. So after that I was approached to stand again for the seat out there, but I declined. And also I was approached, as you probably know – it didn't exist when I started, but by the time I left that was when factions were more or less starting up and I was approached by two sides of the factions to consider nominating for preselection for a Federal seat, but I declined that, too.

You felt you'd had enough.

Yes, I felt that fourteen and a half years – – –. I think it's all right if you've got what's a real safe seat, but it wasn't really a safe seat. It became – I don't like to say this, because it sounds as if I'm conceited – but it became a sort of a 'Molly Byrne' seat, if you know what I mean, as long as I kept working, which I did.

Well, the fact you had lived there, you had your daughter at school there, you were involved with them all as they coped with every issue in their need for facilities –

That's right, yes.

– must have really tied you in to a lot of people in the district.

Well, it got that way that even the children would see me and say, 'Hello, Molly.'
(laughter)

But it's amazing to have fought seven elections in that many years. It was a tumultuous period in South Australian politics in a way, wasn't it?

Yes, well, there was that much legislation went through, and that was really one of the problems as far as Don's health was concerned. I feel he worked far too hard and he was really the driving force behind the Government. And I think there were signs before he retired that his health was suffering, but he kept working and in the end he couldn't go any longer –

That's right, yes.

– which was a shame for the State.

It was a terrible shame. So while you were in Parliament, did you hold any positions? Like what positions did you hold in relation to committees and so forth?

Well, I was on various committees but I'd have to look that up to tell you exactly. I know I was on the Land Settlement Committee, the Public Accounts Committee, I was for a while Chairman of the Subordinate Legislation Committee, I think I might have gone on the Public Works Committee; yes I did.

And so what did the Subordinate Legislation Committee do?

Well, what they did was they looked at – (pauses)

Is it regulations or something?

– yes, regulations to acts, that's mainly what they did.

And they were dealt with in a committee?

Yes, they were dealt with in a committee and then usually they went before Parliament and people could get up and say they didn't approve of them – that's not the right word for it, but that's more or less what it meant – but that didn't happen very often.

So were you a chair of that for some time, then, were you?

Yes, I was Chairperson of that in the 1970-1973 period.

And did you ever think of going for a ministerial position?

Well, I did at one stage but then I never went on with it. I never, ever put my name forward because I really felt I had too much to do within the electorate and I couldn't have managed it. And looking back now I'm quite sure I couldn't have kept up the personal contact that I mainly had with the constituents.

Which you felt was very important.

Well, it was very important, and I felt that was the way to keep the seat for the party, really – apart from the fact that I really enjoyed that part of the work, I found that very rewarding if you could do something for someone.

Yes, you must have felt that you knew so much about the electorate and the different parts of it over the years.

Yes. Well, my daughter used to try and trick me. She used to say that I knew every street in the district, and so she'd make up a name and I would say, (laughs) I don't know where that is. (laughter)

And how was it? You were the first Labor woman in the Lower House or in the Parliament, the first to be a chair of a committee, were you ---?

I don't know whether I was the first to be a chair of a committee.

The first Labor woman?

Probably I would have been *that*, but Jessie Cooper and Joyce Steele were there before me, both representing the LCL, and I don't really know what committees if any they went on. Although Joyce subsequently became a Minister. And I got to know them very well, I might say, and I got on very well with them. And when I first went there I remember – I think that was the first day that Parliament sat – Joyce took me for afternoon tea and had a chat to me.

I would just like to add that I was the first woman member of the S.A. Parliament to sit in the Speaker's chair in an official capacity, when on 13 September 1972 I was acting Deputy Speaker.

That was nice. (with reference to the afternoon tea and chat with Joyce Steele).

Yes, it was. You don't forget things like that.

That's right, yes. Because it must have been a very male type of place.

Well, I didn't notice it like that because of the fact that I knew all the Labor Members before I went down there. In fact, sometimes when they were making their maiden speech I went down to listen. So it was more or less like a brotherly–sisterly relationship. Those of course that went into the ministry, we didn't see that much of them; but those of us who were backbenchers, we all had our own electorates to look after so if I needed any help I could ask one of the Members who'd been there before and I sometimes used to ask Jack Jennings, and he'd give me some advice how it was

best to answer some (laughs) difficult letters that I got sent. So really I didn't find it difficult. And also I'd worked in two Senators' offices, and I had both an industrial and a political background, so I didn't find it difficult. I found it *challenging*, but I didn't find it difficult.

Yes. I'm just looking at my own questions here. And I was just going to say – I've asked you some of these questions – I noticed in one of the speeches and things that you made, someone said it should be called the 'Molly Byrne Hospital', not the 'Modbury Hospital'.

Oh, yes. I didn't know (laughs) they said that, actually. Well, since the Hospital got opened – and I don't know whether it was last year or the year before, they invited me out there for some celebration, so I think that was a great achievement, not just for me but for the Labor Party for having that hospital erected, and really it was something that was needed in that area.

Just reading through the Hansard, it seems some of the Liberals opposed there being a hospital there.

Well, I don't know that they *opposed* it so much; I think they more or less sort of perhaps slowed down its erection, that's probably the best way of putting it.

Because there was that period, wasn't there, from 1968–70 when – was it the Steele Hall Government was in, wasn't it?

That's it, they were in that time. So some of the things we intended to do between '65 and '68 of course weren't started or completed, that's what it amounted to, and then things didn't proceed – well, some did but some didn't – during that time, and then once we got re-elected again in 1970 we sort of got going again where we left off. (laughs)

So in those various elections, you mentioned in the first election that Don was your campaign director: was he involved in any of your subsequent elections in that same way?

No, he wasn't, because by then he would have been the Premier, and then of course he wasn't Premier in the 1970 election, but he was used everywhere, all over the State; and of course later on television, he was used in the forefront on the television, and some of us weren't used. So subsequently I used to have Jack Jennings MP as my campaign director and I think Senator Arnold Drury supported him.

But it sounded like, to me, when you described that first campaign and you said that Christmas before that first election you knew every weekend what you'd be doing, that you were obviously very much your own campaign director too, perhaps.

Well, I'd had quite a bit of experience, and from that December until the election took place in March I did have a program worked out for the whole period, and I stuck to it. And it paid off.

One of the big things that the Dunstan Government did in those early years, of course, was electoral reform and changing the Legislative Council franchise.

Well, I think they were the two most important things, frankly, because we had fought for political reforms always, and finally we achieved it. And often I wonder how we ever achieved getting adult franchise for the Legislative Council. I didn't think we'd ever achieve it (laughs) while I was there, but we did, and I think Don Dunstan with Hugh Hudson were more or less responsible for that, their tactics.

But it must have been something that also won out in the electorates, like your electorate.

What do you mean?

Well, were you out enrolling people or talking about that issue?

I think originally people didn't know what the Legislative Council was, and we used to go out at weekends and enrol people on the Legislative Council. I think some of them thought when you talked about the Legislative Council they more or less associated it with the *local* council. I don't really think that people understood a lot about the parliamentary system originally, but I think as time went on they did because that seemed to be often the focus of our policy.

Because compulsory voting was brought in for that as well, wasn't it?

What, for the Legislative Council? I don't know that it was; I think originally it was voluntary voting and enrolment, but because the election would have taken place the same time as the House of Assembly they would have been given two ballot papers.

Yes, that's right. And I noticed one of the Liberals said, talking about the redistribution, I think Sir Norman Jude said it was the 'rape of the country electorates', that they were concerned that the rural voters would lose their power.

Well, yes, they would have said that. But the point was – I presume you're talking about the Lower House now –

Yes, I am, sorry.

– yes. Well, originally, as you know, the electorates were weighted in favour of the country electorates. I think in the case of Jack Jennings's seat, which was Enfield, I think it was about a ratio of seven to one in favour of the country. Well, obviously that wasn't democratic and so gradually we finally got one-vote-one-value for the Lower House, with I think a ten per cent tolerance, and really that was a tremendous achievement.

Yes. Well, it must have been so dispiriting in the Labor Party before that, all those years in the '30s and '40s when it wasn't possible, really, to win – or virtually impossible to win.

Yes virtually impossible to win. And that's why I say it was such a great achievement, because it was something we'd strived for so many years.

And your father, was he helping you quite a lot – because he was in the local branch?

Yes, he used to help me. But he also died while I was in Parliament. I can't remember when, I should be able to. But my husband died first, in 1970, and then my father died. I can remember at the time some people thought it was my father who'd died because he'd been sick, but it was my husband. I think he died about 1977.

But you said he started up the Tea Tree Gully Branch.

Yes, he started the Tea Tree Gully Sub-Branch.

And I was just going to say one of the other things I sort of felt, looking through all of the speeches and remembering, too, some of it, that quite a lot of the legislation was around making business behave in an ethical, accountable way to people – I mean, like real estate or builders or car salesmen and so forth.

Yes. The Government put through a lot of consumer legislation, and that was really necessary at the time, and I think that's also one of our greatest achievements. And also the licensing of builders, because originally anyone could set up as a builder whether they had qualifications or good financial backing. But then, finally, when

the regulations were brought down, that was very helpful to people who'd purchased houses or had houses built and perhaps had a problem.

I noticed that the people on that Licensing Board, the Builders' Registration Board or whatever it was called to start with, a lot of them came out of the housing industry; so somebody said that Dunstan had a style in politics where he'd somehow sort of get people who were almost opposed, in, and get them involved.

I can't remember that, who was on it originally.

People [from] Housing Industry Association, Master Builders' Association, those sorts of people.

Well, there wasn't opposition from *all* the builders to it. I mean, really, there'd be only a minority of builders that would have been causing problems.

Yes. But causing problems to people in your electorate.

Well, there were problems like that and that was one of the things I think you'll find I talked about in my maiden speech.

Yes. Yes, you did. And you seemed to have quite a most detailed knowledge of building practices: is that something you had to build up over the years?

I don't think I did, really. (laughs) I might have gained knowledge, through talking to people who had problems, but no, I didn't have any background in that direction.

I was going to say, too, I note that – one of the other things the Government took on was about the power of the police and the need for the police to be under political control, with the Vietnam Moratorium Royal Commission – – –.

There was a Royal Commission into that, as you know, and then the Commissioner brought down more or less in favour of the Government. And so I don't know whether it was done by legislation or regulation, but there was an alteration in that respect. I can't tell you exactly what the alteration was, but I know it meant that the police would be then under some Government control.

And also the whole issue of the Dr Duncan case seems to have been a similar thing – not about political control, but about police perhaps not behaving.

I can't remember whether we altered anything subsequently to that happening.

One of the other things I was looking at, I notice that you were involved with the Single Mother and Her Child organisation. Can you say something about how that happened?

Well, I can't remember all the details of that, but I think it was because there was a woman in my constituency who was in that position, being a single mother with a child, and I have a feeling that she started it up and consequently got me involved.

You seem to have brought in deputations from them and -- --.

Yes, I can't remember everything I did associated with them, but I can remember that I was involved with them for some time.

And that you seem to have brought up some issues, some women's sort of issues, through your time in Parliament.

I didn't bring up a lot of women's issues because of the fact that I was elected to represent both men and women, and often problems say of women would be the same for men and *vice versa*. So I didn't concentrate on women's issues. If I'd have been in the Legislative Council I probably could have, but in the Lower House I didn't do that. I mean, I was glad to see some improvements for women, but I didn't concentrate on them.

No -- well, a lot of your questions are about things like roads and transport and -- --.

That's what interested people. And that interested both men and women. And their children, too, as far as schools and kindergartens, *et cetera*, were concerned. I think they called them 'pre-schools', when I think about them, attached to schools.

Yes, I think you're right. So you said that you felt the consumer legislation and the electoral reform were some of the most important things; I'm wondering what else you felt that was very important that that Government did.

I think removing the death penalty; and, which (laughs) isn't the case now, the setting up of the State Government Insurance Commission; and the starting of a State Lottery: they were Government undertakings and [Government-]run *then*. But other than that I think it's mainly the consumer legislation -- and legal legislation, because when Len King was the Attorney General and subsequently Peter Duncan, they put a lot of legal legislation before Parliament, a lot of amendments were needed to various acts. And then, of course, as you know, Len finally retired and he became a judge. But we owe a lot to both of them for what they put through; and before that, of course, Don concentrated on it.

So when these new measures were coming up, did they come out of Dunstan's ideas or do you think they also came out of other – – –?

I think some of it would have been Don's ideas. But, see, some of it would have been Party policy, which we had a really big platform then, because (laughs) we hadn't been in government for so long, so there was a lot to be done – and I think that was one of the problems, that Don was the driving force and trying to get so much done because we'd been in opposition for so long, it was the main effect on his health.

And one of the things, of course, you were involved with was what later became the O-Bahn, was the getting a sort of tramway or service out to your area.

Well, that did come up but that really come into effect, from memory, after I left that was opened. But that was something that was really needed for that area, it's been a boon for the Tea Tree Gully area.

You can get into town on it.

Because before that, originally you had to drive down the North-East Road and buses had to go down the North-East Road, which meant sometimes there'd be like a build-up of traffic and people were held up. And I might say that originally there was a private bus service went out there, and it was very well run and they were lovely people that owned it, but as the population grew something else was needed.

Yes. There were all those little bus services up into the hills and everything, weren't there –

Yes, that's right.

– those little private bus services that finished at five o'clock or six o'clock or something.

Yes, that's right. No, I can't remember what time they finished, but I knew the people that owned it and they were very nice people.

I notice one of the other things that came up in your was some discussion about pollution and the environmental issues, I don't know if that was something that you became interested in over the years.

If I did I can't remember it very well. I don't really think that the environment was such an issue then. It certainly is now, it's practically top of the list now, but it wasn't then. It wasn't something that people brought up very often.

Yes, I notice quite early on you were talking about things being biodegradable – I mean, this is it: I've been able to read your speeches that you've probably forgotten.

I have, I'll have to read them myself! (laughs) I can't remember the last time I read them – probably when I gave them.

And I noticed also one of the other issues that took up quite a lot of space in the Parliament was the abortion law reform.

Yes. Well, when that came before Parliament I had to make a decision as to whether to vote for the reform or whether to vote for abortion on demand. As you know, Mr Dunstan voted for abortion on demand. I voted for just the reform, because I really felt at that time that my constituents weren't ready for abortion on demand.

Because there seemed to be petitions, quite a lot of petitions of various points of view being presented at that time.

I remember in the gallery at the time there were people sitting there from various churches and more or less watching, I suppose, how we were going to vote and what we were saying. But I can't remember anyone out in my constituency presenting me a petition, but on matters of conscience we had a free vote and we could vote how we liked. The same as homosexuality, things like that.

And you mentioned last time I think about the Casino vote.

Oh, yes. Well, I voted against the establishment of a casino. Mainly I suppose on how I viewed gambling, I presume. And I think it was the right decision at the time, and if I was still there now I'd probably vote against it now.

There's a lot of misery caused by it, really, isn't there?

Yes, there is. I mean, originally I think there weren't supposed to be poker machines there but, as you know, there are poker machines there; these things gradually happen. I can't see anything wrong with gambling, I take a Cross-Lotto ticket every now and again, and if someone knocked on the door (laughs) with a raffle book I'd

take a ticket in the raffle; but – as long as it's not overdone, gambling, it's quite all right, but unfortunately some people get carried away and spend more money than they can afford to.

Yes. And planning legislation was another very important thing that the Government did, wasn't it?

Yes. That was one of the things, I think, that was tackled right at the beginning, and I can't remember whether they put through a new act or made amendments to the old one, I can't remember that. But it was needed, definitely needed. And also restricting building on the Hills Face Zone.

Planning would have been quite important out in your constituency.

I don't know that it affected it, really. I can't say that it did. It might have been perhaps regarding parks or setting aside a certain amount of land for reserves, but that's about all, I think.

And, Molly, I wanted to ask you about the industrial legislation and changes that the Government brought in and what you felt was important there.

Well, I think one of the main ones was workers covered if they had an accident to and from work. But whether that's still in existence I'm unable to tell you.

So were you involved with the Executive and the unions on discussing the sort of changes that needed to be in people's --?

No. That would have been laid down in Party Platform. And if it was necessary, I think Don had dialogue with the unions on certain matters, but I was never involved.

And how did he get on with the people in the Union Movement, or how was he --?

Very well, as far as I know. I don't think he had any problems.

Just one of the small changes I think that came in quite early was for weekly-paid Government employees were only allowed something like a very small amount of sick leave per year.

That would have been under the *Public Service Act*, yes. There were quite a few industrial reforms.

Give people more rights in the workplace. I was going to ask you, too, how do you think the Whitlam Government, what impact did you think that had on the Dunstan years? I know that '75 election was quite a difficult one, wasn't it?

I can't remember that. I can remember, of course, when Gough Whitlam, when the Senate refused supply and he went to the Governor-General and subsequently you know what happened; but I don't know that it had any effect on our Government here. Though naturally it was a disappointment.

A major one – yes, pretty disappointing indeed.

People were shocked at the time. But I think that a resolution was passed through State Parliament regarding, I suppose the Legislative Council refusing supply, but I know some resolution was passed at the time and I don't know whether it had unanimous support but I think the LM was there then and they supported it; but whether it was unanimous I couldn't tell you, but apparently it passed both Houses.

Yes. Well, when you started off, people wanted to reserve all this power for the Legislative Council, didn't they?

Well, the LCL did, yes. They certainly amended and rejected quite a lot of legislation, obstructed it, which we wanted to put through. So you might put through an act or amendment to an act but you'd only get part of it through, but you had to accept that.

And the Labor Party representation in the Legislative Council just grew and grew, didn't it?

Well, it was originally out of twenty we only had four Members, and there were five regions. And then gradually, through putting people on the roll, we built it up to six; and then, in a subsequent election, I think we ended up with ten and then we were sort of – I think that the LCL got concerned about the fact that we were building up our numbers there, and of course that's what we'd hoped to do; and then subsequently abolish the Legislative Council. But of course, in the meantime, in the Lower House it was agreed that we would support a referendum for the abolition of the Legislative Council, and subsequently that went into law, I presume it's still there.

And what was that law? I'm not familiar with that.

Well, that if the Legislative Council was to be abolished, you had to have a referendum of the people to abolish it.

But it hasn't been abolished, so ---.

No, it hasn't been abolished. But I'm saying that I don't know whether that law still stands, whether it's still on the statutes, I couldn't say. But even if you had a referendum, you can't be sure what would happen.

That's right, which way people would vote on that.

Because lots of people don't really think that the Legislative Council is important – after all, the Government really sits in the House of Assembly and it's the Minister and people in the House of Assembly who get most of the publicity and people know who they are.

Yes. And Queensland doesn't even have a second House, does it?

No, I think they abolished it in 1920 and they haven't seen the need, even when the Nationals were in power, to reconstitute it.

So I'm just thinking, is there any other things that you wanted to say about your time in Parliament?

Well, I can say this: that unless you're dedicated I wouldn't suggest that people take it on. Because when I first got elected, as I said, originally I would have done the job for nothing and I didn't even know (laughs) what salary a person received. But after a while you realise that you've got to have money to continue, because you are expected and liked to be patron, be asked to be patron of various organisations, and I found that I had to get a whole new wardrobe of clothes, I had to get an overdraft at the bank to buy a car, and I had to get a part-time housekeeper. And also (laughs) I had to get some new furniture for my house because originally, you see, the office was in my house and sometimes I had a little waiting room there but there were too many people so we had to put them in the sitting room, if you know what I mean, and I had to get better furniture. So what I'm saying is – and there's long hours, quite often I'd work an average, I'd reckon, of seventy hours a week, and sometimes more, and I was pleased to do that because everything I did I felt I was making a contribution to the electorate and to the people that lived there; but what I'm saying

is it becomes very tiring after a while and I think that you've got to be really dedicated if you're going to make a success of it. And that applies to the Liberal Members – well, they're not LCL now, they're Liberal Members – as well, because I feel while I was there I know people criticised Members of Parliament but I think it's unjust because it doesn't matter what political party you represent, I found all the Members did their best, as they saw it, for their constituents and for their party.

And when we think of Don, he was looking after his electorate and – – –.

Well, it was difficult. See, probably Gretel helped him quite a lot because he couldn't be there all the time, so I think she made a great contribution to his life and I suppose his children probably helped, too, as they got older.

So if your involvement – you were closely involved with him in that first election campaign, and so you were on the State Executive of the Labor Party with him for, what, ten years –

Yes.

– and also around parliamentary matters.

Parliamentary?

Yes, parliamentary – in Parliament you were also close to Don.

Yes. So I saw him, not every day, but certainly a great number of days during every year. And I've got a great admiration for him. I think that he helped to make this State what it is now: a place to be proud to live in. And people want to live here, and that did happen at the time we were in government, that some people shifted here because they felt our lifestyle was improving and so they were glad to come to the State.

And were some of the reforms that he came up with that members of the Party found difficult to take on, or very controversial?

Well, I suppose probably the most controversial one of course is always – still is – is to do with uranium mining. But that wasn't something that we really had to deal with while I was there. I mean, Don did go overseas and make enquiries about whether it was safe to dispose of the waste, but we really didn't have to make a decision on that because it just didn't come up in our time. But it's something that

people in the Party have different views about. And still have; the Federal Conference is coming off shortly, and that's going to be one thing that's going to be discussed.

It certainly is, it certainly is. And which people can be quite divided over, some of those sort of things.

Yes, well, I think that's going to remain, because people are entitled to their views. I think as long as it's not possible to dispose of the waste safely I think those different views will continue.

Indeed. And some of the things that Don did, like the wearing of the pink shorts, how was that received in your electorate?

It didn't have any effect whatsoever. I can see him now, coming into Parliament in those pink shorts. But he only wore them once. I think he made a statement by it and then after that people felt they could all wear shorts to different occasions if they wanted to. (laughter)

So were there any other things that you felt you wanted to say about Don? You mentioned that you felt that his health was affected by this very heavy workload that he had.

Yes. Apparently that showed up a couple of years before he finally resigned, but he kept going – I suppose he thought that he could overcome it, but he didn't.

Well, I might turn that off now.

Now, you wanted to have a look at all those books.

I'd love to if I could.

Yes, I've got them all here.

Would you be happy if we left this on? Because sometimes when we look at the books it sparks a memory or might spark a question in me. Shall I come up to the table, would that be better?

What these are, these three books here, they're questions that I asked in Parliament, you see? Over the period that I was there, I'd put in the question and the answer. See, sometimes I might get an answer in writing; I might ask a question and subsequently I might get a letter from the Minister rather than he gave an answer in Parliament. So I've got three books on those.

And I notice you've got who you sent them to, so perhaps who asked, who was concerned about them.

Yes, that's right. The question had to be to the appropriate Minister, you see.

Yes. And this is -- --?

And then underneath I'd write who I sent a copy of that to, that question and answer.

So people who'd been concerned about that.

Yes, that's right.

Maybe sometimes they were the one that raise it with you.

Yes, that's right – they might have raised it with me, or they might have been secretary of an organisation, or might have been president of the school committee or the welfare club, you know. Whoever I felt was appropriate I'd send it to.

And some of these, that way of dealing with issues in your electorate, was that something that you developed or that was common, of sending things out, or I think last week you said making a little newsletter?

I don't know whether the others did the same or not, but that's what I did. (handles documents) This is just, I've got a book that's like articles that appeared in the paper, I used to write a report every week for the local paper at one stage. And then if I got mentioned -- --.

It's a beautiful photograph, Molly, it's a lovely photograph.

If I got mentioned in some article I'd put it in here -- --.

So this was about the question of equal pay for equal work in 1966. (sound of distant jackhammer is audible during silences) So you waited on the Premier: 'A deputation from the Equal Pay Committee waited on the Premier, Mr Walsh, concerning the question of equal pay for equal work.'

I can't remember, but if it's said there I must have done it.

Probably somebody like Jean Pavy would have been involved with that, did you know Jean Pavy?

I don't know her. But anyway, there's pages in here of different things. There used to be a lot of balls and that. But in the end it got so much I just couldn't keep it up.

This is -- --.

My late husband. Good heavens, I forgot about that.

So there was some mention that he might actually stand for Parliament.

Yeah – well, he nominated for a seat but he didn't get preselection.

I don't know what this is. Oh, yes, they put there about me asking all these questions about the Effluent Society, in other words about sewerage, for my electorate.

But in the end I couldn't keep it up and I put less and less in it, but I started off putting a lot in it.

Can I just look through this? Oh, this was a testimonial dinner.

Yes, that was when I got out. There's been a few things since but I haven't kept them all up, which people have asked me to do.

So that's when Barbara Weise became Minister.

Yes, that's right, when she become a Minister.

So you kept getting called out into the electorate.

Oh, people even now still ask me to go to some functions.

Di Gayler, she was a Member for a while, wasn't she?

Yes, for one term.

That's my daughter.

You went and had a trip to China, yes. Ah, yes – so this is the Marie Skitch ? – – –.

They'd got a sort of a Molly Byrne and Marie Skitch – I don't – like a campaign fund, and that was about it.

Yes. And so do you remember Marie Skitch?

No, I never met her. She was still alive, but she was in a home. I should have gone to meet her but I didn't.

Just this one little cutting here. Just trying to get it back in the right place.

Ah, these were just things – you talk about things to do with housing, you see: anything that was in the local paper or anywhere that I felt might be of interest to my

constituency – think it's about the homes cracking – I cut them out, you see, and put them in here.

Right, yes.

See? Lots of them.

So this would be like a resource, too, if you sometimes wanted to use it in your speeches.

That's right, and I could look at this and think, 'Well, I should raise that, or that's of interest, another school' – pages of them, (leafs pages) on and on and on.

So it starts before you're in Parliament, even – '63 I saw it started.

Well, it must have started earlier, then. It goes on and on. I've got a whole book of it. (moves book, leafs pages) That was that one. (moves books) Oh, those two were just on speeches that I gave to local organisations, I'm just starting to put that together, so I don't think you want to look at that so much. But [?where is?] the other one. Oh, yes. Now, this is all election material, what I put out when I first stood. That's to do with houses, and about the hospital. Anyway, that's the other side of it.

So that was quite a – 'Nancy Cato meets Molly Byrne' – the novelist.

'Meet Molly Byrne'.

But there wasn't – this was quite a lavish type of brochure for those days, probably, wasn't it? Quite a lot of very detailed – – –.

I think it was. And this was a written letter I sent out to the constituents, and that was written on my dining room table with Don there and Gretel.

So which is the – is that the original?

That's the original.

And then you had it printed up.

Yes, then it was printed.

Is that the printed version, is it?

Yes. This is my handwriting.

Oh, yes. And so that was sent out just before that first election, was it?

Yes, that's right, it was material that went out before the first election.

And this is the button: 'Playford must go.' Oh, you were lucky, weren't you? Your name was at the top of the card.

Yes, because then it was in alphabetical order. Now, of course, they ballot for the positions.

This is what my opponents put out.

'Social credit'.

And that's Mr Laucke's from the LCL. Can't remember what was said. I must have thought that was something to put out for some reason, I don't know why. (leafs pages) Then I went on ---.

This is 'government apathy over women's rights' – oh, that's an advertisement for a Council of Action for Equal Pay.

Must have been all come out during the – then he went into the Senate, Laucke. And so I've got this, like all the way through: every election I've got all this material, what I put out and what the opponents put out, and some things to do with – oh, that was to do with Chowilla.

And this was another handwritten type of letter – that was also put out in that form, was it, as election material? Yes.

I must have. May 1970, I didn't realise I did that. (laughs)

Oh, yes, it's probably done ---.

Must have. [?More on the other side?], pages of it. All the comments and things. And I don't know why I've got them in here, but I've got some things in here ---.

And so Legislative Council, what year is that?

It would be Anne Levy wouldn't it?

Yes.

Norm Foster, Frank Blevins – he was in the Lower House subsequently, I didn't remember they all stood for the Legislative Council.

Chris Sumner, John –

John Cornwall.

– Terry Hemmings.

Chris Sumner.

Let's see, what year would that be? That's '75. So was that when she got in, about that time, wasn't it?

Yes, Anne got in ten years after me.

So that was then the second woman in Labor?

Yes, she was the second woman on our side. But in the Legislative Council.

And were there any more women from other parties in the Lower House by then, or were you – – –?

No, to date there had been only Joyce Steele, LCL who retired in 1973; later, Jennifer Adamson, Liberal, came in, but I can't remember what year –it was 1977.

Yes. She came from a sort of, not exactly the same area, but a similar sort of area, wasn't she?

Yes, that's right, out in the north-eastern suburbs.

That was Don speaking at the Hindmarsh Building Society.

This was opponents I had and that goes on and on and on, right up to the end.

And so who was the candidate – Des Corcoran, that must be this election: who won your seat in the end? Was this Brian

No, it was Ashenden.

Oh, was it really?

He stood against John Klunder. Here he is, 'Scott Ashenden for Todd'. I can't remember how long he was there, whether he was there for one or two terms.

And so was he following your – oh, no.

This is what he put down but I never got around to putting it in because I've run out of pages.

Oh, that's great material.

I can put a paper ---.

And this is the dinner afterwards, is it?

Yeah.

So what's the caricature of you by Bateup?

I've got that in there if you wanted to see it. I was going to show you the -- that was the questions; who is the one -- oh, that was it: when I first got endorsement my daughter was two. Then when I subsequently -- when I got elected, see there, Jessie was four, and that's Hugh Hudson.

So they all -- 'women who ousted the Whip': now, what is that about?

Well, that was - I beat Mr Laucke and he was the Whip.

Oh, yes. Right. And they always represent you as a housewife.

Yes. (laughs) They put me down as a housewife. Well, I suppose I was inasmuch as I wasn't working for two years.

So you were also involved as a delegate to the United Nations Association.

I might have been at one stage.

President on the Mothers' and Babies' ---.

Mm.

That's fantastic. That's great. Thank you very much for showing me these. Oh, gosh: 'Deb balls'.

Yes. Originally, as I say, they had things like that, had balls, but subsequently they seemed to go out of fashion.

That's right, they certainly did, didn't they. But they were important fundraising things, weren't they?

Oh, yes.

They're really good. And are you going to put in your speeches to community organisations and things like that?

Well, I had them just in a box and I've been sorting them out, I haven't finished yet. I don't say anybody's interested in me keeping them, but still, happen to be there.

Well, I should think that if you have thought of putting these into a public collection I'm sure that the State Library would be very interested.

You think they'd want all these things?

Yes. I actually rang them up to check it out. I said, 'I don't know what Molly wants to do, but if ---.' And I can find out the name of the people in the State Library. It's Diana Honey or – I was going to say Margaret Southcott; June Edwards – June Edwards, would be the people that do this, come out and see people and ---.

Write her name down because I don't expect to die tomorrow, but time's going on (laughs) and I might as well, instead of having them here at my house, I might as well give them to them, I think.

Would you like me to ask them to ring you?

Yes, I think that would be the best thing. And my daughter's coming tomorrow and I'll discuss it with her.

Well, you need to make that decision, obviously, you and your daughter.

And also I've got a lot of photos, which you've probably got anyhow, like of Parliament – have you got those, when we got elected at first and then ---?

No, not necessarily. Did you take in your own camera?

No, the official photos. You'd think they'd have them in there.

I think they'd have them in the State Library probably, but they probably – what they tend to like to do is if you don't mind showing them to them they may say –

They can have a look at them.

– they'd say, 'Oh, yes, we have,' or, 'Could we check ---?'

I can show them to you if you want to look at them.

Yes.

I'll just get them.

Great. Okay, thank you very much. (1:16:02, pause to 1:16:26)

Have a drink in a minute. I'm just in the process of shifting all the furniture because I've got my daughter – I shall sit down again – got my daughter coming tomorrow.

And you said some of the grandchildren were coming.

Yes, I'm going to have five grandchildren here tomorrow night.

Oh, wow.

So I've got to shift the furniture to get them in.

If you want a hand or anything before I go, sometimes – – –.

Oh, no, it's all right, thanks. I'll get that shifted out.

And these grandchildren range from like about one to seventeen.

One to seventeen. (leafs pages) Now, which is this one? Right, that's a subsequent one. This would have been – this would be before when Frank Walsh was the [Premier]. That would be the first one.

Loveday, Corcoran, Bywaters, Hutchens, Walsh, Shard, Dunstan, Bevan, Kneebone' – there you are. So Glen Broomhill was Government Whip.

Was Glen Whip? Yes, he used to be, because I remember he was always ringing me up at my room, because I used to (laughs) go up there and work and he used to ring me up. I always told him –

Say, 'Get down there!'

– I said, 'You always ring me because you know where you can find me!'

You weren't Deputy Whip or anything like that, were you?

No, I never had any position. election 1970.

They seemed to always strategically place you beautifully in the middle –

Yes, (laughs) in the centre.

– in between – and some of the people weren't there, they put their little photographs up the back.

Yes.

What's this photo?

That must have been, I suppose – we had another election in '73, didn't we? That's probably it, I suppose. It hasn't got the date on, though.

It's got Peter Duncan in it, up there. And there's Bannon, a youthful Bannon at the back.

That's just when Gil Langley got made the Speaker, it just shows our side sitting there.

And did you always sit in that seat there?

I usually was there, yes, I think so I could easily get out.

And here's somebody in a safari suit – that's Hudson, isn't it?

Yeah, that's Hugh.

Another safari suit.

There's that Gavin Keneally, I think.

I think early on you were dependent on – you were a dependent on Stott, were you, an Independent, first up, in the first Parliament?

No. Our first Speaker was Lindsay Riches. But then I think it was Hall that was dependent upon Stott.

That was it.

That's all I've got.

And, Molly, after you left Parliament, what did you do then? Have a big holiday, I suppose.

Well, I did, I suppose. But I got put on several boards, *et cetera*. I became a member and latterly Chairperson of the Tea Tree Gully Community Health Service and I was on the Controlled Substances Advisory Council, that was to do with health. And then I got put on, I think they called it the Electricity Reticulation Advisory Committee, to do with the Electricity Trust. They later altered this, then I became Chairperson of that. And then, regrettably, (laughs) I got put on the State Bank Board.

It was a bit of a poisoned chalice in the end.

Yes, it turned out to be that.

How long were you on the Board?

I think about three years. So that part of my life – I was very stressed over all that, I might say. The only reason I feel that I kept going was I never read the newspapers, I didn't look at the television at night. I had to shut all that out of my sight. And for a while I just felt that I was going to end up with nothing, out on the North East Road, just with my mother and my dog. But the reason I kept going was because I knew I was an honest person and I hadn't done anything dishonest.

Of course, yes. And after that ended – – –.

And during that period, too, I went to Flinders University as a mature age student. But I gave it up, actually, I never completed – I was doing an Arts degree, I was getting very good results too – but I gave it up because I got involved in this State Bank business and I had to peruse that many documents, I used to spend weekend after weekend looking at them and I was so stressed I couldn't continue.

Because you felt things weren't going the right way when you were on the Board?

Not really. Not until near the end. Not originally, no.

So was Marcus Clark involved when you first went into the Board?

Yes, he was the Managing Director. But he was appointed before I ever got on the Board. I went on the Board when Don Simmons died and I took his place. But it was customary to have a former Liberal and a former Labor person on the Board, that's how I got put on the Board. And I think they felt – John Bannon appointed me to the Board and I think they felt they were doing me a favour at the time; but it didn't turn out like that, for John or for me.

Before it came to that sticky end, did you find that interesting, being on the Board, and being involved in that sort of work around banking, and reading all those documents? Or is that hard to dissociate that from the end of the Bank?

I think it is.

Not surprising. What year did you stop working with the Bank, then? What year was that?

I couldn't tell you, really. It was about 1991.

Anyway, what I'm trying to say is what did you do after that, Molly?

Because of that – I think I was still on this committee for the Electricity Trust, but, as I say, they altered the name to the Powerline Environment Committee– and I resigned from that, and after that I never got put on anything else.

So in a sense you retired at that point.

Well, I did, because I never – I didn't seek to get on these things in the first place, but I wasn't asked after that. But for a long time it was hard even to talk about it; (laughs) I find it hard now. But it probably was the worst time of my life. Because if you feel that your integrity and character is besmirched – that's how I felt about it, but I couldn't do anything about it: I was there, and I had to take responsibility with the other directors.

And certainly when you were a local Member, as you said, you'd worked very hard all those years where you could possibly assist the constituents with their concerns and they came to your door, so you'd spent a lot of years doing that.

Yes, that's right. But I think time's a great healer –

Yes, it is.

– and now I can talk about it. But I couldn't then; I can't now without feeling pretty sad about it. But I happened to be involved in it. But I think most people have more or less put it behind them now. It occasionally still gets mentioned, I hear it mentioned on the radio and TV sometimes, but most people don't know what it's all about now.

Yes, exactly. And it seemed to be an era, didn't it, with those sorts of things happening in some other States as well.

Yes, that's right, that was it.

Yes, it certainly was. Well, is there anything else that you wanted to say, Molly, thinking back over this career?

I might think of something later and then we can add it to what I've said, but I can't really think of anything else right now. Except I suppose I can say that I was very fortunate to have this experience. I don't know why it happened to me, but it just did.

Yes – I was remembering your reading what your father said: he said something like, ‘Molly, in this life you don’t get offered many things like this.’

No, that’s right. So I was very fortunate, really, I suppose I was in the right place at the right time. It could have been somebody else.

Yes. But also you mentioned that – was it Doris Cameron said to you? – you could make a speech at the drop of a hat.

Yes, that’s right.

Do you ever remember your first speech that you ever made?

No, I can’t. Probably to an ALP Sub-Branch, I should say. I can’t really. I suppose these things happen gradually, don’t they.

Yes. Sometimes you have to stand up and read the minutes and it’s just reading something or whatever, and then it probably grows from there.

Yes, I think so. I think you start off with experience in organisations and it just develops from that, but you don’t really realise it’s developing, it just happens.

I know one thing I was thinking of asking you: did you have any links with Labor women in other States?

Once I got into Parliament I did.

Like with who?

I met Evelyn Barron from the New South Wales Legislative Council, she came over; and I can’t think of her name, Ruby Hutchison, she was a Member over in the Legislative Council in Western Australia. I also met another woman Member, she was in the Queensland Parliament. So I met those three Labor women.

Nowadays there’s things like Emily’s List and Labor Women to sort of really develop networks between these women.

Yes, that’s right, I think there’s more visits and people got to know Members from other States and women who work for the Party, but it didn’t seem to happen much then.

No.

I only met them, say, because they came here or I visited those States, and if I visited a State I usually went to Parliament House and that's how I'd meet some of the Members – not just women, but men too.

So like if you were on a holiday, for example.

Yes, I'd be on a holiday and I'd go and meet them.

And did you ever go to Federal Convention?

Never. I was not on that. Oh, I've been as a visitor, but I was never a delegate.

Yes, you've been as a visitor to Federal Convention – when you were on the State Executive, or – – –?

I can't say exactly when, but I can remember sitting in on a Federal Convention, but it was here in Adelaide; I don't think I went interstate.

And one thing I just wanted to ask you: that period that you were in Parliament was when the Women's Movement was quite influential and busy – looking back, can you see, what great changes did really strike you over those years? Or do you think women's position is much the same still?

I think the Women's Electoral Lobby was quite prominent then and I think they had an influence, too, on some of the legislation. And also I think some of the wives of some of the Members had an influence on their husbands, too. (laughs)

Yes – well, that's the sort of unofficial channel that people don't often notice, do they?

No. (laughs) But I'm sure that did take place.

And Gretel, do you think she had quite a lot of influence on Don?

I couldn't say, really. But I don't doubt that she did, but I never really witnessed it. But she had a very good brain of her own, so I'm sure that she would have given him her opinions on things.

And she was, as you said, important in the Norwood electorate. You said she was important in the Norwood electorate.

Oh, yes, she was very important. And he says that in his book, he gives thanks to Gretel.

I went to her funeral last year, actually.

I missed it because I didn't hear about it until afterwards, unfortunately, or I would have gone.

Yes. All the children were there and the grandchildren, and it was very nice like that. People remembering her and her childhood and her quite remarkable life, really, from when she was born.

Yes.

Well, thank you very much, Molly. But if you think of other things.

Ah, well – I hope it's been useful.

Yes, I'm sure it has.

I'll have a drink now. Also if you wanted any photos of Don I've got boxes of photos – – –.

That would be lovely, actually, they'd love that.

Well, I don't know what they want, but I can show you all those sort of things. I don't know whether all the *men* have got these things! (laughs)

No. Well, some people don't keep things, do they?

No. Well, I've hung onto these things – a lot I suppose I've disposed of, but I had a whole box of various things.

END OF RECORDING.