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Derek SCRAFTON

Interview with Derek Scrafton conducted by Alan Hutchings on 24 September 2007 at University of South Australia in Adelaide for the Don Dunstan Oral History Project.

INTERVIEW COMMENCES

Do you want to ask a question or do you want me to just move in on this?

Just move in, Derek.

Okay. And then if you've got any questions – – –.

If I just start off once again by saying I'm Alan Hutchings, I'm interviewing Derek Scrafton on behalf of the Don Dunstan Foundation Oral History Project. I won't say any more, Derek; just let you have your say.

Yes, thanks, Alan. I have three significant sort of memories of Dunstan and the Dunstan years, and the main one is that Don Dunstan was a thinking politician, one who appreciated the significance of strategic planning and research. And the way that I always think of this is that if you prepared a written brief or a position paper on anything for Don Dunstan you knew it would be read and absorbed by him. How did you know this? Because if you went into a deputation, maybe with, in my case, my own minister, the Minister of Transport, but also one that was being held in the Premier's office, the way that he dealt with deputations was in such a manner that you knew he had read the stuff that was given to him, the material that was given to him. While he may have other support at the meeting, he was always in full command of the debate, having briefed himself beforehand. By beforehand, I mean maybe a couple of minutes before the meeting, because he just struck me as a person who could just be given a written brief, quickly scan it, he knew the background to the meeting, he knew the nature of the people that he was dealing with at the meeting, whether they were local council people or a lobby group of some sort, and I always appreciated that. I always felt as a planner, as a transport professional, that if you were asked to do a briefing note for him that your work would not be wasted, that he was going to be able to use this one way or another.

And of course the net result of this is that over the period of his premiership in South Australia his innate knowledge, the knowledge that he accumulated in his role, this was enormous. He was able to – I mean, I only ever met him in dealings

on transport matters; but I imagine it was exactly the same if it was something on health or education or whatever.

Alan, I think it's worth just briefly mentioning the issues on which I had dealings with him –

Yes.

– and the two big ones in the 1970s were firstly the negotiations that led to the sale of the non-metropolitan railways, the South Australian Railway, which was sold to the Commonwealth Government in the mid-1970s. This involved regular meetings with him and then, once the State had got its position together, regular meetings in Canberra. As well as the Prime Minister–Premier level, so it was the sort of Prime Minister, Premier and the Premier acting as Treasurer, so his main advice within his own portfolio came from Ron Barnes and the Treasury people – at that time I guess Ron Barnes was an assistant on the Treasury, but he certainly led their side of the debate; then on the other side you would have the Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, and the Federal Minister for Transport who I think at that time was Charlie Jones, and then a cadre of Federal Ministry of Finance or Treasury, I think they were Department of Finance people, and Transport and so our counterparts, if you like, at a Federal level.

This job, I guess, was spun out over a period of about two years – well, so much so that we accumulated a fairly big internal file on the matter which I passed over to George Lewkowicz because I thought that perhaps the Foundation might actually enjoy either at least perusing this and if necessary retaining it. I'd kept it because I thought maybe one time we might write some sort of historical article about it, but I've never gotten around to it and maybe the Foundation might have somebody, a researcher who'd really enjoy digging into this.

Well, it was certainly a big issue, wasn't it, a really big thing.

Yes. The amounts of money involved were not all that great. The cash amounts that came to the State Government as the result of selling the railway were not that great. The real financial benefit came from not having to carry the non-metropolitan deficit, and in hindsight of course – at the time we argued very strongly that we wanted to keep the metropolitan railway because we wanted an integrated

metropolitan system; but of course all that happens in the intervening years is that the metropolitan railways soak up all the money. But at the time it seemed like the right thing, and everything about the negotiations I think from the State's point of view were very satisfactory. There were people who were ideologically opposed to the idea, but within the Government it was a very clear policy and I think it was carried through very well. Certainly for me it was a real exercise in seeing a good Premier at work, something that I really enjoyed.

The other technical area that there were some dealings with the Premier and his Department was the planning for rapid transit in the Modbury corridor, in the north-east corridor, what is now the O-Bahn busway. At the time that the Dunstan Government came in it was a freeway in the MATS[1] Plan, and when we looked at the various freeway corridors, aside from the ones that had been eliminated by the previous Liberal Government itself before MATS really – in between the Metropolitan Development Plan and MATS itself there were certain freeway corridors that were actually eliminated, such as the one that went through Dulwich and east of the city and Fullarton and so on, the Liberals wanted no bar of that, and Brownhill Creek, and I guess the predecessor almost of what is now the South-East Freeway. But of the true MATS corridors the north-east corridor was one of the first to be identified as one that was unnecessary. There were a number of reasons for that. One was that they just tipped the cars out at roughly where the O-Bahn comes out now at Park Terrace and would simply have created the sort of problems at Park Terrace that you now have with the South-East Freeway emerging at the junction of Cross Road and Portrush Road, when you tip a freeway out onto an arterial road network.

But the other thing about the Modbury corridor was that it was ideally suited to thinking of it in terms of public transport because the growing north-east suburbs were one of the few areas that was not served by the fixed rail system, either by the suburban rail routes or by the Glenelg tram. The planning in the Dunstan years for it was on the basis that it – well, we looked at all the options in the early- and mid-

[1] MATS – Metropolitan Adelaide Transportation Study.

'70s and came to the conclusion that the ideal solution was an LRT,[2] a tramline extended in the north-east corridor. But towards the end of the '70s, of course, that fell foul of politics, particularly the difficulties of bringing the tramway through the city, which curiously are about to be resolved as we sit here – (laughs) the new one will be open in a few weeks' time, but coming from the south rather than from the north. If that link through the city had been there in the 1970s, then what is now the busway in the north-east corridor could well have been LRT. But during the Dunstan years we had this North-East Area Public Transport Review – NEAPTR was the acronym – and it was a very big, extensive public consultation exercise.

Yes, John –

Hutchinson.

– John Hutchinson.

Yes. He led that team, that's right. And the work of NEAPTR involved considerable involvement with the Premier's Department and the Premier himself because it was so political. The opposition within the river corridor at the inner end it was particularly intense, and that was important because of the significance of the State seat of Adelaide and the seat embracing the Walkerville area which, in the duration of the study, or certainly by the early 1980s, had become part of the Adelaide seat. So there was this 'blue ribbon' area of Walkerville and so the opposition there was politically important in the sense that it could swing the Adelaide State seat between the Labor or Liberal Government. So there was a strong political interest in how this thing was resolved. Ironically, of course, the situation resolved itself because Michael Wilson, who was the Member for Walkerville or whatever it was called at that time, became the Liberal Minister in the early 1980s and the bus way by then, the whole politics of the Liberal Party wanting the bus way, had taken over and what was the LRT team became the bus way team and Alan Waite took over from John Hutchinson. That's the sort of sequel.

[2] LRT – light rail transit.

But in the ’70s there was a lot of involvement and the Premier led a lot of meetings with opponents of the system and because there was still a measure of support for the old freeway plan, which itself would have had express buses on the freeway so people said, ‘Why do you need the LRT?’ And Don Dunstan, that was another example for me of seeing him at work and I really enjoyed that, and it leads me to my second major comment, Alan, and that is this very strong memory of Don Dunstan, of his ability to forge a strong cabinet from the members that were selected by the parliamentary Labor Party for his cabinet.

Bearing in mind that the party – I don’t know whether it’s still the case, but it certainly was then – that the Premier did not choose his cabinet; the party room chooses the cabinet and the Premier’s discretion is in the allocation of portfolios, I just think – I mean, I didn’t know this at the time – but it wasn’t just the way that he made his cabinet work, but the initial appointments of the people in the right jobs is the way that I put it. Now, maybe so many years later, whatever it is, thirty years later, one could be accused of seeing all this through rose-coloured spectacles; but I was a young man with my own mission, and the way that Don Dunstan and his ministerial team worked made it so important to me and made my work so easy and so enjoyable. You didn’t just deal with your own minister in isolation. If there was any particular problem then some other member of the cabinet who maybe had an electoral interest or maybe just a professional interest – like I remember at the time we used to have a lot of meetings with Hugh Hudson: first of all he was the Minister of Education, but it was just his interest in planning, and then later on he became the Minister of Planning, I think you’d know that, wouldn’t you –

Yes.

– sometime in the ’70s – and so you got this interaction between the portfolios in a rather freewheeling way, which I always thought was much more effective than trying to sort of prescribe it in the form of an interdepartmental committee, you know, or some structural relationship. You just knew who the people were to go to in an organisation. Interestingly enough, you mentioned John Hutchinson’s name, that was one of his strengths, too. He knew a lot of the people, a lot of his contemporaries worked in these other organisations – people like yourself, people

like Basil and so on. We knew these people and you knew who to go to and work with.

But, to get back to my point, Don Dunstan was able to manage his cabinet in a true collegiate cabinet process. The reason that I stress this is because in recent years, certainly from the mid-1980s onwards and certainly from 1990 onwards, you got this trend towards a sort of presidential approach in government, not just in our state government but in Canberra and in other state governments, and it seems to have almost become the norm in supposedly Westminster democracies. But I always think that the way Don managed his cabinet team, and I don't know about the party room in general, had some involvement through the Transport Committee, but it's mainly the links to the ministerial team that I think were important and are important, and he just exhibited that in a superb manner. Part of it was due, Alan, to his own intelligence, this point I made earlier about his ability to comprehend quickly, his ability to span the problems in a range of portfolios, almost – now others who are closer to him like Bruce Guerin and so on would have a better feeling for this – but it always seems to me that he enjoyed the trust of these people. He was able to pull the Labor Party together into this sort of intellectual cabinet team from a group of people who were not as intelligent as he was; that he was able to work on their strengths – the ministers, for instance, like mine, Geoff Virgo, or Des Corcoran and that, who had come from different backgrounds, from working-class backgrounds or whatever – he was able to forge a team out of them and to have them work together and to acknowledge one another's skills.

I don't think we'll ever see that again. The governments don't seem to want to work that way any more; they want to be sort of all-powerful. They don't want to be over-dependent on professional advisory services and there seems to be almost a sectorisation. I mean, there were always factions, but he was able to manage that, too. That was another thing that he strode over.

You mentioned John Hutchinson and Alan Waite, *et cetera*, *et cetera*. In those days in effect there were the ministers, cabinet, and under the ministers were the senior advisers from the public service. Nowadays you've got a whole layer of minders who seem to be getting more and more. From my own experience – I don't know what yours was, but I suspect what you're going to say – Dunstan had a feel for who he should talk to or get somebody to talk to in the executive level of

the public service, there seemed to be a direct connection, there didn't seem to be a layer in between. Now, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but – – –.

No, no. I think that's certainly a corollary, almost, of what I was saying. And within our department that's exactly how we worked. If I went away for a month, let's say, at a time, although there might be an acting Director General the Minister just worked directly with the people, whatever the problem was he went to those people, and I'm sure that that was generally true. But I think also, Alan, it was a mark of mutual respect and this trust, that if Bruce Guerin or one of his people came to us with a problem they would get a straight answer. We would not be protecting a patch in any way, this was a team effort. We wanted to bring these things about, you wanted that railway transfer thing to work on, you wanted the NEAPTR team to come to a successful conclusion, it required everybody to work together in this way.

I remember a problem that occurred in the South – and Don himself was not directly involved in this – but one of his ministers was the chairman of a cabinet committee and the same process worked then. There were about four or five ministers in this cabinet committee and there were four or five of us in the meeting itself, and it was a meeting of equals. Nobody was more important than anyone else. The important aspect of the job was for the chairman to be able to come out of that meeting with a recommendation that he could take to cabinet that he knew had the support of everybody in the room. That was a problem to do with development and roads in the southern suburbs, and so it involved people like the Minister for Local Government, the Minister of Planning, Minister of Environment – no, it wasn't the same person in those days – and the Minister of Transport, and also the Minister of Energy, and he was there more in his local member capacity, as the Member for Mitchell. But I can remember that meeting very, very vividly and if that was not one that Dunstan himself was directly involved in it was one that this working technique had filtered through the system. And I just have this feeling that a lot of that came from the top.

Well, that was the days of the State Planning Authority, too. Now, you weren't a member of that. Keith Johinke as Commissioner of Highways was.

That's right, he was, yes.

What was the relationship between say yourself and – – –?

Well, we had three aligned organisations: the Highways; that what first of all was the Tramways but became the STA[3] because when the railways were sold, South Australian Railways were sold, that was all merged together into the STA; and then we had the Department itself. There were two relationships, essentially. One was we had a formal link through a ministerial council which met once a week or once a fortnight, but Geoff Virgo and Keith Johinke and Frank Harris and myself and I think somebody like Don ..... or the successive[?] Geoff Strutton, the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, and Ken Collett from the minister's office. So we had like a little team, and so that was the formal relationship. These meetings every week, if there were any sort of differences of opinion that's where they were resolved. But more importantly they were meetings in which if there was a problem we could work out who was going to deal with it, so you didn't get sort of two people burrowing independently away on the same problem. You might have to liaise with one another because you might not all agree on the solution, but this particular example I was mentioning in the South, oddly enough, the most influential person in that meeting from the public service point of view was Keith Johinke because it was to do with roads. And he was quite up-front at this meeting in telling these ministers that if one course of action was taken that it would not be the most efficient solution for him. It was up to them to make the decision, but he wanted it very clearly understood that the way that the road programming in that area was going he had certain priorities and if you leapfrogged Seaford over the area east of what would now be – the area east of South Road and north of the Onkaparinga, what do you call that area?

Morphett Vale East, in effect?

Yes, a bit further south than that and further east than that, a development that took place further east. I remember Keith had a very clear plan about the road work, what the budget was for that, and his view was – I remember him very distinctly. So in that case I would have played much more a support role, whereas another

[3] STA – State Transport Authority.

issue, a railway issue, well, I might be there on my own because it wouldn't involve anybody else anymore. But in the early days of the SAR then we would have had the Railway Commissioner there, Ron Fitch was the last – no, he wasn't the last of the traditional railway commissioners; Murray Stockley was, but Murray Stockley effectively was there while the transfer was taking place.

That was why I mentioned earlier to you, but very often that wasn't enough so you needed the Minister for Planning or the Minister for Local Government to be at these meetings together with his people, and there would have been – at this meeting I think it would have been Doug Speechley or somebody like that would have been the planning authority's rep at this meeting and then there would have been I think Ian McPhail or somebody from the local government office. I think these relationships worked very well, but a lot of them depended, as you've pointed out, in having the right people in the right job, a professional approach to what you did. Everybody isn't going to agree about anything, but the decision-making process I always thought was superb; and that's why in some ways I'm still here. I don't mean now, but (laughter) until I retired.

But it does lead me, Alan, to my third and final observation that I'd like to put on the record because it's a very personal one, and that is that when I look back on my time here in South Australia and my career in general I owe a lot of it to Don Dunstan because he was the one who, when he was in at Harvard I guess is where he was when he was in Boston, he met a guy called Sid Bruning and when the Dunstan Government was elected one of the first things he did was to bring this Dr Bruning over – he was actually at MIT,[4] I think, Bruning, but he had a firm called Social Technology Systems or something, I think it was a fancy name for a ..... (laughs) consultancy.

But these days you always have to put 'Solutions' on there, don't you?

(laughter) Yes, that's right. He produced this review of MATS or the MATS corridors, and that was actually a sort of baseline document from which we worked, but in this document he said to the government – now, he had an idea you needed a

[4] MIT – Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

sort of all-embracing commission of transport, but by the time the Government had finished with this and guys like Bill Voyzey and people in the Premier's Department had put their wisdom – Bob Bakewell and people like that, who at that time would have been in the Public Service Commission – by the time they'd thought through this the net result was this appointment of a Director-General of Transport. I met Geoff Virgo in Canada and I didn't get offered the job initially, they offered it to some guy who gave back word, and Bob Bakewell came back to me months after and said, 'Are you still interested in this job?' And I'd almost forgotten, you know, I had to really sort of stop and think at the other end of the phone, and I said, 'Yeah, I'm surprised after all this time.' When I got here they explained the background about how they'd appointed this guy and he'd given back word he'd got a better offer someplace else, I guess, and that was all to my benefit.

But it was Don who would set this whole thing in process and it was his Government and Geoff Virgo who agreed with this, and I've never forgotten that that was a very important development, without which I wouldn't even have been here. What happened was I had a friend who had been for an interview with Geoff Virgo and he came back to the office in Ottawa where we worked together and he said, 'Look, I've been for this interview and my interests don't really fit this job. But,' he said,' I think yours would.' So I met up with Geoff Virgo in Toronto. Then I met other people from the State. My first perceptions about life in South Australia are very good: first of all, meeting Geoff Virgo and Max Johnson in Toronto; and then meeting Colin Tillett, one of the assistant commissioners in the Public Service Commission, and I met him in the airport at Hartford for a sort of informal interview around the lunch table. I went back and I said to my wife, 'Well, if you're willing we should go and do this.' It was the best thing that happened to me.

Oh, that was a funny thing: this guy said to me, 'Well, what sort of terms and conditions do you want?' And I said, 'Well, I think about a contract for five years.' And he said to me, 'Look, son, never ever happens in South Australia in five years.' (laughter) So he said, 'The minimum that we would be prepared to think about was seven years', and so I had to come – and never left. I stayed there for twenty-five years, thanks to an awful lot of people; not just the people we've talked about, but a

lot of things about my work and my life in South Australia. I mean, I came here and if I could sum it up in a way it's almost it was like living in Canada but the weather was better and the scope of the work I liked.

You came from Ottawa?

Yes, I worked in the Federal Government. One of the attractions of this job was the geographic scope was smaller. I spent my whole life for the previous two or three years in Ottawa commuting back and forth to jobs that I ran in Winnipeg and Regina and Calgary and Vancouver. I very rarely went east because the French Canadians handled Québec and the Department of Regional Economic Expansion handled all of the transport in Atlantic Provinces, so most of my work was sort of Ottawa west and I was getting a bit weary of all this travel, and this opportunity was one that I thought this would be worth trying and it was a real winner. And I've never forgotten that, and I've never forgotten that without Don it might never have happened. If we'd had a what I might call traditional Labor Government led by one of the old right if I could – because they were probably in the stronger side of the party in those days – I don't think the intellectual background would have been there. Mind, that just shows their intelligence at the time because they knew this guy was a man who could lead them. They knew that this young man, Dunstan, was a man who could pull a team together, could minimise the factional disputes; but I bet nobody realised just *how* good he was until he actually came on deck. I've never forgotten that, and when I hear people denigrate Dunstan or the Dunstan years for various reasons and people have all sorts of ideas – well, you know, they can believe what they want; but I think he was a fine leader and I think he was an excellent Premier for this State, and I think a lot of the things that we now take for granted would never have been here if it hadn't been for those ten years or whatever it was.

You've mentioned the name Max Johnson – this is a bit of an aside; because I'd forgotten about him but, once again, whether it was because of that atmosphere that Dunstan created and being able to pick the right people for the right job, but Johnson almost had the role of picking the right people for the right job.

What happened, Alan, was because of the way the portfolios were set up, often the ministers sat somewhat aloof from the agencies. So like in our case you had – and

of course that was really what Bruning pointed out, that because of this system where you had sort of semi-independent operating agencies in various relationships – the Highways was a department but the Railways Commissioner was a commission and the Tramways was a board; you also had this little office called the Minister's office, and of course one of its roles was also to handle minor aspects of the portfolio, like when I came it was local government. The Local Government office was part of Max's team there. There would have been a Director of Local Government within that little ministerial office. And in fact before the Director-General's office was set up the Minister would have had in his office an engineer seconded from the Highways who was like the professional link back into the Highways organisation. I think at the time, just before I came, it was Bob Nairne at one time and then Steve Karipedes and then Basil Thompson, I guess – or I guess when Basil came to me it was that engineer's job moved out of the Minister's office into the Director-General's office, that's right, and it was Max's job to make sure that the Minister's office worked and to make sure that the machinery was all in place, and he obviously was an old hand again, like Max, I think he probably worked for about another ten years after I got here. Ken Collett took over from him, anyway, so that was the line of succession there.

But Max was with the Minister on this overseas trip. Because I remember Max was the first person I asked who got this job originally and he said, 'Oh, it's not our routine or our practice to tell people.' I said to him, 'Well, it would help a little bit, because you like to know who the competition is, if it's somebody better for it than you.' And they told me afterwards, Geoff Virgo told me afterwards, that the guy that they'd actually appointed was an electrical engineer and that was because Geoff himself had a high priority to electrify the railways. But the guy went to the World Bank. I see him occasionally, he's called Thompson[?], I think he's probably retired now too, but I saw him at a meeting in Cambridge a few years back. I said to him the first time I ever met him, I said, 'Well, I owe my job to you', and of course he didn't know why, because he was – – –. (laughter) Yes, that's right. The machinery within the office was all-important.

But the other good thing I think for me – again it's a very personal point of view – is that it just happened that our office, the Minister of Transport's office and the

Director-General's office was in the State Admin Centre and so whereas the Premier was on the eleventh floor I was on the twelfth I think and Geoff was on the tenth so you saw these people on a sort of day-to-day basis, which was also very good. If you had a problem, you want to go down, talk it over with Bob Bakewell and his successors after Bob had come from the Commission to the Premier's Department – I assume somebody's going to interview Bob, are they?

Yes, I think Bruce Guerin or one of the others is.

Yes, because Bruce would have been one of his successors, you see.

Yes.

No, they were good people. And a good example of this is I remember once, soon after I was appointed, going down to have a chat with Bob Bakewell and Bruce Webb was there, and Bruce had been appointed the Director of Mines at the same time as I came in as DGT, and I had a friendship with him which resulted from being in Bob's office. Our professional interests were pretty remote, but for that reason, for all of his days after that, Bruce was always a friend and it came out of just the way in which this State did its business.

The other thing I might mention, which is probably nothing to do with Dunstan himself but certainly adds to this smoothness of the machinery, was the audit. My recollections of the audit function in Canada was one of a remote agency that was only there to criticise you. When I came here, I remember at my first meeting with the Auditor-General – I think he was at the time, he was either a member of the Tramways Board or he'd been a member of the Lees Committee, Ivan Lees had a railway review committee before I came here and I think – I've forgotten his name too, I'm sorry about that, I would have that somewhere – and I said something to him about the audit function and he said, 'Oh, you'll find it's quite different here. We like to think that the Auditor-General's office is there to help departments work better', and I never forgot that, and they did. Even when we did things that we needed to be taken to the cleaners for in later years, I think it was always like that and it was a tradition of the Auditor-General's right until – well, Ken McPherson has just retired and he was in the same mould. All these people, all these successive Auditor-Generals and their staff, some of their deputy A-Gs – well, Tom Sheridan, I

guess, went, didn't he, from the Treasury to being one, and one of his deputies went from the Highways. Isn't that terrible, I've just forgotten his name, he was a head of finance in the Highways and went to be one of the deputy A-Gs. I always thought that relationship was very good in South Australia, too.

And finally, because I don't want to labour this point too much, the relationship with what was the Public Service Commission and the public service processes I always liked, too. I remember I hadn't been here very long and I got a call from John Stock, who was then a young guy working in the Public Service Commission, and he said to me, 'We've got this young economist, a woman here, she's applied for a job in Engineering and Water Supply or PBD[5] or somewhere, but', he said, 'I've had a look at her CV and I think she'd just be ideal for your operation.' Sent this girl over to us – I don't know, maybe she was twenty-one, twenty-two – came over, worked with us, turned out to be one of the country's best transport economists, Margaret S....., she was called or is called.

Margaret – – –?

Stars[?].

Starlish[?].

And she left us in about 1980 or early 1980s to go into consulting and then she went as the chief economist at the National Road Transport Commission, finished her years off in sort of private consulting. But that was simply because John Stock and his colleagues and that, these guys, John Burdett and people like that, they always had this sort of wide-eyed approach.

Yes, I remember it myself. It's one of the reasons I mentioned Max Johnson, because he started and then –

He came from – that's right.

– and he seemed to have an overview.

That's right. He came from the Commission, that's right, to his .....

Yes. That overview of the service, perhaps it's too big now, I don't know.

[5] PBD – ???

Oh, I don't know.

There's this layer of minders – – –.

Yes. (laughs) But these skills, they're still there in people, as you say; it's a matter of allowing them to exercise them.

Yes.

Yes, because that's right. We were looking for a suitable admin assistant or secretaries I guess they called them in those days and we'd narrowed this down to two for my office, and there was a lady who was I think maybe in her late thirties and this young girl, eighteen. We interviewed the two of them – somebody else had narrowed them down in a selection panel – and Max and I and maybe somebody from the Commission sat down and we interviewed these two people. I had a slight preference for this older lady because of her experience but she was outside the service, and Max said to me, he said, 'Do you feel really strongly about that?' I said, 'No, not at all,' I said, 'I just want somebody who can do the job.' And he said, 'Well, we just have a tradition in South Australia of recruiting within the service if we've got somebody who's suitable', and this Sue White came to work for me and worked for me for whatever it was, twenty-five years. Not quite; I think she went off and did something else, so maybe let's say twenty years, yes, maybe about twenty years before she went off to do something else. But yes, that was another superb appointment, became part of the team. It was just great.

But that's another thing: John Hutchinson was very good at recruiting people, too. He had a good eye and a good ear for the right sort of people. Anyway, Alan, I don't know – have you got anything else?

Well, one last thing here that I don't remember but was referred to me: the Goods Movement Study.

Oh, right, yes. Well, I'm glad you mentioned that because one of the first things that we did was Bruning had said, 'What this little group of people needs to do is as well as looking at current transport planning issues, which in some ways could well be handled by the existing machinery,' he said, 'you need to look at issues that fall between the cracks, things that line agencies are not going to do as a matter of routine. And so we set up a research program very early, and one of the projects in

this was the Goods Movement Study. It was an analysis of how important freight movement was to the State's economy but particularly in those days to the manufacturing industry, what proportion of the costs that industry incurred were being absorbed in transport. People used to quote figures depending on their point of view a size, fifteen and twenty per cent and all of that, and we did this job. Actually, the team that did it was a joint sort of in-house – Scott's team, W.D. Scott's at the time, then it became part of one of the bigger consulting groups. Tony O'Malley was one of the people who's still around in the town and he was involved in the very early stages, and some of the Scott's people from Sydney, too. We did this in association with the – ah, now, what was its title? There were two organisations: there was Industrial Research Institute, IRI, which I was a member of; and then there was another one called something like Industrial Development Advisory Council. The names of these places changed over time, you know, State Development Council and Economic Development Council or whatever; but at the time I think it was called something like Economic Development Advisory Council, and we did it in co-operation with them under the guidance of Bob Ling from Hill's Industries and Noel – I've forgotten his surname now, he was the managing director of Solar at that time – – –.

The optometry firm.

Yes, the optical firm. His name's just gone. But we had this, and it was a process that we liked to use that was in any job that involved the industry, we wanted the industry to be part of it and there was good machinery for doing that. Out of that was produced this Goods Movement Study, which demonstrated that the cost handicap through its transport links to South Australia were not that great. There might be something like four per cent – – –. One of the problems is that the range would have been enormous, you know, something between one point five per cent and eleven. But in the manufacturing industry average it was four, five per cent, and this job demonstrated that. Now, that was very important because the industrial development people need to demonstrate to potential manufacturers, or to a manufacturer here in South Australia who was thinking of moving his business to the Eastern States to be closer to the market, more accurately what that figure was.

The second aspect of the study was to demonstrate how important urban goods movement was; that it wasn't enough – and this was easy for me because it had been part of my background, I'd done this work in Canada actually with the Americans, it was part of a joint Canadian–DOT[6] team looking at urban goods movement, so this element of the study was second nature, also a thing that I really enjoyed doing at the time – and it was to demonstrate that it's not enough just to look at the inter-city links and say, 'If we improve the Adelaide–Melbourne railway or the Sydney–Adelaide–Broken Hill highway or something we'll get these benefits or whatever', it was equally important to make sure that your freight movement within the city was efficient – and that is still a problem. It is still a major issue, because the public don't like trucks. People like driving their cars and they don't see the necessity for things to be delivered by truck.

One of the rationales for Monarto was that you could transfer before you crossed the ranges, not after you crossed them.

That's right, that's right. You could have freight interchange at Monarto, that's right, bringing your freight in. And not only that, that you'd split the loads up before you reached the most difficult parts of the metropolitan area, like the railway coming over the hill between Monarto and the city: you could get the stuff, that's right, at some interchange. Yes, I know. .... that, that's something that you're much more expert than I in, but I remember being involved with projects to do with Monarto, one of which I used just last week in a railway speech, and that was the work that we did looking at the possibility of a tunnel through the hills. At that time it wasn't technically such a good idea because the grade on the railway would become impractical because we wanted to get up to Monarto; but the reason I was talking about it last week was thinking about an alpine sub-base tunnel rather like they have through the Alps, or they've opened one I think and they're working on two and they've got a plan for the fourth, so that instead of going sort of halfway up the mountain and then through you actually cut through the base of the mountain at much lower altitude, so you have a much longer tunnel. Of course in this case it would be from somewhere in the sort of Torrens Park–Brownhill Creek area right

[6] DOT – Department of Transport.

through to the Murray River, whereas at the time we did it in the early '70s we needed to get through the highest point on the ridge but you still were on the plateau of Monarto, if you like, and the grade – as is proven by the grade on the freeway, and the roads can take it but the railway wouldn't be able to handle that, either up or down. But I remember doing the job that Basil was, Basil Thompson did that job for us.

So there was plenty went on and altogether I think – I have a record somewhere – that in a period of about fifteen years, which is slightly longer than the Dunstan period, I think we did about two hundred pieces of combined planning and research exercises of one sort and another.

So you came here, just to get it on the record, which year?

Nineteen seventy-two.

Nineteen seventy-two.

I came in February 1972 and I retired in – – –.

That was around about the time when the State Planning Authority had done that *Adelaide 2000* report –

That's right.

– of different scenarios, and Monarto or the idea of a second city was building up, so you sort of walked straight into the midst of all of this sort of strategic thinking.

And, more than that, one of the great things is – .... taught me this – and he said, 'I'm sort of biased in a way because I've been involved with the State Planning Authority and the State planning people for a long time', but he said, 'You won't have a great deal of difficulty in worrying about the sort of base within which you have to work because the planning authority are there and they do this work.' And in fact I had a second opinion of that because at the time that I came here soon after David Kettle came here from Canada too and he and I were at university together. We worked together – never in the sense of the same organisation, but in the same cities – in London and in Ottawa and then in Adelaide, and he came to work for the State planning people about the same time, and he told me. He said that he was attracted to the State for the same reasons in planning that I was in transport.

Yes.

So I tell the story as if it's a personal one, but there are an awful lot of people who benefited in the same way. John Hutchinson was encouraged to come back from Vancouver, he'd been working in Vancouver. There was a vibrancy about South Australia that some of us didn't know until we got here, but there were a lot of others that were really keen to come back once the Dunstan Government was elected.

Yes, I suppose we locals may have taken that for granted but, no, I think we were aware of it because of the contrast with the earlier period.

Yes. Well, I think Steele Hall, in all fairness, I think Steele Hall had probably –

Yes, back before him.

– he probably demonstrated that a new, younger Premier might do different things, and Don was able to build on that. I think that probably it would have been more difficult for a guy like Steele because the traditions and that were very strong in the Liberal Party. I mean, I'm not saying they're not in the Labor Party, but Don just seemed able to handle them whereas I'm not sure anyone could in the (laughs) Liberal Party.

Anyway, thank you very much, Derek.

Pleasure. I enjoy talking about it and it's something that I do very often in my old age. I tell people, when I hear people denigrate those years, I say, 'You want to think yourself lucky. There are some high schools here and things like that that wouldn't be the quality they are.' I mean, you look at a place like Marryatville that was transformed from being a technical high – or even Adelaide High; well, no, in the case of Adelaide High he'd built on a reputation. Marryatville built its reputation in next to no time thanks to some of those policies – seems to me, anyway, I know nothing about education but I know my kids were brought up here and it didn't do them any harm at all.

Okay.

Thanks, Alan.

END OF INTERVIEW.