

Bob SMITH

This is George Lewkowicz for the Don Dunstan Foundation Don Dunstan History Project interviewing Dr Bob Smith. Bob worked in the Premier's Department in the 1970s. The date today is 6th June 2008 and the location of the interview is Dr Smith's home in Victoria.

Bob, thanks very much for doing this interview for the Don Dunstan History Project. Can you talk a bit about yourself, where you were born and your education, and then how that sort of led into the position you took up in the Premier's Department?

Well, thanks, George. Look, if it weren't for Sir Robert Menzies I'd have been a farmer like everyone else in the family. I went to school in Adelaide because there was no easy access to secondary education in the country where I lived, and from university went into postgraduate studies and then into academia, which was a highly-divergent career path for people from the farming industry.

I got into the public service also in a happenstance way because of research into the Whitlam Government's changes to the public service. It became apparent to us that there were things going on inside the public service that we could never find out from the outside. There were internal incentives, motivations and ideas and important things going on that just weren't visible to the outside. So I thought the only way to do that was to take the anthropological approach and go and live in it for a while. Living in it turned out to be nearly twenty years. And then at the end of that time, which took me from South Australia to Victoria and on to Queensland, I came back to Melbourne and started reflecting on it, mainly through the process of teaching students, including especially international students.

Now, you were doing, you mentioned, academic work on public sector reform. What was that work and roughly when was it: was it the early 1970s?

It was the early 1970s. There were three of us: Geoff Hawker, Pat Weller and me, and we were funded by the Department of Political Science in the Research School of Social Sciences at the ANU,¹ and the idea was to look at the institutions and processes of policymaking, and we adopted the policy processes approach to

¹ ANU – Australian National University.

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distinguish our approach from traditional public administration and traditional political science, as it was at that time. And what we ended up doing were two things: we knocked out a number of papers on things that we were interested in that we could observe just from being around in Canberra; and the second thing we did was we got information through work for the Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration – Geoff Hawker was Director of Research for that, and both Pat Weller and I did several consultancies for that commission – and out of that we got enough for several books. Geoff wrote a couple on his own; Pat wrote another one on treasury processes, and Pat and I edited a book on public service inquiries; and Geoff, Pat and I did a thing called *Politics and policy in Australia*, which was not the first public policy-style book but one of the first, say, half-dozen in Australia published in the late 1970s.

So you had all this observation and research about public sector reform and processes. What were you taking into the position when you, one, applied for the position in the Policy Division of the Premier's Department and, then, in your application of that? What did you have in mind?

What I had in mind was pretty irrelevant, actually, because the most important lesson was that scholars don't necessarily make public servants, let alone effective public servants. The most important thing from my point of view was discovering that there was a wholly different way of using information and analytical skills which don't meet scholarly criteria but which, nevertheless, are in their own way quite rigorous and which are not necessarily understood or appreciated by scholars.

And the position, what was it called, in the Policy Division? Was it Chief Projects Officer?

No, I was Senior Projects Officer, and I remember it had an 'S' on the end because a lot of similar designations were 'Senior Project Officer', and I can remember once being twigged by Bruce Webb, who we'll doubtless talk about later on, saying, 'Oh, you're the Senior *Projects* Officer, are you? You only take on the *senior* projects, do you?' (laughter) Which he thought was quite pointedly funny and which I had a different view of.

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And what was your knowledge of Don Dunstan and the Dunstan Government, like his ideas, his style and his broad achievements? Did that attract you to the job, too?

Well, the idea that there was a different way of doing things in South Australia was something that was pretty attractive to people who'd grown up in Adelaide and in the countryside in the 1950s. In our family, Don Dunstan stood for everything that was reprehensible and I had an uncle in the legal profession who said that if Don Dunstan ever became Attorney-General all right-thinking practitioners would (laughs) cease practice forthwith, it was that kind of relationship.

And why was that?

Oh, Dunstan was unattractive to people in the countryside for two reasons: one, he spoke with an upper-class accent, which was enough to get him stoned; and, second, he was a member of the Labor Party, which was also enough to get him stoned. So he was worth capital punishment twice over.

Right, and were any particular ideas and policies he put up that were anathema to the country people?

Oh, he was a walking embodiment of ideas that were the antithesis of what hard-working farmers should be on about. It's hard to understand it from this period, but it was quite literally another world. Even though the Yorke Peninsula was only two hours away from Adelaide by car now, in the 1950s it was a lot longer by car, and mentally it was further still.

Your knowledge of work of the Premier's Department before you took up the job, what did you understand about the role you were going into?

Oh, very little. The main reason for being interested in it was that it was clear from our research work that incoming governments that wanted to do things differently – and it happened that we were studying Labor governments – were up against it in terms of being able to understand the capabilities of the public services and also give consistent ministerial leadership, which would be understood and taken on in the public service. And the thing that was most obvious about a number of state governments at the time, and South Australia was the leader at this time, was that

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the Premier seemed to be the locus of change and, similarly in Canberra under Prime Minister Whitlam, what Whitlam did with the Prime Minister's Department, particularly under John Menadue, was a bit of a marker as to the way in which the political side of the government could connect to the bureaucratic side of the government, and so therefore the Premier's Department was of interest for that reason.

And what was your immediate impression when you got there, say in comparison with what you thought you were getting into?

Oh, it was highly interesting. It was highly challenging and it was a step that was really very salutary and very transformative, I think.

And some interesting characters, apart from the Premier himself?

Well, it's a whole new language. In academia, at that stage one didn't take management, certainly administration, very seriously at all. One might write about it as important in one's articles but in day-to-day work one didn't have to think about where the money came from or how the processes flowed. Now, we were very lucky at the ANU: Robert Parker, the head of the department, did all that absolutely brilliantly and made it look absolutely effortless and provided wonderful conditions for us to write arrogant, angry papers and get them smoothed over so that we could get them published without getting lynched. So coming into the public service meant having to think about how you made things happen, why you made things happen, what were the heads of power and what were the proprieties and what did getting a good result mean. And these things, like most things, look very different when you're actually doing it compared with when you're just writing about it.

Yes, and what were you learning after a while of that experience?

It was that you had to come up with answers. I mean, in academia, it's good enough to come up – you can make your career out of coming up with a couple of good questions. In the public service, you're only as good as the last thing you fixed up.

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And just observations on the change process, given all of those reforms that Don Dunstan and his cabinet was promoting, implementing, some dropping off for whatever reason: the role of the Policy Division, how did you see that being played out?

Well, at the time it was very hard to see Policy Division outside of the frame that was encouraged within the Division, not only by the Division's leadership but also by the way we all worked together. It always was very much a team approach, a sharing approach, and the informal and the formal processes tended to blend to make a very committed, very results-oriented outfit. But when one stands back from it the criticisms that were made at the time, not only by people within the Dunstan Government but also by people in the succeeding Tonkin Government, seemed to have weight. In many ways the things that I saw and participated in and advocated in other premier's departments were (a) very different from the way the Policy Division ran and (b) were advocated and supported because of the experiences of the Policy Division.

And what were some of those things like?

Well, the most important point was how the Premier relates to his ministers and in the Policy Division, I didn't – at least till towards the end of my time there, which was only two years – get much of a sense of how the Premier related to his ministers. One has to remember also that cabinet processes in South Australia weren't upgraded to the Commonwealth model at this time; it was still very much the old system, so one didn't get from the cabinet papers necessarily a very clear sense of what was going on in cabinet. And so the patron–client relationship between the Premier and his cabinet ministers, that seemed to emerge in some versions of the story, became quite critical to analysis of the role of the Policy Division and to whether it was an effective institution within South Australia at the time. And in subsequent careers what we found was that making sure that the Premier didn't become overweening, wasn't seen as overweening and wasn't seen as supported exclusively by overweening bureaucrats, became a very important factor.

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Right – is that because of the personage of the premier themselves? One interesting thing in some of the work we’re doing in this is how dominant Don was in terms of a lot of leadership on a lot of these reforms he was looking at and how things just seemed to pivot around him.

Yes. Look, I think on this one that Dunstan was not only a singular individual in South Australia, he was a singular individual in Australian history because he had a collection of personal attributes that were both positive and negative that were larger-than-life. He brought to the South Australian Government, to the South Australian Labor Party, a range of experience that hadn’t been seen since the early days of the twentieth century when people who had been in the various liberal fragments had gravitated into the Labor Party, and he also had a personal intellect which was pretty hard to keep up with. And so you could be a pretty solid cabinet minister and still find that the Premier was ahead of you whenever he felt like getting ahead of you.

And where did say the head of the Policy Division and the head of the Premier’s Department come in? Were they there as key movers and shakers or process people? That’s good relationships with other departments.

It’s very hard, very hard to resist the temptation to say, ‘You know the answer to this question, so why are you asking me?’ (laughter)

Oh, we’d just like to get it on the record from your perspective.

Exactly. I think the issue there was that there had been a drastic change in the Premier’s Department before I joined where a dominant head of the department had been asked to take on another department and a person that had been Chairman of the Public Service Board, a more process-oriented person, Graham Inns, was brought in. This led to some difficult relationships which were very hard to work with and I would say that I accepted too uncritically some of the things I was told about the Policy Division and about the recent history in the place; but even if I’d been a bit more of a wake-up I think it would still have been a difficult area because Mr Inns was a pretty genuinely-motivated character who found himself head of an operation which was doing things that were pretty hard to keep up with and which weren’t something that he had been familiar with in his previous public service

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career, although it had been extensive both in South Australia and PNG.² I suppose one of the questions I'd like to ask Mr Inns, if I ever ran into him again, is, 'Graham, did you actually know what sort of a stunt they were pulling on you when they asked you to become Director-General of the Premier's Department?'

And with regard to Bruce Guerin, who was Director of the Policy Division, I think Bruce had a very hard job because he was clearly intellectually miles ahead of most of us, most other people in the public service. He was – from his point of view, and I think probably pretty accurately – being asked to do a job that was greater than he was being given the resources for, and he was certainly being recognised or remunerated for, so he had to do what any sensible person in this sort of position does and that's exceed your brief, work informally, create your own authority and get on with it. Now, in the process, that led to some problems. As David Corbett said, there were some dragons to be slain in the days of Bruce Guerin's ascendancy. Don't think I'm quoting David quite accurately; but I remember once, after the Policy Division had been disbanded, Corbett saying to me that he thought that there were some things that had been done when Bruce was Director that had led to its demise, and David was in a reasonably good position to observe, being a professor at Flinders and then a member of the Public Service Board.

And Bruce became Executive Assistant to the Premier as well, had sort of a dual role. Do you recall any thoughts on that at the time?

At the time I thought that was a difficult role for him. It was a difficult role for us. But at the time I thought it was feasible. I also thought that Bruce handled the dual role extremely well. In his interactions with me, he was very punctilious not to let overt political directions come into the conversation. He always talked to his officers, as I saw it, as a public servant, even while he talked to the ministers however he talked to them. So I thought at the time it was a feasible role; now, if anyone suggested that, I wouldn't have a bar of it, I would advocate an alternative

² PNG – Papua New Guinea.

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course with all of the intellectual force I could muster, and the reason why I say that is not only because of Bruce's experience but also because of some later experience I had in Queensland.

And when you were relating to other departments, how was your position in the Premier's Department used? Was it to sort of move things along or be there as a sort of neutral chair, if you like or observer on things?

When you went to a meeting you looked at people's faces and you could see there was a snake in the room – and then you realised it was you. (laughter)

Why was that?

Well, the view of other departments was that – I think this is commonly understood within the Policy Division – the place was staffed with young upstarts, some of whom, to compound the felony, happened to women, and people hadn't been in the public service for five seconds, didn't know anything, were overly-loyal to people who hadn't been in the public service for more than five minutes and were the ultimate source of embarrassment for them and their ministers because the Premier was inclined to listen to their advice and if the Premier did listen to their advice then they got give the job of fixing up whatever it was the Premier was wanting fixed up. So it meant that from the public service point of view this was an outfit that devalued any expertise that they had and tended to cut them out of the game.

Now, the other side of the coin, the Policy Division point of view, was that the public service was a bit inclined to sit where it was comfortable, a bit inclined to encourage the ministers to sit where they were comfortable and not to move as fast as the Premier and the Government corporately wanted to move. And so what we saw playing out here was a very early act in what has been a fairly consistent story of change management in relations between ministers and public servants over the years, and a lot of people have subsequently laboured long and hard – and with some success – to maintain the driving force of Dunstan and the Policy Division, without the political and bureaucratic costs, which as one of the first shows in, learning as it went, the Policy Division incurred.

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One of the interesting things coming out of a lot of the interviews is how young a lot of the people were.

Yes.

It wasn't just in the Policy Division but also in other departments, young people coming in and being given very responsible jobs – whether they were remunerated for that's another issue.

Yes.

But did you get this sense of, 'Here I am: what am I doing here?' Or, if you got that, how did you use your position to sort of shore you up with all these older people who'd been around and had all this expertise?

In some of the projects that I was dealing with, particularly the government's prosecution of its nuclear policy with regard to uranium mining, I found that if you relied on where you came from, that was no use whatsoever; if you relied on who you were and what you knew, that was no use whatsoever; it was really a matter of the speed with which you could get on top of the material they were feeding you and the questions you could ask. And I found with the Mines Department people that simply saying to them 'This is what the Premier wants' was an invitation to be treated to an example of at worst dumb insolence, at best very reluctant concurrence with what might have been asked for.

Getting into the issues was the way to do it, and I found that where their minister and their department wanted to do something, unless you could come up with some questions that really made them think about the basis on which they were proceeding, you weren't going to get anywhere. So I took refuge in epistemology and it worked rather better than I expected, and basically you had to show you were prepared to mix it with them on the issues.

With the policy backdrop? Or sometimes it was clear, other times it was being worked through?

One of the things that was really apparent in the South Australian public service at the time was that an understanding of how policy was thought up and developed and prosecuted was not something that anyone really had thought much about. The idea of due process with cabinet processes, the idea that there was a way in which you

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went about discovering what the questions were that had to be asked, involving people inside and then outside the public service, these things which are meet-and-greet the people now were not really articulated; and certainly in the Policy Division I don't think we were able to articulate them very well, either. We were trying to find our way, and my impression with particularly dealing with people in the Mines Department was that they really didn't have a great deal of time for all this sort of stuff because they had a knowledge base, they had a history and they had some ambitions for their department and for their portfolio which their minister seemed to share, that didn't mean they had to worry about this sort of stuff. They had a truth which needed to be understood and respected and concurred with by other people. And I suppose what nearly twenty years in the public service taught me is that that's not enough, nor is simply blocking people enough. We were at a very early stage in our collective understanding of how to relate to each other over difficult problems.

And did you get any sense from the Mines people that they had a pretty strong minister as well? Was that Hugh Hudson?

Yes, it was Hugh Hudson. Yes, there was a very strong sense that Mr Hudson was very strong. I'd known Hugh Hudson at the university – I hadn't been taught by him, but I'd known him round the campus through student affairs – and there was no doubt about it, Mr Hudson was a dominating personality.

So they had this sense that they could wheel in their minister in these debates and he had a pretty strong voice with Don Dunstan, the Premier?

They did. I must say I was a bit slow on the uptake there: it took me a while to work out the relationship between Hudson and Dunstan in cabinet, because I'd been out of the state too long to know about it from past contacts and I was a little unaware of the importance of this relationship, and it was something that I wished I'd picked up on a bit earlier. I knew from talking to other people, to you, Andrew Strickland and especially Bruce Guerin, that this was an important relationship and that Dunstan and Hudson had a very important alliance which was big enough to accommodate major disagreements on things which they both thought were important, and towards the end of the time of the government I began to get a better

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appreciation of that, especially once Dunstan had left the scene and Corcoran was Premier. I remember on one instance some issue relating to uranium policy came up and Mr Hudson wanted to talk to Premier Corcoran and the Premier didn't want to talk to Mr Hudson, so the Premier arranged that Mr Hudson came into the Premier's Office and found me. Mr Hudson and I very quickly came to the conclusion that there was no point prolonging the conversation so we exchanged pleasantries and left. (laughter)

Can you remember the particular issue at hand?

I can't for the life of me remember what it was; all I know is that Mr Hudson started off making his point and I had to say to him, 'Minister, look, all I can tell you is what I understand the Premier wants. I'm in no position to conduct a policy discussion with you'. And he looked at me and gave a bit of a grin and I gave a bit of a grin back, and he said, 'Well, there's not much point us talking to each other', and I said, 'No, I'm afraid not'. And at that stage I realised that there was a breakdown in relationships and that my briefing notes to the Premier were basically not going to lead to any productive result any time soon.

Right, so that was for them to sort out at whatever time.

That's right, exactly.

One other thing, recent observations about the importance of a government having a narrative: I was wondering just on reflection whether you could see what you were doing as part of an overall pattern, that is, here's a state on the go with these reforms in all sorts of areas attracting people, dynamism, notwithstanding some economic bumps along the way and that, did you see that helping the change process, if you recall anything like that?

Yes, I think there was consistent narrative of reform, story of reform, which has largely been lost sight of outside of South Australia now, but at the time the changes inside South Australia were quite remarkable because the 1950s and early 1960s were pretty claustrophobic times in South Australia generally and in Adelaide. Now, as a South Australian born and bred, I sometimes looked askance at the heretical comments made by some of the lecturers at the university who clearly wondered what they'd wandered into, and so to have the state led by a premier with

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oratorical and intellectual and political flair, a man who was in his time – and quite rightly – a national figure doing things to the state public service, doing things to the state government and, more importantly, doing things to and for South Australia which put the state on the map was really pretty exciting. And Dunstan had a story about equity, about shared prosperity, about rights for people at the bottom of the pile, including Aboriginal people but also including people in the mental health system, people who were impoverished, having a fair go; and it was a story told with a lot of flair. And there were a lot of bells and whistles: all the arts stuff, which was important; I remember you, other people, telling me no new building could be planned without there being a restaurant in it, possibly also an art gallery. (laughter) These were things which were very different from the Adelaide of the early 1950s and were pretty exciting and made the place a much more exciting place to live in than was hitherto the case.

And, just rounding off this area, there's all this policy work going on and reform: did you sense any political ideological backdrop to this? I'm referring to the debate about democratic socialism and how democratic or radical it should have been at the time.

Well, Dunstan was regarded by many in the not-so-far left as an absolute sell-out and people in the left magazines would write all sorts of quite derogatory things about the government. But it was a government so it made pragmatic decisions, and not all of these pragmatic decisions pleased everyone; not all of these pragmatic decisions met all of the criteria which were central to its story. That's life in government. What stands out from the period, thirty years on, is that this was a consistently radical reform government which, in the end, was more successful on the cultural front than it was on the economic front. And one of the tragedies that we could see coming before us in the Policy Division I think was that the economic side of South Australia was just not going well and that manufacturing was not going at all well and we were at that period where what had been the Playfordian industrial base of South Australia was corroding and nothing seemed to work and we hadn't yet got a vision of an alternative. And I can remember sitting in a briefing for the Premier before he went off to a Premiers' Conference at some stage

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and various people would ark up and say their piece about various things they could try; the Premier would lift one droopy eyelid and say, 'We've tried that. We've tried that. We've tried that', and we could sense the weariness and the incipient defeat in his voice; that there was a hollowness underneath the achievement.

Just this general area of policy in the Premier's Department and the Premier, is there anything else you would like to put on the record for us before we head into some more specific policy areas?

The final thing I'd say is that the enduring memory I have of the Policy Division was of a place where people worked very hard, people played very hard, where there was a lot of questioning, there was a lot of answering, and there was an almost-surprising degree of mutuality of effort. So I always found that it was a good experience to have had, even though it ended up being a pretty shattering end, but it was a great experience to learn from and, when one now looks at the way governments of a reform nature – whether of a neo-Liberal nature or a Labor nature-led form – you can see where the Policy Division's experience, the Premier's Department's experience, fits into a broader pattern of state governments learning how to use political power in a way that was linked to pretty serious policy work. And so being in as a participant observer in one of the first shows in the country was rather a nice thing to have been able to do.

Just moving now into the uranium policy area, just by way of summary, there'd been a uranium report, *The hazards of the nuclear fuel cycle*, and there'd been a cabinet submission on that and I think some decisions been made, but I just can't quite remember the sequence of Don Dunstan's visit overseas to check out a few things. And the note I've got from you is you did some work on the revision of that hazards report and production of another paper, and then working on nuclear codes of practice. Perhaps we could just talk about the revision, or where you came in: what was your role in the nuclear policy area?

When I came in, Bruce Guerin decided that you were needed for other things and therefore I should do the revision. That was news to me, because I knew absolutely buggar all about the nuclear fuel cycle, and I didn't know where this fitted into the politics of the Labor Party or the politics in South Australia or even the framework of government decisions.

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What came about was the revision of *Hazards of the nuclear fuel cycle* merged with continuous discussions with the Mines Department about not only that but other things, because the Fraser Government made the decision that they would open up the Ranger uranium mine and, as a consequence of that decision, they initiated the nuclear codes of practice activity, which they had to involve the states in, and so that made the South Australian Government's position quite controversial and antagonistic to that of the Federal Government at least on a superficial level. Also there was the management of the long-running issue of the South Australian Government's relationship with uranium enrichment and with the European company Urenco, and so you had, in retrospect, a series of events that were overlaid on each other, and I'd have to say again I was a bit slow in working the pattern out there.

Then the other thing that came in was the Maralinga cleanup – you know, yet another Maralinga cleanup; as it turns out now, one of the early ones. We thought it was the last one, but there've been quite a few Maralinga cleanups since the one we were involved in. And there was also involved in this the relationship with the Fox Inquiry, which had –

That's the Ranger one.

– yes, which had looked at the Ranger issue and whether uranium mining should proceed. If I remember correctly, that was commissioned by the Whitlam Government but the Fraser Government took the decisions. Now, one of the members of that was Dr Charles Kerr, and one of the other guys on it, apart from Mr Justice Fox, was a fellow called Graham Kelleher, who was later the Chair of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Kelleher was sort of an environmental public servant, we'd call him now, and Kerr was a medical doctor of some kind in Sydney. One of the things I ended up doing was having long telephone conversations with Kerr about all sorts of things to get ideas or to confirm directions, just make sure we weren't falling off the edge. That was a relationship which Bruce Guerin organised: he flew to Sydney and saw Kerr and put some

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arrangement in place for Kerr to act as a consultant; my job was to talk to Kerr on the telephone.

I can remember once saying to Bruce, ‘Oh, it mightn’t be a bad idea if I actually went to Sydney and saw Professor Kerr’, and Bruce thought that was an extremely bad idea. So I had the pleasure of talking to Professor Kerr on the phone for absurd lengths of time on many occasions and finding these conversations very intellectually-stimulating – and, from a policy analysis point of view, extremely practical, because if Kerr said something was a bad idea then we’d have to talk about it; if Kerr said, ‘No, look, I think you’re heading in the right direction, keep at it’, we would just keep at it.

And with Kelleher it was a more sidelined relationship. We met each other a few times through being on Commonwealth–State working parties, and exchanged information from time to time.

And what was your role: to gather information and negotiate, or do briefings for others to negotiate?

Sure, yes. Well, with *Hazards of the nuclear fuel cycle* it was a process of keeping up with new information that was becoming available from European and particularly from Department of Energy sources in the United States, because that was the time of the Carter Department of Energy, later disbanded, which turned out ream after ream of very elegantly-crafted reports. And this was before Three Mile Island. It was at a time when the Mines Department were asserting, and so were other people in the nuclear lobby in Australia, that this stuff was absolutely safe and they would say to us all the time how safe is safe, and we would say to them, ‘Well, how do you know it’s safe? How do you know it’s not going to do this, that and the other?’ I got the sense early on that they were overstating their case, that they were stating the case in political terms that could not necessarily be substantiated in scientific or other intellectual terms, and so that was the area that I kept hammering and I later discovered it was the Lyndon Johnson question: ‘How do you know?’ And I didn’t know it was the Lyndon Johnson question, but with Bruce Guerin’s encouragement I asked it all the time, and I found that – coming back to something I

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said earlier about taking refuge in epistemology – it was a way of making sure that your place at the table was always legitimate, because you were asking questions that they didn't want to have to answer but that they knew were going to keep being asked and they had to do something about it, and that political bluff and bluster wasn't going to be enough.

So what was their main interest? It was to mine the uranium and sell it off and maybe enrichment as the next step; they weren't too fussed about what happened to the uranium after?

Well, I think it can be succinctly summed up in the terms of Sir Ben Dickinson: 'Look at Burra. We're going to have another Burra.' And of course, as you know, in Hindi 'Burra' means 'big'. 'Burra Burra', 'very big', 'Burra Burra', 'very big'. So the town of Burra was once Burra Burra, which in Hindi is 'very big', and that was what Dickinson was after, that was what Bruce Webb was after, that was what Hugh Hudson was after. And the thinking was that really South Australia could sell the stuff and other people would look at how it was used, and in any case the Mines Department people were convinced that it was safer than safe and that there weren't issues, and so by looking, as *The hazards of the nuclear fuel cycle did*, at the back end of the fuel cycle, politically and economically and policy questions of a pretty unfortunate and unpleasant nature were raised and probably at the time properly so. We can probably give different answers to some of those questions now than we could give thirty years ago when safety could not be plotted through to finality anywhere near as well as it can be now, even though now there are still some big guesses involved.

Yes. And the idea of risk analysis wasn't really on at the time.

Oh. 'What's the risk? You dig it up and flog it. Look, you can eat it, you can sit on it.' I was treated to lectures on how you could sit on uranium without any shielding on your pants and it wouldn't do you any trouble and all the rest of it. The more these stories were told, the more the questions were coming.

And Don Dunstan's position at the time was 'We won't mine it', or was that still being worked out?

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Well, Dunstan's position was something that I don't think I ever clearly heard from him, and this is something that in retrospect I should have been more questioning of. I worked very closely to Bruce Guerin on this and I would see the annotations that the Premier would put on briefing notes, but I would only very rarely get involved with the Premier – in fact, I can't think of a single instance at the moment, although there may have been some, where I would actually talk to him, with Bruce and with other people, about nuclear policy. Where we did get involved in the detail was with the nuclear codes of practice where, because I went to most of the meetings, I would have to work out beforehand what the line was, clear that with Bruce and then clear with the Premier immediately, the next morning, what South Australia's position had been declared to have been in the meetings, because we'd have a brief, we'd stick within that brief as far as we could – and this is something Bruce always encouraged – but always leave room for a bit of opportunism. If you saw an opportunity to kick one goal, take it; if you saw an opportunity to kick six, kick a dozen and get approval for it the next morning. So that meant dictating the memorandum to the Premier on the plane on the way back and having it confirmed on the telex before the blokes in the Commonwealth knew what the hell was going on. So we regarded it as a bit of a trick to have the position on the Prime Minister's desk while in the Prime Minister's Department people were still scratching around working out what their position was.

So was there a parallel thing going on: that is, SA not wanting to mine but if the Commonwealth was going to approve it, 'This is the SA position'?

No, I don't – – –. I'm sure the Premier and Hudson and Bruce talked about that sort of thing but I didn't get involved. I didn't get involved in that until really the last stages, where the trip to the UK took off, and I can remember Bruce Guerin saying to me, 'Look, I don't know what the Premier said to Hudson, but I think he might have told him there was going to be a change of policy'.

Really?

Because certainly working relations with the Mines Department improved out of sight.

Bob SMITH

Interesting.

And we worked through *Hazards of the nuclear fuel cycle* and another paper. Now, *The hazards of the nuclear fuel cycle* I think we got pretty well close to agreement on; the other paper was one that I dictated in great haste and Bruce Webb was very unkindly disposed towards it, to put a polite turn of phrase upon it. However, he wore it. But in any case it was overtaken by events because, before those papers were ever used, Premier Dunstan resigned from ill health and Premier Corcoran took a different approach and, notoriously, the papers were stored in the cupboard of the Deputy Director-General of the Premier's Department's office, discovered by the Liberal apparatchiks when they took over in September 1979, and notoriously released in the gallery by the now Premier, Mike Rann.

Interesting. So just we'll get this clear: the Government's position for a time was no uranium mining, and then there was some – this talk you picked up or whatever about the Government's position changing, this was before the Premier went overseas.

That's right, yes.

The Premier came back and confirmed that there wouldn't be mining, and in the background there's Peter Duncan trying to organise the left –

Yes.

– and Don hearing about that and paying Peter Duncan out, but there's still a decision not to mine in the end, is that right?

Look, I don't know. The impression I had was that because of the Uranium Enrichment Committee and various other things, that the early view of the South Australian Government had been clearly that here was a resource which had to be mined. It was a view that was similar to that taken by the NDP³ Government in Saskatchewan in Canada, which had very similar values to the South Australian Labor Government. I met some of those people when they came to Australia and they were very much in favour of mining, and Bruce Webb used to berate me by

³ NDP – New Democratic Party of Canada.

Bob SMITH

quoting from their reports and all the rest of it. That was highly entertaining. Then, by the time I joined the Premier's Department in August 1977 the firm policy was not to mine and *Hazards of the nuclear fuel cycle*, as I understood it – you would know, having been principal author of the first edition, what the story was – that was a blocking manoeuvre, and my job, as I understood it, was to keep that up to date and so I had an eye on two horses. One was that the policy would remain to block, and the other was that there might be a policy switch. So I was often identified by various people, perhaps mischievously, as a person who was rock solidly opposed to uranium mining, and the more I read the more I decided that I had to do what public servants are often supposed to do and that's run two sides of the argument. (laughter)

And so the side of the argument that I had to run was very clear from discussions with my public service boss, and that was to keep the obstacles running. That continued right up until the Premier's trip, and the Premier's trip, to me, seemed to be more about reinforcing the Premier's position that he wouldn't allow mining to go ahead than that he would. I have no idea personally of what he said or might have been thought to have said to Mr Hudson and I've no idea, of course, what he said to Bruce Guerin, and I've got no idea what he said while he was on the visit; but I was primed to release the documents that had been prepared with the Mines Department on the Premier's return, and I took that to mean that there was going to be no decisive change in policy. And certainly the phone conversations that I had with Bruce Guerin while the visit was in place – because I had several of those – were not of a kind to have made me start to reopen the documents and to firm the ground up for a change of policy. There was nothing that Bruce said to me that suggested there was going to be a change in policy. Now, that doesn't mean that it wasn't on the cards; just that I wasn't told. (laughter)

You weren't told. So who were the key players? We've mentioned, of course, the Premier, Bruce Webb, yourself, Bruce Guerin, Ben Dickinson. There was Ron Wilmshurst.

Ron Wilmshurst and Keith Johns.

Bob SMITH

Keith Johns was what?

Deputy, he was Deputy to Bruce Webb. And Keith Johns had the reputation of being a more equable person to deal with. He had been either a lifelong public servant or he'd been in the public service long enough to be quite pragmatic about how he operated, and he had a reputation – and I found this to be true – to be pretty responsive. You'd go and ask Keith a question and he'd either say yes or he'd say no, and if he said yes it was yes, and if it was no it was bloody no, and so you knew where you were with him; whereas with Bruce Webb, Bruce was a more complex character, in many ways a very interesting bloke – he was really somewhat puzzling, but also I found him a very genuine bloke and a very friendly bloke in a way. And Wilmshurst and Webb and I negotiated some of these contracts, some of these documents, and we got into a situation where we'd work through the afternoon and then we'd go home and have some dinner and come back and have another go, and we'd break out the beer about eight o'clock. Bruce Webb liked a beer: he said, 'No point in having a dry argument', and I found that our relationships improved quite a lot after the beer was broken out, because in those days I was quite a keen beer quaffer and Bruce was definitely a very keen beer quaffer, and Ron Wilmshurst certainly liked a pint or three. So we'd sit there and we'd negotiate points over three or four bottles of beer and got on with each other, and whether that was Wilmshurst and Webb thinking that they were on a turning point or not, I don't know; all I know was that I saw a different side of these guys. Wilmshurst I'd always regarded as a straight shooter and I came to appreciate his technical grasp and his professionalism; and Bruce Webb I just got to understand a bit better and to sympathise with some of his frustrations at having his minister's ambitions upset by a bunch of twerps from the Premier's Department. So I ended up with a higher appreciation of him than I might otherwise have had. But in terms of the policy significance of that activity, I don't know. That was just a nice way to end what had otherwise been an unholy row.

But certainly when the Premier got off the plane the impression I had was that there was to be no change and the reason I went down to the airport to meet the

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Premier as he got off was that Bruce Guerin rang me up from wherever he was in the UK and said, 'You get down to the airport and you make sure you're at the foot of the steps when the Premier gets off the plane'. So I knew from that that there was something going on and I did what I was told to do: I presented him with the documents or told him where they were, told him what we'd been doing, and he looked to be hale and hearty, to be in actually extremely good spirits, greeted me and other people with great friendliness and the full Dunstan voice production, and he looked to be smiling and on top of the world I then went back to the Premier's Department waiting for the next iteration – which, of course, never came.

Incredible. And did you get any sense of activity, were you tuned into what was happening around the Party at all, the Labor Party?

No. I kept a fair distance away from the Labor Party, I have to admit. I still had my Party ticket at that stage, but I made the decision that there was no way one could be an active member of the Party and also an honest public servant, so I made it – perhaps wrongly – made it my business not even to be aware of what was going on. I knew other people were aware and I thought, 'No, this is a game that I don't want to play'.

Yes. And there's some talk about a document that Ron Wilmshurst and Ben Dickinson and whether it was the Premier or Bruce signed, I can't remember, about their observations and conclusions on their trip. Did you ever see that or know about it?

No. I didn't, and in fact I'm not too sure that I was even aware of that sort of thing until you mentioned it in the emailed questions. Now, I think my memory is simply faulty here, because Bruce Guerin did keep me pretty well-informed as to what he wanted me to know, and it was Bruce's style to brief with a purpose and in a fairly complete way, because Bruce's technique to lock you in was to let you make your own conclusions, and he was a past master at that. I've never met or worked with anyone who was quite as good at that technique; and in saying that it was a technique and that I'm aware of the technique I don't cast any aspersions on Bruce Guerin. It was just I take my hat off to the man. He was a master policy activist and

Bob SMITH

a master civil servant. He did his job extremely well and I wish at the time I'd had the powers of observation to notice a little more than I do in retrospect.

What about the public, the press and all that sort of thing? Do you recall any big debate going on and where the people were, if you like?

Ben Dickinson was always up to something and, as everyone knew and Bruce Guerin was particularly aware, Ben had access to people you didn't think anyone could get near. He just had unrivalled access to people in the mining world. And the view around the place was that he thought here was a state which was beginning to struggle economically sitting on a potential goldmine, literally as well as figuratively, and why the bloody hell didn't they get on with it? And South Australian political debate at that stage was pretty raw and it was sold pretty much in terms of the pro-miners were very much in favour of jobs, jobs, jobs, money, money, money, and that was all there was to it. My view was that the Dunstan Government had taken a tough call to say, 'Hang on, we don't want to be party to something that is going to have impacts for which we will be responsible and for which other people will bear the costs', which seemed to me a fairly sound moral position and also a position that was justified in terms of the policy analysis. And it seemed to me at the time – and especially now – that you had to push the argument several further steps in before one could justifiably go ahead and mine. Now, later on, other people took those steps and it's now a matter of history that the Roxby Downs mine is a very successful one and that the dreams of Ben Dickinson and Bruce Webb and Hugh Hudson for a giant mining province in South Australia may yet be fulfilled.

Very good. Is there anything more you wanted to say on the uranium area?

I think there's one other thing. The uranium codes of practice led to some interesting observations, one is about Maralinga and one is about how state governments do things for strange reasons.

One of the things that became very obvious was that the federal public servants were very fed up with South Australia's intransigence and with the intransigence of some of the other states.

Bob SMITH

They were Liberal states, not Labor.

Yes, they were Liberal states. And so they, in the time-honoured way of Commonwealth bureaucrats, would try and cut you out of the herd at morning or afternoon tea or lunchtime and give you an exhibition of their latest standover tactics. And I got this a couple of times because, much to Mr Webb's annoyance, Bruce Guerin made it very clear that whoever was the Premier's Department delegation member was the head of the South Australian delegation, so Bruce found it very difficult to sit either in the back stalls or at the table and find that the pipsqueak on his left or his right was the one who was telling the Commonwealth chairman what the Premier of South Australia's view was. So I had no doubt that there were discussions between other members of the South Australian delegation and their Commonwealth colleagues – it would be perfectly natural and I'd certainly do the same if I were in their shoes – and this would lead to a bit of a punch-up with one of the feds, and so out of that came a bit of a movement around the room.

I made the obvious decision that if we wanted to get anywhere we weren't going to get anywhere with the feds because we were just going to get beaten up, so it was a matter of just getting to know the other state representatives. Because there was a reasonable amount of continuity we'd meet each other, so I noticed them moving around the room, so I began to move around the room and we all got to meet with each other and we found that – surprise, surprise – we had one thing in common: we hated, and our Premiers hated, being stood over by the feds. So we had an instant bond. And so then we started talking about the technicalities of what the feds were providing us with and it became apparent that the fellow from Victoria, Keith Thompson – a bloke I later worked with in the Victorian Premier's Department and provided refuge for when he was on the run at one stage. Keith was very good to me when I was on the run in South Australia, so a couple of years later I found I was in a position to provide him refuge in the cabinet office in Victoria, which I did; Keith and I got on very well – –.

Sorry, who was that again?

Bob SMITH

Keith Thompson. He was the Federal Affairs bloke in Victoria. He was a lawyer, and very upset with the way the Fraser Government was traducing states' rights. And the bloke from Western Australia, Peter Murphy, who was some sort of scientist who liked a good red wine, as I recall – anyway, Peter and I got on very well. Very strange; we had nothing in common, it would appear, but we could talk to each other, and we often used to share a plane from Canberra to Adelaide before he went on, so we used to sit and gasbag. And so I came up with the idea at one stage that it mightn't be a bad idea to see if we could get the Premier of Western Australia, the Premier of Victoria and the Premier of South Australia to send parallel letters to Mr Fraser, and so I tried this out on Bruce Guerin. He raised an eyebrow, as Bruce tended to do, and said, 'Show me the draft'. Well, I showed him the draft and we sent it off to the blokes in Victoria and Western Australia and they said, 'Yep, our bloke'll be in it.' I got on the phone, there was no email in those days, and they said, 'Yeah, our bloke'll be pleased to sign this. Put a few words in here, would your bloke accept that?' 'Yes.' So we negotiated the draft, and this became what Bruce Webb described as 'the unholy alliance'. (laughter) And Bruce Webb thought this was highly immoral, and the feds were highly annoyed, and we just sort of stuck it up them. I can't remember what our excuse was now, but anyway, it just caused them a lot of annoyance. Basically what it did was tell the Federal Government that the states were not going to be sold cheaply and that they weren't going to lie down and just accept; they had to be persuaded every step of the way – they whacked us so we whacked them.

So what were the governance arrangements? Was it a joint ---? I know the Commonwealth was talking to the states, but who had the power in the end?

As I recall it, the Commonwealth had to get the states to agree, and their frustration was that we didn't just lie down on it. I don't know why the hell they would ever have thought that, I don't know.

What were you actually arguing about?

We were arguing about how the nuclear codes of practice would be constructed and thus the level of assurance there would be that ---.

Bob SMITH

So we're looking at, what, mining, safety?

We were looking at mining safety.

Transport?

We were looking especially at transport safety. We were looking at the whole way in which we handled a substance which was now known to be rather tricky and which had the potential to have effects which went well beyond what were directly observable now or even in one or two generations. We were looking at multi-generation impacts of an apparently innocuous substance which had only really been recently discovered to be quite dangerous, and so we used the nuclear codes of practice discussion as an opportunity to just say, 'Look, just be careful with what you're doing'. That was nuclear codes of practice.

Maralinga came out of this because the feds decided to make good fellows of themselves. They were into what they called 'nuclear accounting', and so some silly arse decided that there was a reportable amount of plutonium buried at Maralinga as a result of one of the British tests. So this became a situation where the feds opened themselves up to rent-seeking by South Australia, which we shamelessly exploited. They admitted it, and then a gentleman in the PM's Department fed me a suspiciously large amount of very precise information which suggested to me that someone was running an agenda in the Prime Minister's Department against the Prime Minister, but never proven. Anyway, when someone's on the other end of the phone telling you things which turn out to be okay you don't refuse to take their calls. So we took this bloke's calls, I took this fellow's calls, and we built up a case about what was going on and so, as a result of the Federal Government 'honesty' about this uranium, the feds felt that they then had to get the Brits to repatriate it.

This involved a very high-level delegation of federal officials going up to Maralinga and summoning a South Australian delegation to Edinburgh Air Base. Mr Guerin felt that this was too good an opportunity to miss, so he got the Premier to send a telex to Fraser saying this was gross insolence and we weren't going to be intimidated by being drawn onto Commonwealth military territory, and the meeting had to be held on South Australian Government premises. Mr Fraser agreed to that,

Bob SMITH

and I can remember sitting at the meeting alongside a bloke from Britain who was a very spooky gentleman indeed and he spent a good deal of his time, once he found out what department I was from, trying in the nicest possible way to lasso me into his corner. Anyway, Bruce Guerin did all the front-of-house stuff with the PM's Department. We had the usual very amiable discussion after a very stiff exchange of views; nothing was resolved; (laughter) the federal delegation went back to Canberra without South Australia having given an inch; and then we insisted that the thing be repatriated with South Australian participation and observation, and we sent Dr Jill Fitch up to actually watch them get the stuff out. I can remember Jill coming back and saying they were aghast that I might get out of the plane. 'They said they were very relieved when *you* didn't get out of the plane.' Later I went up there – this was when Mr Corcoran was Premier – to actually watch them while they rolled the barrels into the back of a Hercules and stuck it into a VC10 out at Edinburgh and flew away. And there was a side issue as to where the VC10 was going. It was hypothesised that it was flying back through the United States without the Brits telling the Yanks what they were doing. (laughter)

Oh, god!

Now, this was pretty funny stuff. And it involved us, also, in discussions with the feds about the Maralinga site and again the feds tried a bit of stiff-arm treatment, I remember, two blokes from Canberra coming over and saying, 'We want you to agree to recommend to the Government of South Australia that South Australia takes full responsibility for the Maralinga site', and this required no thought whatsoever. I said, 'I'm not putting that to anyone. I think the meeting is over; let's go to lunch', which we did.

Why did they think they'd get away with something like that?

I suppose they thought it was worth a try. (laughter) They found it was not, and it was so obvious that there was just so much up there. And I can remember once trying to convince Premier Corcoran that we knew what we were doing, and he said, 'Listen, son. I was in the army. I know what they do with rubbish. If there was

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anything there they would have just said, "Put it in a pit and tell them to bugger off". That was Corcoran's warrant-officer realism. Brought me down to earth on that. There was no way we were ever going to know what the buggers had put up there and that we just had to treat it as contaminated soil.

What was the status of the land? Was it Commonwealth land or State land or Aboriginal land?

Well, notoriously, the Aboriginals had been shifted off. There was some agreement between the Playford Government and the Australian Government and/or the British Government. I can remember reading the documents. I can't remember for the life of me now what the status was. The feds, with our enthusiastic encouragement, went off after the Brits to make it very clear to the Brits that they'd let the buggers off so they had to clean it up. The feds, in turn, were very keen to get shot of the problem and we just said to them This is a national problem, we're not copping all the cost of what was an international and a national issue. Thanks very much, but you fix. And of course at this stage the Dunstan Government had done a lot of work with the Pitjantjatjara people and other people in the Policy Division, particularly Andrew Bishop, were responsible for a lot of liaison with Aboriginal communities, so we were very aware of the fact that the Aboriginal communities had, at best, been severely inconvenienced and, at worst, been severely wronged, so therefore there was growing sensitivity that any solution to the environmental issues that remained had to be such that Aboriginal people could go about their business without frying themselves on radioactive land.

Yes, amazing. Just moving into another area, the Privacy Committee that you were on. (break in recording)

Yes, the Privacy Committee was a funny one. I confess I was more interested in the freedom of information exercise which was on at the same time and Bruce Guerin, as I recall, gave that to Dennis Ryan and told me to keep my nose firmly out of it and deliver something on privacy, which I also have to confess I didn't do. The origins of the Privacy Committee seemed to be to do with what later became a bit of a running criticism of Premier Dunstan and the Dunstan family: that was their

Bob SMITH

objection to being photographed and their even greater objection to not being noticed. And I can remember Bruce Guerin saying that the Premier just got sick of people wanting to photograph him when he didn't want to be photographed. The Privacy Committee wasn't set up, however, to look at just that side of things; it also moved onto what we found was safer ground at the time – I think this was approved also by the ministers commissioning it, Duncan and Dunstan – onto information privacy and we got John Keeler from the University of Adelaide involved. And interestingly, in light of the way things go these days, I can remember asking John what sort of a fee he would like and he said, 'Oh, no, too much bother, it's interesting, I'll do it for nothing', and Anne Rein was involved from Peter Duncan's office. We got to the point where we eventually wrote some papers. I can remember having to sort of try to get my head around what computerisation was doing to information management and John Keeler was looking at the legal side of things and were there rights involved and, if so, how does one define them. Anne Rein was very enthusiastic in pursuit of whatever Peter Duncan's agenda was at the time and I'd have to confess she was more on top of it than I was; it was not a project that I found of particular interest and I didn't handle it at all well.

It gave me one thing, and that is an enduring scepticism about a so-called 'right to privacy'. I believe that the origins of the privacy concerns in twenty-first century society go back to Oliver Wendell Holmes and the idea that people – I think it was Oliver Wendell Holmes – the idea that people have a right to be let alone, and that I think is absolutely on the money. But the erection of a whole legally-enshrined and adjudicated set of privacy-related rights still strikes me as playing with something that we don't yet have a handle on, because information slides around in all sorts of mysterious ways, particularly in days of computerisation, and also people want it to slide around in all sorts of ways to their advantage and we haven't yet been able to find a way of enabling people to both be private and to be recognised, both when they want to be, and so there seem to be a couple of desiderata there, not just one. And so being a privacy fundamentalist seems to me to erect difficulties as much as to enshrine desired qualities. On the other hand, to simply say, 'We've got to have information slopping around all over the place so that we can get what we want

Bob SMITH

whenever we want it', is to miss the justly-enshrined desire to be left alone. So I just thought the privacy debate, as we found it, was one that was not very well-developed and we didn't develop it very far, me particularly, and I still, to the extent that I've continued with this, we still haven't developed it very far. We wrote a paper on it recently which was rejected from a prestigious journal on the grounds that we were not sufficiently courteous about the right to privacy, we in fact fundamentally questioned it, and we were so disgusted with ourselves so we simply put the paper into a box and left it there, and one day we may exhume it. So that's privacy, I think. If you wanted to get a better handle on this it would be good to talk to John Keeler or to Anne Rein.

Was government information involved in this, the terms of reference, or had that been sorted out already?

No. No, the freedom of information stuff was going along and the ---.

Sorry – this is statistics the government might have had and information the government might ---.

No. The issue of how a government presents itself and makes stuff available had not in any way emerged. It became clear to me when I got into an operational department in Queensland that this was something we really had to work on, and of course by that stage we were already – this was early- to mid-'90s – working with the early stages of the World Wide Web and so we knew we had a different beast by the tail or, rather, it had us by the throat; and the idea that because something was in a file and someone had said that these things were secret you had to keep it secret was still very much the way we operated. The idea that I hold to now, that really it's government's job to put as much as it can out into the public domain – in its own interest as well as in the citizen's interest – was not something that had been formulated.

I'm sort of separating the two. One's privacy in the sense of you've got somebody's address –

Yes.

Bob SMITH

– and some background on them and what are the restrictions on you being able to pass that information on to somebody else, whereas freedom of information is somebody out there, if you like –

Asking for stuff.

– wants some information about what you’ve got in the government.

Yes. We were very interested in the New South Wales Privacy Committee and with the way in which there were checks being put upon the profligate use of information, and so we went through the debate about did criminal convictions have to stay on the record forever or should criminal convictions be expunged in a graduated way after people had paid a penalty and had been rehabilitated and were back in society. So actually this stuff was very interesting and very worthwhile, but my memory’s very hazy on this. I don’t think we got very far into it.

There was also an inquiry by the Australian Law Reform Commission – the inquiry was headed by David Kelly, later Secretary of the Law Department here in Victoria, and David was a professor in the Law School in Adelaide before that – and I can remember him saying to me once it was the most boring piece of work he’d ever had to inflict upon himself. And Kevin O’Connor, who was later the Commonwealth Privacy Commissioner, was a senior research officer with the ALRC.⁴ And it was one of those things that was at the early stage and we didn’t have a handle on it, and the latest work that I’ve seen on privacy still suggests we don’t have a handle on it, but I haven’t seen the latest ARC report, I know there’s a big one around. I’ve been watching what’s been coming out on the UK websites, and Demos has just released something on it which I’ve just seen the abstract of, and it basically takes the line that we’ve got a way to go in people working out what they really think should be private and what they really don’t mind being public, because it is either to their direct advantage or it is to the public good in some way. It seems to me we’ve got ourselves pigeonholed in an area of saying, ‘Look, it’s my right to assert a right, and this is justiciable through the courts, so there’. It seems to

⁴ ALRC – Australian Law Reform Commission .

Bob SMITH

me that we've erected a whole lot of barriers to the exchange of information about welfare administration, health administration, criminal administration, that is in the public interest and that can be safeguarded as far as individuals are concerned; we just seem to have shackled ourselves with prematurely going to judicialising privacy and taking it throughout that it's a right. And I much prefer the line of what are called in the Canadian literature the 'privacy pragmatists', who say, 'Yeah, we do want to be let alone, but we recognise there is mutual benefit and also direct individual benefit to be had from the exchange and aggregation of official information about individuals'. And I think we're still at the stage of trying to put a handle on it, and if I wanted to put a term on it I'd say, 'This is a wicked problem'.

And the committee did a report but it didn't really get picked up by Des Corcoran.

We had papers that were beginning to pad out the file that were quite, we thought, quite respectable at the time. Premier Corcoran didn't want to know about it. It became very clear that Premier Corcoran didn't want to know about it. And, as I mentioned earlier in the discussion, I was told by someone who seemed to be in a position to know, Attorney-General Griffin *definitely* didn't want to know about it.

That was the Tonkin Government.

The Tonkin Government. And I've still got the folder, I've still got my working folder somewhere, in a box somewhere. But never worked on it again.

Bob, thanks very much for that interview. Some terrific observations and insights there. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW:

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