This is George Lewkowicz for the Don Dunstan Foundation History Project interviewing Dr Bruce Eastick, who was a member of parliament in the early ’70s, became Leader of the Opposition in 1972 and was a member of parliament through to the early ’90s.

Dr Eastick, thanks very much for doing this interview for the Don Dunstan Foundation History Project. Can you just talk briefly about yourself so we have some idea of your educational, employment background and how you got into politics?

I was the elder son of Thomas and Ruby Eastick, born in the home at Colonel Light Gardens or actually on the edge of Colonel Light Gardens, which was known as Reade Park. Locally it was known as ‘Snobsville’ because (laughs) it was a private development, whereas Colonel Light Gardens had been a major government development after the First World War.

I went to Colonel Light Gardens Primary School through to grade seven and then up to Urrbrae Agricultural High School where I went through to Leaving. I had gained a particular interest in agriculture or farming, mainly because my mother’s elder sister was on a farm at Avon in the Lower North here and I’d spent quite a lot of time up there, and hence on to Urrbrae. From Urrbrae I went directly to Roseworthy Agricultural College – still wanting to be a “cocky”, or a farmer – and during the first year at Roseworthy College a team of horses or a number of horses young and old broke into a wheat crop and I was one of a series of students that was called upon by the then College veterinarian, Phil Schinckel, to give a hand to treat the horses and said, ‘That’s for me’. And so, whilst still in the agricultural field, it moved over a little bit.

It was rather interesting that in the evenings we had to swot and a member of the staff would come around and Mr Hickinbotham, who’s Alan Hickinbotham’s father, arrived into the room one night and asked the people who were in the dormitory what they were going to do, and when he said, ‘Eastick, what are you going to do?’ I said, ‘I’m going to do vet science, sir’, ‘Huh. No future in it’. So (laughter) that was that.
Having finished at Roseworthy and having gained a special matriculation for Sydney University, I won a scholarship from the Department of Agriculture to do the five-year veterinary course. Originally it was to be the first year at Adelaide and then the final four years in Sydney. I rationalised that if you were going to do a course you did it in the one spot, and they fortunately came to the party and said, ‘Yes, we’ll let you do that’. The scholarship was worth a hundred pounds for the first year and a hundred and sixty-eight for the second year, plus a trip to Sydney.

**Plus the fees paid, the university fees paid.**

No, no. The hundred pounds or the hundred and sixty-eight pounds, as it turned out, was for everything.

**Everything.**

So there had to be some support from home, obviously. (telephone rings, break in recording)

The entry that I made mention of, or the special matriculation for Sydney University, was the fact that at Urrbrae there was no language other than English and so I didn’t have an Intermediate language, and they undertook to admit me to Sydney University subject to gaining a Roseworthy Diploma of Agriculture with honours, which was a good stimulus to make sure you did well, so I finished up actually with a first-class diploma from Roseworthy and that led into Sydney.

I was able to conclude the course in five years, which was the full term, again with honours, and then a previous graduate the year before having gained permission from the Department of Agriculture to forego three years of direct work with the Department providing he started a rural practice, I undertook to look to go into a rural practice, which comes back to the original farming interest and so forth, rather than direct cats and dogs.

My wife-to-be and I sat down in the last year with a hundred maps of South Australia and the statistical record of where the sheep, horses, pigs, cows were and put a fifteen-mile ring around some thirty-five, thirty-eight places in South Australia.
It came down to – at that stage there were about five rural veterinarians in South Australia – came down to two, Murray Bridge and Gawler, and I rationalised that if anything were to happen to the dairy industry Murray Bridge would be in a lot of trouble, and the thing that happened to the dairy industry in 1956 was the River Murray flood, which resulted in cows going in all directions and I was treating more Murray Bridge cows up in this area than were left in the Murray Bridge area. So Gawler was the one we picked, and at that stage it was basically a rural practice. Then in the 1950s the Government decided to build Elizabeth, and in ’59 I started a sub-practice in Elizabeth with the help of the Housing Trust, so that it wasn’t very long before it was the Elizabeth end was the tail that was wagging the dog. And that was greatly enhanced by the number of English people who were out here in the RAF\(^1\) and brought their habits, which weren’t a particular feature of the Australian public in those days; but that’s all in retrospect. So that’s where I finished up.

I found myself in both high school and again at Roseworthy College and again at the University of Sydney being drafted into semi-leadership roles as year rep or as a member of the Sydney University Student Representative Council, and I suppose that in one sense leads on to the other roles that one is called upon to take in life. You’ve set a pattern and people are aware of what you’ve done and come along and say, ‘Will you?’ And if you’re foolish enough you don’t say no. (laughs)

Right, yes.

I say that in due regard. But it’s a little bit like retirement; retirement is a myth. But I did read in a journal just after I supposedly retired from Parliament, ‘Why is it that in retirement so many people enjoy using my leisure?’ It’s because you let them.

That’s right, yes. Interesting.

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\(^1\) RAF – Royal Air Force.
And so it goes on. And, having had that role and joining Rotary when it started here in Gawler in 1954, again involvement in the community, which led to a period of time as a councillor for the Willaston Ward and then on into the mayor role.

Late 1969/70 there was a redrafting of all of the electoral boundaries in South Australia with an increase from thirty-nine to forty-seven members, and Gawler, which was held by Jack Clark at that time, went from Gawler all the way down to Pooraka. Gawler was hived off and went with a number of the northern areas. I had places like Saddleworth, Kapunda, parts of the Barossa Valley, down as far as Kersbrook, and it was a new game; and again, having been involved in community activities and having been a member – not an activist, as such, but as a member of the Liberal Party, or LCL\(^2\) as it was at that stage – there was a recommendation, ‘What about it?’

**Who made this recommendation, was it the local group or the State office?**

Our local groups and also people in and around the Saddleworth and Kapunda area, who were not overly happy with their then member, who happened to be a Liberal member but he was a single person and the interest wasn’t quite as direct as some people believed it ought to have been and had been previously. So I went to a preselection ballot against the sitting member in 1970 and was the successful person.

It’s rather interesting that the Labor Party put up Brian Chatterton –

**That’s right, yes.**

– who was living out at Lyndoch at that stage as the person that was going to win Light, and on the night of the election the last seat which was conceded was Light. We knew it was right earlier than the pundits at the radio station, by virtue of the votes that had come in from Gawler; they were waiting for the Gawler boxes to be declared; and I think of the then five Gawler or Gawler-related seats I had three of them and did reasonably well in the other two. So with about a fifty-two per cent of

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\(^2\) LCL – Liberal and Country League.
tally – – –. There were three people in the election: there was a person who stood as an independent from down on Gawler Blocks, as it was on those days. Rather interestingly, his sister-in-law became my electorate secretary for seventeen years. (laughs)

What was her name?

Gerlach. He was Eric Gerlach, and he stood on a number of occasions, always with a fairly narrow vote.

So he was minority, if you like, or independent.

Yes, he didn’t quite know what he wanted.

Can you remember some of the issues at the time?

Well, the very big one at the time was the Dartmouth Dam and Chowilla, and the reason that the election was called in 1970 ahead of time was because Tom Stott, the independent, had withdrawn support for the then Hall Government and it wasn’t a particularly successful campaign fighting for a water issue in the middle of winter.

I see, right.

It was in May, late May, and people were not really prepared to worry too much about a water argument which they didn’t know much about as between Dartmouth and Chowilla. It was very apparent from early stages that Chowilla was a very, very questionable proposition. It was going to have waves up to six metres on it, it was going to have a tremendous evaporation problem, *et cetera, et cetera*, but with Tom Stott wanting it in his bailiwick he refused and so Hall was forced into an early election, and it was fought almost entirely on [that] basis. It also was associated in some part with the fact that Hall had won the government in 1968 with the help of Stott, thwarting Don Dunstan, who’d taken over from Frank Walsh and who’d been a Premier for a short period of time. So that was the basic issue and bread-and-butter things were not of a great deal of interest.
Were there any particular issues you were – notwithstanding you didn’t use them in the campaign – that you were wanting to get brought up in the campaign or in the Party and then brought into Parliament?

Well, I think the fact that it had gone from a basically urban seat to a very mixed seat with a lot of agriculturalists. Having been involved with those people for a number of years as their veterinarian, having been known as somebody who worked in the community and with the community, there was a distinct advantage in that and it was reflected in the fact that Gawler, which had been rock-solid Labor for many, many years, were dealing with somebody who was one of theirs.

That’s interesting, yes.

I’m quite sure from comment which was made at the time and the facts that later in Gawler, having won all the boxes and finishing up with up to sixty-five per cent at stages, that people had come to respect that it was a doer, not a gunnabe.

Fair enough, they knew you. Yes, that’s interesting. And what was the feeling when you’d lost the election? This was your first time as a member of parliament and you joined the opposition party, what was the feeling at the time, if you can remember that?

The feeling was one of general concern, but it was a new era, there were more members, there was a much smaller demand upon people living in the urban areas. For example, in those early years, I think from memory I was representing something like twenty-nine schools – high schools and small schools, fifteens, twenties and so forth – whereas the urban people, because their numbers were much less than they had been in the past, might have had five schools all told.

This was a redistribution.

Redistribution completely, and the demands upon those people were somewhat different to what it was in the more rural areas.

Yes, so the population was evening out but the demands were still pretty high in the country.
Yes. In those first few years after redistribution the country seats did have a marginal benefit, but that was changed at a later stage when today it’s plus or minus ten per cent of the mean. And, for example, Graham Gunn who went in at the same time as I did representing the Western Australian, Northern Territory, Queensland and New South Wales border, is now taken over down as far as Kapunda which used to be part of mine with two other electorates in between him.

That’s because the urban population’s up – – –.

Because the urban population has grown. The numbers have stayed the same, forty-seven. You divide forty-seven into the total, plus or minus 10 per cent, and you’ve seen the contraction of the number of seats which were available for country-related people.

Can you remember some of the early discussions when you became an MP, like the Party regrouping, the Liberal–Country Party, and ‘What are we going to do now?’, the sort of issues and approaches you ought to take to – – –?

I think one of the things which in retrospect is more a feature of the changing circumstances, that the Party became represented by a number of professional people rather than direct country people. People with a country perspective but, for example, the Member for Flinders, Port Lincoln, was a pharmacist; the Member for the Barossa was a schoolteacher.

I see, yes.

The Member for Light was a veterinary surgeon. And David Tonkin, who was another one of the early ones, was a medico or an optometrist, ophthalmologist. And some of the debate which took place in that subsequent period reflected a variance of opinion on what had been perhaps a narrower view in the past, one which undoubtedly would have reflected back to the amalgamation of the Liberal Party and the Country Party back in the ’30s, where there was a coming together of mutual interest. There was no animosity to Country Party people as such, but there was more debate which upset the leader at the time in some respect, who was fairly autocratic in his attitude.
Steele Hall.

Steele Hall. And you don’t go a long way as an autocrat with people who have been in business or who have conducted community professional activity, *et cetera, et cetera*, and really his walking away in 1972 was because he misread the real purpose of debate; but that’s another issue altogether.

So what were – you’ve not only got the Lower House but also the Legislative Council which had, in some people’s views, I don’t know how many, was seen as a sort of conservative-dominated — — — —.

Well, the figure up there was sixteen to four and had been for years, and based on five different groups of five by four each, a longer period of time, and only two of the five were urban – three of the five were virtually rural, albeit they came in a little bit close to urban – and a lot of the argument that I think developed over time, some saw that as a relic of the old Country days as opposed to a broader outlook.

So was there discussion about, ‘Well, how do we look after the interests of the country people but at the same time we’ve got to get back into government so we’ve got to get the urban people on-side?’ Was that going on?

Some of that, and just a change of attitude to ‘We’ve always done it this way’. There’s a time when you’ve got to say, ‘Well, you’ve done it that way; is there another way?’ And some of the debate that took place, which was upsetting to Steele, was that his – his authority wasn’t under attack *per se*; his ability to listen to reason was the thing that was under attack, and there’s a subtle difference there.

So he had an idea in his head and he wasn’t listening to others.

Yes. This is it. Decisions without consultation or without recognition of perhaps there is another way.

And what was he saying that was a concern that you can recall? Like he had his views; what actually were they, if you can remember them?

I would say that it demonstrated in some measure almost a hatred of Dunstan, which reflected an inability to see things in total. There were some exchanges across the floor of the House at times which made a number of people wince.
I see. Was this after the election or when he was Premier?

When he went back into Leader of the Opposition and Don Dunstan came back in as [Premier]. I mean, Don was an unusual person with many attributes, but the animosity that Steele seemed to develop was not always helpful.

Right – in what sense? Getting things sorted out?

Trying to denigrate the person, as opposed to saying, ‘Well, because you’ve said that, I’ll say this’. And I would like to think back on my own time that – and I think I can demonstrate that later – that you respect what has been proposed when it is well-argued and is obvious; you seek to change on the edges where improvements can be made. A typical example of that is that quite early in the piece, because I was involved in local government I was particularly interested in any legislation that came up about local government, and I not infrequently, with the permission of the party room, would put forward amendments to legislation that was before us, and invariably they were refused. Fifteen months later the legislation came back in and right in the middle of it was one or two of the issues. I remember going to Tom Casey in relation to an agricultural issue one day. I said, ‘Hey, that’s what I proposed’. He said, ‘We thought it was okay at the time, but we had to kick it around amongst the departments to make sure that it didn’t do this there and something else somewhere else. So’, he said, ‘you got your way’. ‘Yeah,’ I said, ‘but not with my name.’ (laughs)

Interesting, yes. Won’t give you any credit, yes.

I say that against the background that, on reflection of twenty-three and a half years in Parliament, one can be thankful and happy that you saw a number of things occur which you had initiated, even though they weren’t necessarily in your own hand, some things which were put up as amendments were accepted on the spot, so that you were seeking to do the best you could for the community as a whole. But of the twenty-three and a half years that I was in Parliament I was only ever once in a government of my persuasion, and on that occasion I sat in the middle. (laughter)
As Speaker, yes. You had to be even-handed.

But, you know, in select committees and so forth: I sat on many select committees on a number of different subjects, and there was always the possibility in that circumstance to see some quite vital changes to legislation by productive argument in the committee stage and being able to identify, whereas, coming back to what I was saying earlier on, Steele could never see a compromise.

I see. That’s interesting.

Now, others might have seen him in a different way, but talking with others at the time that was one of the issues that occurred. When he resigned, it was –

So that’s resigned from the LCL?

– from the LCL and as Leader of the Opposition –

Right, and he became Leader of the Liberal Movement?

– well, that followed on a wee bit later –

That followed – right, okay.

– the party room had decided that there was a need to look at a changing circumstance of how you conducted yourself in government. It wasn’t, ‘We will do it this way’; it was, ‘Let’s have a look at the ways in which the whole management is taking place here, there and somewhere else and let’s pick their eyes out and gain the benefits of any change’. The real issue so far as Steele was concerned is that he saw that he was not going to be, alone, able to select his cabinet.

I see, yes.

Whereas a number of the Liberal Parties interstate had moved away from the fact of the Premier having absolute control. There was a discussion and some of his and some of the others’ in the party room. He wouldn’t tolerate there being any further debate on that system and threatened to go if it went further. There were twenty of us in the party room. There was a vote of I think I’m correct in saying twelve to eight, that, ‘Let’s have a look at it’, and he spat the dummy. He had already written a
resignation, eight days before he actually resigned, because there was to have been
debate on the issue on a particular day, there was a very heavy program that
particular day, which meant the party room had to look at ways and means of how
they were going to approach the day’s or the week’s program, so it was staved off;
but all he did was brought back the same one a week later and threw it on the table
and walked out. And a number of people went to him and said, ‘Don’t be so
foolish’, but he got up in the House an hour later and besmirched nearly everybody
of his mates, and that’s all in the Hansard, on 15th March 1972.

How many people went with him, can you remember that?

There were seven.

Yes, seven went, right.

Seven went with him.

And they were these – – –.

Eight were going to say, ‘Well, look, let’s think about this a bit further’, but there
were twelve – and, as I say, a number of these people were professional people
who’d been used to, and former cockies, who could see the need to look forward.
But when it came to the actual people who stood firmly behind him there were seven,
and one notable one of those was the person who was his deputy as Deputy Leader
who, by not resigning, became my Deputy Leader, who joined him and also split off
into, a few weeks later, the Liberal Movement.

I see.

There was only one country person who went with Hall, and that was John Carnie
from Flinders, and John lost his seat at the 1973 election because he was making out
to be a true country member of Port Lincoln and the area and he was running hand-
in-hand with Hall in the city area, and the newspapers were fairly fulsome of what
was taking place. He completely misread the fact that what he was doing in one
place was well-known in another place, and the proof of the pudding’s in the eating;
he just completely misread what he could do and how he could do it. He had a small group of people over at Tumby Bay and so forth that were supporting him who couldn’t see right from wrong. I make that comment in a broad sense. And he opened the door and Peter Blacker, the Country Party person, came in.

Just getting back to Steele Hall and his approach to the politics of the time, where did the Upper House come into it? Did he see them as the ‘people up there’ who were their bloc or what?

He had a real gripe with Ren DeGaris.

That’s right, yes.

And the total of the reason for the gripe is something which I’m not aware of, it took place before I went in. Ren was a deep-thinking person who didn’t take idle comment well, he thought things through, and he had a lot of support from other members. But there was a suggestion that in government during the ’68–70 period there’d been one occasion when he was the Acting Premier and that he’d done something which Hall didn’t like. Others would have to tell you that were around at that time, and there are not a lot of them, (laughs) as to what the real gravamen of the action was.

What is interesting is, notwithstanding the LCL had the majority in the Upper House, there’s still a lot of legislation going through when you look at the statutes.

Yes.

Do you know how that worked, in the sense of you had what the Labor Party would see as the conservatives or the LCL, but they managed to negotiate these amendments and get a lot of legislation through.

The general interest of the people in the Upper House was to retain the benefit which saw sixteen out of twenty. The fact of there being open franchise for everybody into the Legislative Council was a very divisive issue. Steele had made up his mind that everybody should have a chance and he went out on a limb and made some statements which were ahead of any confirmation of agreement by people in the Upper, and it wasn’t only Ren DeGaris that was concerned about having been left
high and dry. Don Dunstan used it very effectively in the period when he sought to change the franchise of the Upper House and it left Ren DeGaris and some of these others without a leg to stand on, really, because Don threatened a double dissolution if the changed factors in be late ’73, ’74 didn’t go through, so in essence the role of the Legislative Council in its then form disappeared by that change which Don was able to organise. And the changing scene in the Upper House at that stage was quite dramatic because you suddenly didn’t have sixteen to four; you had figures getting closer to perhaps twelve to eight and things of that nature. Then there was an increase in the number from twenty to twenty-two. Still maintained right through has been the fact that there’s an eight-year term – I think on reflection it was probably six years, six initially, and then when the lower house changed to a four year term the upper house term changed to eight years as only half the upper house came up for re-election at each House of Assembly election.

I see, yes.

But yes, and the electorate for the election of the Legislative Council was the whole of the State. So there were quite dramatic changes there and Steele, having made announcements – – –. For example, the increase in the number of electorates from thirty-nine to forty-seven or a figure of something of that nature, there might have been a slight variation in what was intended, was made by Steele without the knowledge of a number of the people in the Upper House, so if there was division it was because of.

And do you know whether anybody was advising him on the calculations that were required just to work out the chances of winning from Don?

I don’t know what the score was then. I had very little – very, very little to do with the Parliament as such or the people in it. I had more to do with Jack Clark, who was the member here, because both Jack and I were in positions in the town, he as the member and I as the mayor, and in actual fact on the day of the election, on 30th May 1970, Jack and I were driven up Murray Street, Gawler, in a horse and buggy, up as far as the Bushman Hotel and then back down to the Institute, because it was the one
hundredth anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of the Gawler Institute. Later that night, Jack was the Member for Elizabeth and I was the Member for Light. (laughs) And our families – my eldest son and Jack’s son – were in Gawler High School together and great mates and so forth. Just the measure of what can happen. Some people – can I go back and put it in a slightly different way?

Sure, yes.

1980 I had the opportunity while I was Speaker to go to the House of Commons, the English parliament, for just on a month. It was a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association arrangement where there were twenty-six members of parliaments from the Commonwealth. We had them from the islands off of USA –

The Caribbean?

– Caribbean, we had them from Bangladesh, we had them from Hong Kong, we had them from South Africa, *et cetera, et cetera*. There were twenty-six of us. And one of the persons who looked after us quite well, a senior person, had been the Minister of Education in Harold Wilson’s Parliament, and he told the story of having gone home to his – Ernest Armstrong was his name – he told the story of having gone home one weekend when he was the Minister of Education and no sooner put his tail on the seat in his office and the three most important people of his electorate committee through the door castigating him because a photograph in the local paper that particular week was of him, a headmaster and a Tory. There was a school opened the previous weekend on the boundary between the two. And they were all smiling at one another. ‘Why are you – – –? How dare you smile in the presence of your enemy?’ He was a chappie about six-foot-six and I reckon he almost went to seven feet when he said, ‘I had great delight in saying to them, “I beg your pardon. My political enemies sit behind me. My adversaries sit opposite me.”’ (laughter)

Fair enough. That’s a good way to think about it.

And how true that is, on both sides of the political scene – the number of people that have been deposed, *et cetera, et cetera*. But I’ve never forgotten that as an example
of the fact that you can have a great rapport with somebody. You don’t discuss party politics *per se*. But the point I was going to make: Jack walked across the chamber one afternoon when I was still a backbencher and he said, ‘Bruce, Michael’s going to go for a job. Would you care to write him a reference?’ No trouble at all.

**Good.**

And so my reference, as a Lib, but as a person, was being given to the son of an opponent— —. Andrew Dunstan and my elder son shared a tent on Kangaroo Island before I ever went into Parliament, one of these school holiday things, and the younger son – and I can’t think what his younger son’s –

**Paul.**

– Paul. Paul was a great mate of a child of a friend of mine, who was a student at Roseworthy College with me. Paul and this other person’s son quite often met out in the country. This former colleague was calling in home one day and he said, ‘We’re calling in to see a Lib’, and Paul said, ‘I’m Joe Blow’. (laughter)

**Anonymous.** Just looking at the Party and the broader franchise, there was the reduction of the variation in the size of the populations for seats and then the Upper House. What was the LCL’s approach to all of this? Okay, well, that’s all happened; now what do we do? Is it development of good policies, or thinking about the best electoral tactics to get people to support the party?

There was a group of people who’d been around the system for a long, long time who decided that the LCL was the LCL, it had been formulated in 1932 or thereabouts and it ought to stay as it was, albeit that it was accepted by all the other states and it was part and parcel of the Liberal Council of Australia. After Hall resigned in 1972 and the Liberal Movement started up a few weeks later, there was a claim that the Liberal Movement was the true Liberal Party and the LCL was – and over a period of some months, in fact, it was in late ’73, early ’74, that the LCL decided to change its name to the Liberal Party of South Australia. It was a matter of talking it through. It was a matter of placating some long-held views with reality. And the fact that the Liberal Movement wasn’t the Liberal Party *per se* was fairly
well identified in the 1973 election. It was a very difficult election to go into. I’d been in Parliament only less than two years when I became the Leader of the Opposition. We had an election in ’73 almost twelve months after the fact that I’d gone in. You’d had the swell and the arguments and the newspapers were full of the arguments and claims and counterclaims that were going on, and the seven people that were with Hall – that’s Hall and Millhouse and others – that held out Liberal Movement tickets and/or both tickets, Millhouse only putting out Liberal Movement tickets, even though he was the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party – that’s another issue altogether – come the election, the people who were on an LM ticket, their vote went down. Didn’t say that the Liberal Party vote *per se* went down because it went slightly differently. But Carnie lost his seat. Millhouse, because of his profile and the length of time he’d been there, held his position. Hall had troubles in regaining the percentage that he’d had in the past. And the candidates who were going to do great things failed miserably. You get the likes of Heine Becker, John Mathwin and so forth: they were going to do all manner of things. The candidates who’d stood up and were running against Liberal candidates failed miserably, and I remember saying at the radio studio to somebody that confronted me – he said, ‘Are you happy now?’ – I said, ‘*You* shouldn’t be happy because where are all the votes you were going to get?’ And almost immediately after that, of course, the Liberal Movement was declared null and void so far as the Liberal Party was concerned, and that was the impetus to then start the discussions which saw the LCL code go and a couple of meetings, and I stood up on the platform out at Unley and congratulated everybody for the maturity that they’d shown saying. ‘Now let’s move on.’

**And what happened to the Liberal Movement vote, it went back to the LCL?**

They picked up their position. One of the other problems which arose in the 1973 election which wasn’t helpful is that three of the longstanding members of the Party who had lost their interest in Steele and were part and parcel of those that voted against him not allowing the discussion to take place resigned – you got Joyce Steele, David Brookman and Jim Ferguson, Alan Ferguson’s father, those three people had
been in Parliament for quite some time – and so that you had new candidates in some of those seats. Joyce Steele’s, for instance, was where Dean Brown went in. David Brookman’s was where Ted Chapman went in. And in the case of Jim Ferguson, Steele changed his seat and took over Jim Ferguson’s seat, because he’d been part and parcel of that area and he had a number of people who were very much active in the Liberal Movement. But an examination of the figures of 1973 was quite interesting as to what happened to those that thought they could be one thing in one place and one in another.

Was there any interaction with the National Liberal Party at all, like were they telling or advising the local, the South Australian Party?

At the early stages they said, ‘Grow up’. That’s paraphrasing it. As they become more aware of the issues and the nature of issues they were supportive of the traditional Party and quite ecstatic when it changed its name but weren’t forcing the issue, they were leaving it to the State. Southey, who was the Federal President at the time, found it a little difficult to rationalise on what was taking place until he became more aware of what was going on. Almost immediately after the ’73 election, of course, those who had held out the dual tickets abandoned – there was Tom …., there was John Coombe, there was Mathwin, there was Heine Becker. Heine bailed out quite early, he could see what was happening. So that the Movement then became the Democrats a wee bit later on. Then Steele, of course, went off to the Senate for a while and then he resigned that to run for – – –.

You were elected as Leader of the Opposition on the 16th March 1972. How did that come about, why were you selected?

I don’t know. (laughter) I can’t honestly say whether there was any second nomination. I know there’d been a lot of discussion taking place in the intervening period between Hall going – – –. It wasn’t of my volition, in the sense of going out canvassing people; I was requested if I was nominated would I stand, and I said, ‘Under the circumstance, yes’. And I think I’m correct in saying that when nominations were called of the nineteen people – nineteen because Hall didn’t attend
– that I was the only nomination. It possibly reflected, if I can say it without any ego whatsoever, because I’d been able to make a contribution from the backbench with debate.

**So you weren’t even in the Shadow Cabinet at the time?**

No.

No, really?

The Shadow Cabinet, well, there was no such thing as a Shadow Cabinet. There were shadow advisers, and they were the previous Ministers of the Hall ’68–70 election. There was John Coombe and David Brookman and so forth, and Ren DeGaris was a shadow, was retaining that role as well. I introduced the Shadow Cabinet situation in 1975, which has applied ever since. And it was because again reflecting back on circumstances leading up to the 15th March that decisions were being made and we were told what we were going to agree to, without any debate, whereas as soon as I went in as Leader of the Opposition I created a series of leaders of seven groups and apportioned everybody to those so that they were able to feed back in and then we’d discuss it at the – – –.

**Was this your idea or somebody was advising you about it?**

Yes.

Your idea only?

Yes.

Right, interesting. Did these advisers and leaders come to you and say – this is after you’d been elected – ‘This is what we need to do in the next foreseeable period’?

Well, they were given responsibility for various pieces of legislation. They were asked to formulate thoughts and so forth. And, as I say, with the other things running in the background there was not a lot of ability to – we did make changes; I’ve got a copy of my 1973 electorate speech, if that’s of any value to anybody at any time.
Yes, will be, yes.

It’d be on the record somewhere. It made a number of statements that we believed in and which we would be pursuing. The fact of maintaining the position of the most with only the one loss – and in fact we gained another one, we got Peter Arnold back in Chaffey.

Yes, that’s right.

Peter Arnold had lost his seat in 1970, being in the Riverland and so forth and going for the Dartmouth as opposed to Chowilla. Peter came back in 1973, so that we lost Carnie and gained Peter. But from that point on there was a greater harmony amongst the people and there was a much more extensive policy speech made at the 1975 election, and it’s a fact of life that it was the 1975 election we finished up with more votes than the Labor Party. I went into John Olsen in 1989, I said, ‘John, I can sympathise with you. You got more votes than the Labor Party’. (break in recording)

In both cases, of course, the Liberal Party having won more votes, the Labor Party was put into government by virtue of independents.

Yes – back to the future, as they say.

Exactly, yes. (laughter) It was Ted Connelly in my case; it was Normie Peterson in the case of John.

Yes, Norm Peterson. It’s interesting. So what did you see as your role as Leader of the Opposition?

Well, it was one which has been explained by other people from time to time as a very difficult one of trying to draw the forces together to heal wounds, to identify to people that there was a future, albeit that other things were happening around them, and in great measure by ’75 it had come to be, albeit that if you’ve lost two elections people sometimes then start to look elsewhere, and they did. It’s once again one of the old adages that you never believe the intention of anybody other than those that tell you they’re not going to support you.
Right, yes.

(laughter) And can I say after ’75 I was going to retain the position, but I didn’t.

So what happened there, was there a vote?

Always post-election there’s a spill.

Stayed open, a spill, okay.

A post-election meeting was called, all positions vacant, and I was one short against David Tonkin.

He didn’t do so well in ’77.

Exactly, yes.

And who did the policy work? Well, there are two bits to this: one is when the Labor Party was producing its legislative proposals, and then your own policy thinking and development, your own, by you and the rest of the Party. How did that actually work? You had these advisers. At this stage, was there a party office that was helping out?

There was a Policy Department within the Party to provide it. It’s always been a feature of the Liberal Party – or the LCL, as it was at that stage – that the final decision on any policy is not dictated from headquarters but is agreed by the members of parliament. Information and recommendation and so forth is welcomed, there’s no argument about that, but the reality of presentation and what can be achieved this time as opposed perhaps to another time has always rested with the Party. Members of the executive – in ’73 I had what amounted to an executive, albeit that they had responsibilities, and we all met as a group for any proposition that was put up – was a de facto in one way Shadow Cabinet, albeit that they didn’t always lead the debate; various others would lead the debate when it come. But it was a collective of information from elsewhere. It was discussion with colleagues interstate.
One of the great virtues of the system has been something which started with
Lyell McEwin and Jim Heaslip many, many years ago was the Interparliamentary
Bowling Carnival.

I see.

Commonwealth weren’t allowed. (laughter) And that was held once a year –

This is the states.

– in rotation. And on the bowling green and the other activities which took place on
your bus trip and so forth, opportunity existed to sound out from both sides of
Parliament what they were doing in this State and how they were doing it and how
they were achieving it and so forth, and quite a number of the ideas which came
forward for policy came out of a recognition and a hands-on knowledge. The fact
that you could go back home and say, ‘Well, that wasn’t a bad idea. What can I do
more?’ You get on the telephone, you knew who was on the other end. It wasn’t
just a voice, it was a person. Now, ministers get that advantage in ministerial
conference and so forth; but here was a case where people who might have been ex-
ministers or who were executives’ members and so forth, but also everybody else,
had the opportunity if they were wanting to bowl. And a great number of the
changes which were proposed over time came out of that sort of contact.

Was there any polling that was done at the time or was that – like now there’s
opinion polls – – –. Can you recall?

Not to the degree that is undertaken at the present moment.

So ..... soundings, right. And who was the best parliamentary tactician on your
side in the sense of, ‘This is what we ought to do from day to day or week to week’?
Was there a manager?

Not always the same individual. There was an airing of thoughts. There was always
a meeting of a small group before Question Time as to what’s happened today,
what’s in the papers or what have we picked up, ‘Does Joe Blow know any more
than we know?’, and go and grab him and find out. John Coombe, who was
subsequently my deputy between ’73 and ’75, was quite an astute person in relation to parliamentary process – he’d been in local government, he’d been in business and so forth – and he could tease out. Another person who had a very, very keen sense of understanding of issues from the Upper House was Ross Story.

Ross Story, yes.

I wouldn’t pick one individual. I welcomed the input from a number of people in different capacities at different times.

So you would, if Don Dunstan was introducing something or making some sort of a speech that had to be responded to, was that you, the lead person, in response to what he was doing as Premier?

Mainly. But depending upon the subject matter. It was making use of the skills of the individuals as I saw them, or as others had related them to me. It wasn’t hogging the limelight totally. If somebody had a better understanding of what was being argued, away they’d go. And the important thing was to make sure that everybody had something to do in the Parliament; idle fingers ….

That’s right.

So that you’d try to make quite sure that somebody just didn’t sit on a seat, that if they had an expertise or an understanding in one area that they were slotted in as an integral part of the debate on a particular issue.

But was there anybody seen as – ‘Well, Dunstan, we know he’s getting up and we’ll get somebody really prepared to take him on and deflate his –’, I guess, ‘– charisma’, as some people saw it, or ability to perform in Parliament?

In the early days, before I became Leader and subsequent, while he was still there, Hall and Millhouse, with no authority of mine per se, would enter into that. We had others – John Mathwin was one – who could quite often throw some words across the table that irked him. But my aim never was to seek confrontation as such, and when Don resigned in 1979 I was castigated in the local newspapers, particularly by Eric Franklin I think it was, who was in The Advertiser at the time, by having stood up after he’d announced his retirement and in essence thanked him for his input to
the State and saying that leader to leader there’d never been a situation where there had been a breakdown in confidence.

**Interesting.**

For example, Don came to me ahead of Monarto – no, after he’d announced Monarto, but there was to be a Commissioner – Don came to me and said, ‘It’s been suggested that So-and-so might be invited; would you have any concerns?’ I said, ‘Personally, no’. He said, ‘It’s confidential at the moment because he hasn’t been announced’, and so forth. About three days later the newspaper had a comment and I went straight into Don’s office. I said, ‘Don, it’s out’. He said, ‘Yeah, we know where it came from’. I said, ‘I just wanted to make quite sure that [you knew] it didn’t come from me’. He said, ‘No, I know that’. He said, ‘I know where it came from’. And those little opportunities have got to be taken, leader to leader. You’re not in one another’s pockets *per se*.

But another attribute of Don’s that I will always remember, and reflected in part in what I had to say – and it’s in the Hansard what I said at the time, even though it was misrepresented or misunderstood by I’m pretty sure it was Franklin at the time – was that one evening, while the debate was on and going along, Don was there, Des Corcoran was there, and they beckoned me over. We were talking on the front bench and I said, ‘One of the things which irks me somewhat is that I’m one against your ten’. I’m not sure whether at that stage I had the same salary; I certainly didn’t have the same staff. I had a motorcar and so forth. But I said, ‘Your people have a number of advisers and so forth; they also have the opportunity to move around or go overseas or research things’. ‘What are you getting at?’ And I said, ‘Well, I think in a position of opposition, eyeball-to-eyeball, that where things are happening and comments being made, that the Leader of the Opposition should have similar benefits to a minister’ – or to not so much the Premier, but in that general – – –. And they said, ‘Well, that’s interesting, because we recall having been cut to the bone by Hall when he was the Premier between ’68 and ’72. We weren’t allowed to do this, we weren’t allowed to do that. And we understand what you’re saying and where you’re
coming from’. Only a matter of a couple of weeks later they came across and said, ‘There’s an overseas trip for you. When do you want to go?’

Right.

‘There’s an equality of salary.’ I think that was a part of it. In other words, they weren’t trying to belittle or they weren’t trying to denigrate, downgrade the benefit of an opposition which was informed compared with one which was not necessarily informed.

The other thing about Don was that he was a very sensitive person. I don’t know whether that’s been related in other circumstances. But I remember on one particular occasion, harking back to when Steele was Leader of the Opposition – and again it’s all in the Hansard – of Steele saying that there was some question about his way of life. And he stood up and his face was red and he said, ‘If I was to understand everything that the Leader of the Opposition had to say I’d be the greatest – – –.’ (laughter)

There was another occasion when the Governor –

Oh, Oliphant.

– Mr Oliphant, yes – belittled a couple of the members in the Upper House who’d attended in shirtsleeves.

Yes, that’s right, yes.

And he was out of the office and across the road, and quite sensitive about what had been said. He didn’t win that one, *per se*. But on another occasion – and I was the Leader of the Opposition – and there was a piece in the paper about some felons having been tied up by the police or by some investigators, and comment was made and he fumed and said nothing. About half to three-quarters of an hour later, after Question Time, he came through the Opposition doors after me, he said, ‘That woman’s just admitted that she fabricated that’.

Oh, really?
(laughter) Little things, but it showed his sensitivity. He was sensitive in the answer that he gave, he was disturbed about what was being claimed about his form of management or his form of government servant, and he wanted (laughs) it to be known very quickly that his people had been defamed by somebody who subsequently admitted. Now, *that* doesn’t appear in Hansard, the answer that he came in to give me, but it’s part and parcel of my understanding of the person.

He was moody, and I think that’s probably well on the record in a number of places, and as Leader to Premier we were present at quite a number of official occasions and so forth where we were in one another’s presence. We didn’t ever have a harsh word in that regard. If I can be condemned for not having been more aggressive, so be it. That’s not my way of doing things. Or was not.

**What about any of the other ministers? There was Corcoran you mentioned and Hudson, of course.**

Corcoran and I had a great rapport. Des could be quite vitriolic at times, (laughs) but it was sort of over the head. I remember Des coming to me one day just before Question Time and said, ‘Hey, I hate to tell you this, but we’ve just had a report that the Warren Reservoir’s likely to go tail over turkey, and if the Warren Reservoir goes tail over turkey all the water will empty into the South Para and then it’ll be in through Gawler’. And Des, even after he left Parliament and when I was Speaker, Des was quite a favourable person to me.

Not all the ministers have been the self-same way, although I cannot say that I ever despised any one of them. There was an occasion where the whole of Dunstan’s Government, and Glen Broomhill in particular, thought they were going to put me over a barrel in relation to land sales at Monarto,\(^3\) over the royal commission, which identified the fact that they had been misled by their public servant, and Ward, the Commissioner, recognised that and whilst he didn’t accept everything, again that was misinformation or misknowledge on their part. They claimed that I’d been the

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\(^3\) Royal commission into Monarto land transactions, 1975.
source of the information, whereas in actual fact I was up opening a show at Orroroo and got a telephone call from the *Mail* to say, ‘We’re running a story, so-and-so, do you know anything about it?’

**So just talking you mentioned the *Mail*, what was your and the Party’s relationship with the media?** I’m asking that because the media was seen as being pro- the Liberal Party, pro-LCL. That’s by the Labor Party, if you like. So what was happening there?

I wouldn’t – a little surprised on that, because (laughs) the Liberal Party would say that they were pro- the Labor Party. (laughter) You get it both ways, you get criticised on one thing and sometimes it’s because of lack of knowledge, sometimes it’s partly-deserved. It depends entirely upon the person, and you knew those that tended to run with the members of the other side and those who were more fair-minded, and those who were seeking to play it as straight down the line as you could. Cudmore, who was there years ago, was obviously a member of the Liberal Party but he didn’t always push a line. At the time that I became Leader and there was to-ings and fro-ings, some of them were full of praise of Hall and so forth and others were willing – but Reckske, who in the *Sunday Mail* wrote a magnificent article which I thought correctly stated a number of facts. The cartoonist could be cruel. (laughs) And when you talk about bias, I’ve thought in the last few days he was showing a distinct direction.

**That’s right, yes.**

I might be wrong, but – – –.

**This was also the coming of the television age, if you like, in politics. How did you relate to that? Like Don was seen as a consummate TV performer; how did you feel about all of that?**

Looked upon as a little brusque at times and not smiling when perhaps a smile might have helped and so forth. Even criticised for the wrong hairdo. (laughter) There’s a classic in 1975 with a great cartoon in *The Advertiser* or *The News*, I forget which now, of ‘Eastick has a new hairdo’. (laugh)
I see.

I tended, more so than now, where memory sometimes gets you looking for the word, to say what I meant and some thought that was good, there was no fooling around, that was it; others criticised it as being less than amiable. But you are what you are.

*It wasn’t that big element of ‘spin’, as they call it now.*

No. In the election, ’75 in particular, there was always the debate between the two and in the ’75 I was genuinely believed to have upstaged Don. That was stated in the press. It was a matter of meeting him on his own terms, not vitriolically but saying, ‘Hey, but recently you said so-and-so and that doesn’t – – –.’ And you only get a few comments, it’s not as if you got the world telling you that you did good or did bad. This is the eye of the beholder, and if they’re biased in one direction, well – – –. No, there was quite good comment relative to ’75.

*Just talking about ’75, things were going well for you and your party and not so well for Labor. Can you just talk about that election a bit, because one of the notes I made was Don’s denial, I’ll call it, of the Whitlam Government? What was the feeling in your party then?*

Well, once again, the ’75 election was an early one. I’d only arrived home from the trip, an eight weeks trip looking at things like the car industry, looking at new town development, *et cetera, et cetera.* And the issue which had been left behind in the early part of ’75 was the railways, the taking over the railways.

On the trip – just digressing slightly – on the trip, Don and Bakewell and Koh, Don’s second wife, Adele, were on the same plane as Dawn, myself and Peter Middleton, who was my press secretary at the time. They were heading to Penang; I was heading in the first instance to Jakarta, and we were on the same plane. Bob Bakewell came back and said, ‘Would you like to go and have a chat to Don?’, between Sydney and Jakarta. So I went up and had a chat and we were talking in part about the comments which had been made about the railways and what was good and what was bad and so forth, because there was still an argument, so far as
the Liberal Party was concerned, relative to the manner in which the takeover of the railways was being promoted. Don then called the early election and it was fought on the basis of the railways. There were other issues, of course, but there was a lot of angst in the community relative to what had been revealed about the railway at that time, and so that became a real issue and it was on that basis that some of the debate honed in on what had been said and what had been denied and what had been changed and so forth. (break in recording)

The other issues, of course, were those which had been developed relative to the change of name, from the Labor Party: is it all window-dressing, is it real, *et cetera*, *et cetera*? You had Whitlam at his best at that time and some of his statements were rather conflicting. And the thing which was said to have swung against us in the last week, the last few days of the election, was the fact that Don denied Whitlam. Did it? Didn’t it? It still gained us more votes, but not in the right place. There was also a question at that time which caused a bit of concern subsequent to the election was that it became [known] that some people had multi-voted.

Really?

It was subsequently denied, but a person who had made the information available was subsequently sacked for having alerted the Opposition to the fact that there were some motorcyclists going around – – –.

Was this a critical seat, like a very close one?

Yes.

I see, gee.

And [1975] we won two more seats. We got Mount Gambier back, Harold Allison, and we had Millicent back. Des had moved up to the city and we had – – –(Murray Vandepeer).

Can’t remember that one.
Yes, any rate, we won Millicent. So that we retained everything we had and that’s the way it was.

**Did you try and get Connelly on-side, from Port Pirie, or not?**

Comment was made by somebody who knew him, not by me personally but with my knowledge, and he’d always been a Labor Party member and I believe they had got to him beforehand. And he was a typical example of where people in a number of seats were starting to question the introduction of party hacks or unionists, and the person that was put up as the official didn’t live in Port Pirie but was somebody high in the hierarchy of the Union Movement and people just showed that they wouldn’t accept it. And we’ve seen that on other occasions through the years.

Yes, that’s right. Well, it happened to the Liberal Party just recently, in whose seat was it? Kerin’s seat.

Yes.

**We talked about Don Dunstan a bit, but was there anything you wanted to add about him, looking at him as the Premier of the State and also the Leader of the Parliament?**

I first met him as a person in a meeting in Gawler, before I was elected to Parliament. He came to address a meeting up in the local hall and the community and myself as mayor at the time were invited to attend. He was talking of his views on life, which weren’t altogether those that I espoused, but we met briefly and exchanged – and, as I said, right through, albeit that we were eyeball-to-eyeball, we were on different wavelengths in a number of cases, there was never an occasion that I felt belittled by him. Some answers to questions were, you know, ‘You ought to know better’, sort of thing, but that’s par for the course. And I was quite genuine – I stress this, because I believe that it’s important – I stress that when he resigned – it was unusual, it was not expected, by us anyhow, when he came in, in his dressing gown and so forth, and comment was made by various people – I genuinely meant what I said, because it was a relationship which had been established over many years. He was particularly interested, of course, in the Aboriginal people –
Yes, that’s right.

– and that played quite a part. Dawn and I attended a couple of functions with him at Aboriginal Week. On one particular occasion we arrived and some fellow came up and said, ‘Dr Eastick, you’re not welcome here tonight’. (laughs)

Oh, really?

I think it might have been Val Powell or somebody who was off to the side, and quickly came in, told him to get – and we were, we were a welcome guest at the Aboriginal function and so forth. We had the other occasion when there was a dinner in the old South Australian Hotel with Prince Philip and the next day was the opening of Strathmont. Now, I can’t recall whether Don attended at Strathmont or he was an apology because Gretel had had a medical condition overnight, and I remember the Prince making comment but then the function went [on]. I’m pretty sure Don was away because of the circumstance.

Because of that crisis, yes. Were there things you learnt from him as a politician and parliamentarian?

(laughs)

Like just by observing him and avoiding or taking on some of his ideas or characteristics?

The nature of his voice projection at times was irritating, yet that was Don. He was a born actor in that sense. No, I take people for what they are in that way. I’ll never forget on the occasion that he came in with the pink pants. (laughter) In those days, the ministers used to walk across the chamber before it opened and leave a little note with the various members, ‘I’ve got an answer to your question of such-and-such’. And Don came across this particular afternoon to give a little note to Joyce Steele, who’d been the former Minister of Education and so forth. And (laughs) Joyce looked up and said, ‘Oh, Don, you do look chic’. (laughter) He shot back to his seat.

And you then picked that up as an opportunity to get stuck into him, or not?
(laughter) I saw very, very little of him subsequent to him leaving Parliament. Certainly his name bobbed up every now and again and so forth, and I recognised that after Playford the fact that he played a part in Walsh getting into government in ’65, undoubtedly, and was the natural to follow through, or I believe was the natural to follow through.

It was pretty close, yes.

It was perhaps a little strange that, for the first time, a non-unionist as such, but his involvement in union affairs might have been far greater than I was ever aware of. I know he was quite riled by being beaten in ’68 and that saw a side of him that wasn’t altogether pleasant at the time, but I can understand that, particularly when somebody’s playing up from the middle, as Tommy Stott was. As it turned out, he was entirely wrong, which he subsequently acknowledged but didn’t fully admit, in pumping for Chowilla. It never was a proposition and as more and more information because available what was going to happen if they went ahead with Chowilla he turned coat and moved back to Dartmouth.

Just a short [time] or perhaps three weeks, four weeks, before I became Leader of the Opposition, along with several other colleagues I’d actually stood in the centre of what is the centre of the Dartmouth Dam. We’d gone off on an inspection and there were posts up both sides. And I attended the opening of the Dartmouth Dam in 1979, when I was Speaker. We flew over in the morning and flew back in the afternoon – Tonkin was the Premier – and to see what was there to start with and what was there at the end was quite exciting, quite interesting.

Did you ever see Don with industry leaders or hear from them what they were saying about him, concerns they had or good things they were talking about?

I don’t recall any specifics other than the fact that the majority of industry leaders were not of his persuasion and the comments would be – but were they factual or were they in my presence? – ‘Well, the sooner we get rid of this mob the better’. (laughs)
Fair enough, yes.

Again, it comes back to what I said earlier about the only ones you believe are the ones that tell their not.

That’s right, yes.

And I’d have to say that in the whole twenty-three and a half years of politics and in other places, as mayor and so forth, one finds himself weighing up what has been said and what has been told: is it factual, is it being said for a good reason, is there evidence to support it and so forth? Not to become a Doubting Thomas, but it’s a matter of assessing what you’ve been told.

Making up your own mind. What about – I’ll just throw in a couple of things Don was pushing, one’s the industrial democracy – what did you think of that at the time, if you can recall?

I was anti- what the Liberal Party viewed and the dominance which subsequently followed in a number of places – – –. Give and take on both sides, you can go too far both ways.

This was workers getting involved in management.

And I’d have to say I’m a wee bit concerned with what’s been in the paper the last two days about walking in. If it’s just for that purpose and that purpose alone – – –. But when you hear the utterances of some of the people that have been castigated by the Labor Party itself of the excesses that they go to, there’s that inherent fear in the back of the mind what will follow.

What about things like setting up the State Government Insurance Commission, that is the State, if you like, or the Government, setting up these sorts of bodies? Was that accepted, given what Playford had done say with ETSA⁴ and that, or was that something that your party was really concerned about, like government getting too involved in industry?

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⁴ ETSA – Electricity Trust of South Australia.
I think the manner in which WorkCover, for example, has escalated is a pretty fair indication that governments aren’t necessarily best equipped. And can I go back in one other sense, about that it’s important that you don’t utilise cronies, that you do go out and identify people who’ve got a real opportunity? And you will find that people from both persuasions can give useful information. In the main, where they’re not stymied because of political view, the committee structure of the parliaments, the select committees and so forth, prove a very useful two-way interaction relative to a particular issue with good results following. You go back to Bannon’s problems with the [State] Bank, relying too much on the word coming from one person: I mean, I saw John get up and on a number of occasions say, ‘I have great faith in my managing director’. (laughter) Oh, yes. But that brought about his own demise.

Yes, that’s right, yes.

There were a number of questions and I was party to some of them, Jennifer was a party to some of them, Tonkin was party to some of them, based on real knowledge of what was happening with the State Bank, that he completely refused to accept or even take heed of, as I would believe, because nothing happened to reverse what at an early stage might have been a reversible opportunity.

That’s one of the dangers.

I mean there’s a great deal of argument still goes on as to whether the Electricity Trust should have been sold. You suddenly ask yourself why did it suddenly become a saleable item in New South Wales if they hadn’t recognised that there were distinct advantages. You win some, you lose some. Astuteness of management and of questioning, rather than accepting without question, advice is very important in life, and I think that’s been exhibited at the present moment in the SAJC.\(^5\)

That’s right, yes. Be some interesting stories coming out of that if they become public, I think. Just looking at the 1970s, just thinking back about it, did you see the State progressing? I’ll lead on a couple of areas, one on the social policy area

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\(^5\) SAJC – South Australian Jockey Club.
and the other one’s on the economic area, if you’ve got some observations on those two.

Yes, there were changes. I mean, Hall had started that on the opening up the hotel hours.

That’s right, yes.

And Don passed on – Don’s particular interest in restaurateurs and foods and so forth changed attitudes. Would it have happened under Playford? No. It did happen under Don. I’d have to say that the problem which you have at the present moment which is constantly being bandied around of gambling losses and gambling is back on the hands of both the Labor Party and the Liberal Party. It was the Liberal Party that introduced it in Michael Wilson’s time, aided and abetted by the view of – that, of course, was in the ’80s. I think in all changes they’ve got to be adequately reviewed, and whether you need in legislation, as has occurred in some events, that any piece of legislation will be automatically reviewed within five years or seven years or so forth I think is something which is worthy, which then makes it less difficult to go back on what you’ve allowed than not to have put that stop – I’d call it a stop or would call it a review to determine the effectiveness or the changes which might be necessary.

Just for the economic side of things, is there a lot a state government can actually do or is it just because of the flow of what’s happening nationally? And I won’t talk about now, given globalisation, but in those times, would you and your party have been better economic managers? I’m asking because I heard Steele Hall once talk about that: ‘We would have been better economic managers – – –.’

That’s always been claimed and I would think that – and I can only talk from the mid-’60s onwards – I think that they have shown that, against the Labor Party’s State Bank, against WorkCover as it is at the present moment. The Liberal Party’s involvement with putting large sums of money into industry hasn’t always been as was expected or to the great advantage.

One of the real difficulties in coming to grips with the reality of a number of issues as they arise is the hidden information which is stored away that doesn’t
become available for thirty years or until a whistleblower bobs up, and so one makes decisions on what *is* known or what can be determined. I’m saying in retrospect some things which you laud and may well be fully conversant with ought to be looked at slightly differently if you knew more of the background.

*Yes, fair enough, yes.* I’ve asked a lot of things and you’ve had a terrific recollection of those. *Is there anything you wanted to add to this discussion before we finish?*

No, I’m quite happy to make quite a number of records available under some circumstance, if somebody wanted to look at them.

*Sure, yes.*

Like my father, I’ve been a bit of a magpie and I have quite a large number of files of letters and issues associated with the various times in Parliament. I wouldn’t want them used to denigrate anybody *per se*, but I think that if some people who’ve written statements – and I’m thinking more of journalists than researchers as such – were to know the true facts of some of the things that they’ve pontificated about that –

*Fair enough, yes.*

– (laughter) there would be a better understanding of issues. When I took over the office and the staff, Joan Hall was a staff member and Joan Bullock as she was at that time, she went over to the Liberal Movement; but she said straight out that she was going with Hall, not going to stay in the office. But quite a lot of material was left in the office files which, when sorted through, allows me to make the statement I did earlier this afternoon that, for example, Hall’s resignation document was written ten days before it was delivered. It was still in the file; and it’s in *my* file. (laughter) Not for wrong purposes, but as part and parcel of – – –.

*For the record, yes.*

My father had quite a long military career, not as a full-time soldier and so forth, but he was a real magpie and I’ve been through all of his papers and put them into
[order] and they make interesting reading and I sort of got the idea of being a magpie too; and, whilst I don’t go back and read them frequently, they’re there and if somebody was prepared to have a look at them and use them in a proper manner – – –.

Okay, good. All right, well, thanks very much, Dr Eastick. That’s been very –

‘Bruce’, it is.

– Bruce – thanks.

END OF INTERVIEW.