

**Neal BLEWETT**

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**This is George Lewkowicz for the Don Dunstan Foundation Don Dunstan History Project interviewing Dr Neal Blewett. Dr Blewett was an academic in the mid years of Don Dunstan's time as an MP and then in the early years of his Premiership. Later, Dr Blewett became a Member of Parliament in the Federal arena and a Minister of Health in the Hawke Government, so he's got that interesting crossover of academia and of political process and policy. The date today is the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2010 and the location is Sydney, New South Wales.**

**Neal, thanks very much for doing the interview for the Don Dunstan Project. The reason why we wanted to interview you was your academic work, the Playford to Dunstan publication you did with Dean Jaensch about the Playford years and then the transition to the Walsh–Dunstan period, I'll call it. I think it stopped in about 1970 or thereabouts, the analysis you did; and then you I think personally knew Don and went to some of his parties or dinners and things like that. So we've got a couple of insights into Don Dunstan and his thinking and his political activities.**

**But just to get a brief background on you for the readers and listeners of the interview, can you just say your background – you'd come from Tasmania to Adelaide?**

I was a Tasmanian Rhodes Scholar in 1957 and went to Oxford where I did a Modern Greats degree (Politics, Philosophy and Economics) and then a research degree for which I earned a D.Phil. I was there for about seven or eight years, and in 1963, my wife having given birth to a daughter, I was looking around for an academic position in Australia. I was offered a place in my old University of Tasmania, but did not think it sensible to begin an academic career in a university where I had been an undergraduate. A job came up in Adelaide in the Politics department; I applied for it in the middle of '63 and took up the position at the beginning of 1964.

**In the Politics Department.**

It was in fact a Politics and History department because the then Premier Playford would not tolerate the idea of a Politics department in his university. He would have allowed a Political Science department, but our then professor, who had been schooled in the British tradition, had no time for the new-fangled American Political Science. The result was the compromise Politics and History.

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**That was W.G. Duncan.**

Duncan, that's right, yes.

**Good. So when did you first hear about Don Dunstan? Was that from Tasmania or when you arrived in Adelaide?**

No, I don't think I'd heard of him before I arrived in Adelaide, but I know that I heard of him almost immediately I arrived in Adelaide because two members of the department, Bob Hetherington and Bob Reid, had written an account of an earlier South Australian election – 1959 - in which Dunstan figured quite prominently and both of them were admirers of Dunstan. I was very interested in electoral issues, I'd just finished a thesis in Britain on some British elections at the beginning of the twentieth century and so the political science of elections was a major intellectual concern. So I heard a lot about Dunstan within the Department.

**And what sort of things were people saying?**

Well, they were all pretty positive. I think most of the departmental figures saw Dunstan as the coming figure in the South Australian Labor Party. It was a fairly aged party at that time; he was one of the few younger members of the Party and certainly the most dynamic figure; and, as I say, many in the Department were great admirers of him.

**Were there any particular issues that they talked about at the time?**

Well, very much an issue I was concerned with – maldistribution in electoral systems. They were concerned with this whole question of the gerrymander in South Australia which had existed for many years, and in fact I did some early published work on comparing – using American political science techniques - the level of maldistribution in South Australia as compared with other states in Australia. So those sorts of issues interested me.

**This was all done by basic calculators; we didn't have computers then.**

Yes, you worked on the old-fashioned calculator to do these things.

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**Interesting. So when did you get first to meet Don himself?**

I can't quite remember when I first met him. I know that once I began to work on what was to be the study of the '68 election – that is, some time post-1965 – I began to talk to people in the Labor Party; in 1966 I moved into his electorate; but I can't remember the first occasion on which I personally met him, though of course I'd seen him around and I'd seen his performances and his television work and things like that.

**Well, even if you can't remember the first time, just the times you did meet him in those early years you were in Adelaide, what sort of impressions did you get?**

Well, I was tremendously impressed with him. I interviewed him quite a bit for the work on the Playford to Dunstan book, which was originally intended to be published after the 1968 election but then got caught up in the short-term developments because you had another election in 1970 only two years away, and so it didn't come out until after that election; but the original intention was to write a book on the 1968 election and I interviewed him in relation to that book. I can't remember again when I first went to his home in Norwood, but because I was living nearby I saw him around frequently. I knew Gretel of course, again, because she was teaching at the University and worked in the same building – the Napier - with me. So given our neighbourhood and the university we lived in a kind of Dunstan milieu.

**Interesting. And you remember he used to come to the University when he was an MP and give talks?**

Yes. I heard him lecture. I remember quite clearly one occasion, his talking about his view of social democracy; and of course he spoke on another occasion about the electoral system.

**And do you recall what sort of social democracy?**

Yes. I think that Dunstan is the classic social democrat in late twentieth century Australia. The only other comparable figure, and he's on the national scene, is Gough Whitlam. But both of them seemed to me to be imbued with that moderate,

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social democratic tradition which derived enormously from Great Britain, and I thought that, at the State level certainly, Dunstan epitomised this more than any other state Labor figure – I think not just in South Australia but around the country – and I think [Whitlam was] the only comparable figure, in a way; and they had very much the same views, though when they were both in power at the same time there were considerable clashes between them. But they very much had what I would call a classic British social democratic outlook.

**Does Fabianism remind you of that?**

Yes, a Fabian approach. In a sense, a middle-of-the-road approach, very much concerned with a whole range of libertarian issues as well as equality issues, but the balance between the pursuit of equality and the pursuit of a more liberal society, which was very characteristic of the leaders of the British Labour Party at that period and very much characteristic of both Dunstan and Whitlam – that is, they married a pursuit of egalitarian objectives with also a strong commitment to the liberal tradition.

**Just on that, did you ever talk to him about his long road, his campaigning – he started in 1953, I think, as a Member of Parliament, and the Labor Party then was in a big mess well into the early '60s.**

Yes, not on any specific occasion but that background regularly came up. He was a very good mimic, and he used to give quite marvellous accounts – he'd be at a dinner party and he would take off particularly Frank Walsh, who was the Leader of the Labor Party at that time. He did describe the extraordinary uphill struggle it was in a Labor Party which he thought in many ways was happier in opposition than it was in government.

**Did he ever explain why he just kept at it? Because that's a very long commitment to – – –.**

One of the problems with Don, often, because of the glamour side of him, he's seen as a bit superficial. But if you look at his career it is really a determined, enormous amount of continued application, a very hard and determined slog, seemingly

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incompatible with the glamour thing. He campaigned and had a strategy for nearly 20 years to transform the constitutional structure in South Australia. He begins this almost as soon as he goes into Parliament – very funny about some of his conflicts with Playford over this issue, because he was the most aggressive of the Labor Party people on this issue. That begins there in the middle-'50s and it's not really brought to a conclusion until 1975/76. So there's something like 20 years in which he worked at a strategy which scarcely altered. I mean it was modified by opportunities; but a strategy to transform the representation in the Lower House, to break the power of the Upper House, and those two things were linked together, and he made compromises along the way; but there was a determination, I think – well, certainly from the time I met him in the middle-'60s – a determination to carry through a long-term strategy.

**And your study with Dean, what were the key things you drew from that – just to get a summary for us, you know, your book – (laughter) his campaigning and why it was so effective.**

It's hard to – he was a bit unhappy with – well, 'unhappy' is perhaps too strong a word – but we described his central role in the election as the 'politics of popularity', I remember that's the title of the chapter, which was the study of him. And I would agree, looking back in retrospect, some of that perhaps neglected some of these underlying commitments. It was very much a study of him as a very able populariser of his party's positions. I mean he's the first politician – yes, even more so than I think Whitlam at this stage – the first politician to really mobilise television as a basic support, and the way he played off the newspapers against these other media and against each other. The period we were writing about was the nine months between his becoming premier and the 1968 election. His first premiership was overwhelmingly dominated with winning the next election, to rescuing the Government from the predicament it had got itself into. Even though it had done a lot the Government was in deep trouble because of the adverse economic situation. I think that Dunstan probably only became Leader of the Labor Party because the 1966 Federal Election was so disastrous in South Australia and it looked as though it was

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almost an impossible task to win in 1968, and because the party was so desperate he was able to beat off the challengers. Only just; I mean he didn't win by very much to become Leader of the Party, and I think it was the situation in which the Labor Party found itself in '67 which meant that he had to focus not so much on specific policy issues but on recovering the popularity of the Party.

**And did he ever talk to you about what he was doing?**

Yes. As I say, we discussed these things for the book and he was pretty frank about what he was doing and that he had to exploit all of these media opportunities in the relatively short time he had, and given the fact that the Party's standing was in a fairly poor way when he took over.

**Well, after say 1970, when he got in in a bit more of a stable context, like he won reasonably easily given the way the electorate was shaped, did you follow what he was doing after that?**

Yes. And we'd talk quite a lot about electoral reform. I don't know whether my advice was influential but I believed that it was worth accepting the limited Steele Hall package – I mean this is just prior to '70 – but that, while it wasn't completely what he wanted and it was well away from one-vote-one-value, given Labor's position over about 10 years he would be able to win on this limited reform.

**I interviewed one senior politician of the time and I kept asking him about ideas and policy, and he said, 'Well, politics isn't about that; it's about personality'. I wanted to ask you did Don ever talk to you about his vision? And we talked about his very broad social democratic ideas – – –.**

Yes. In fact, I wrote a silly (laughs) – when in my leftist phase – a silly left-wing article in a journal and he wrote me a quite (laughs) critical, and – looking back on it - I think pretty perceptive response in which he argued in his letter, he argued very clearly that my position, influenced very much by the prevailing left-wing views of the time, made little practical political sense. He argued in a society such as ours, that mine was not a politically-practical program and that, if you were to succeed in changing the society, you had to do it very much by way of the middle road. You were not going to be able to get support for say further nationalisation, which I think

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was one of the issues that came up at the time. Yes, we had friendly discussions about these issues, and also about ways – I mean he was very concerned about what he saw as the economic decline of South Australia that, given the conditions of the '70s with the decline in protectionism, with the very biased basis of industry in South Australia in whitegoods, motorcar industry, all of them facing difficulties as the international situation changed, and their distance of course from big eastern markets in Australia, which was becoming more critical, I mean he was very concerned with ways about how South Australia could find a new economic path. I don't think he ever really succeeded in doing that, but he was very concerned with trying to redirect the sort of economic energies of South Australia away from what were basically dying industries in the longer term.

**Did you get any sense of where he was getting these ideas, or some leading people – and perhaps including yourself – or things he was reading, or a combination?**

I don't know. I think those ideas were very much his – the sort of things were not so obvious in the literature. I don't think the kind of economic reforms he was looking at in South Australia were ones that he would have picked up either from international literature on social democracy or particularly from debates about the economy more generally in Australia amongst people of left-wing persuasion, other than of course he had this abiding interest – again, which ran into the ground – in worker democracy, which was of course very much seen in the middle-'70s as the way forward for social democrats: having abandoned or minimised their commitment to nationalised industries, how did you get effective social democracy? And he, I think well ahead of his time, saw not worker control but worker participation as a major step forward and put a lot of effort into that; and it may be that, at some stage, social democrats may return to those concerns, which tended to disappear in the 1980s, of course, because I suppose the whole –

**Economic rationalism?**

– yes, the whole change in international perspective on these issues, yes.

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**Interesting. What about, you know, he's looked on probably debatable on the economic reform side but highly successful on the cultural and social reforms: did he ever talk to you about those sorts of things?**

Yes. He'd wax enthusiastic about all the new cultural bodies he was establishing, from the Film Corporation to the Jam Factory, and he was tremendously committed and enthusiastic about those, and I think he is probably the only Premier that you could talk about as having transformed the culture of a State. I mean others might have done things to the economy, but he really transformed the sort of cultural mood of South Australia and I think he was very involved in that. But again I don't think one should over-stress that at the expense of his other activities.

**Yes. Interesting. And I'm just curious, I took a quote from your book, *Playford to Dunstan*. There was a quote there: 'Despite his talents and his eloquence, Dunstan was not loved. An intensely private man, he appeared arrogant to his enemies, aloof to his friends; he appeared cold and he lacked the gift of easy conviviality', which seems to contradict, in one way, his public image of being on top of the media and his relationships with all sorts of different groups of people – unionists, you name it. So I'm just wondering where you got that from.**

Well, I think that the first sentence is very much a reference to the attitude of the leadership of the Party to him in the early period. That changed over the years of his success, but I guess if it's at page 52 of the book it's probably fairly early on. So I think I was referring to that. But the second is more true of him: I think he was an intensely private person, despite this – I mean he could go into bars, and I saw him in working-class bars and I went once on a campaign tour with him to Port Pirie, Port Augusta, and he was a very good bar politician, so he was very easy with people on that level; but I think that, in terms of getting close to him, I think very few people had much insight into him privately. I think also, because he tended to be very wary of how friends might damage him and things like that, I think he tended to be fairly cautious with people. And so 'lacking the gift of easy conviviality', whether I would have written that later in my life – because, as I say, when I was a political candidate I was with him on several campaigning tours, and I've got to say that at the

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superficial level of bar conversations he had, I've got to say, an easy conviviality; what I think is that he was not easily convivial in more private situations.

**And do you think he was playing a role in those situations or he sort of naturally felt comfortable? That's another aspect, that he was an actor and his role was that of a politician.**

I think there's very much of that. I could remember he had this great ability to doze off in the car and you were going off to a meeting or meeting people in a bar and he'd be out to it, and then as soon as the populace turned up as he got out of the car and they were waiting for him, then the man transformed amazingly. So I think there was a lot of the actor thing in him but, unlike Hawke, for instance – and Dunstan I think was as convivial as Hawke in these situations of a kind of limited intimacy – Hawke was, in all sorts of circles, the same sort of person, whereas I think Dunstan was convivial where there was not a great depth of personal involvement.

**Did you ever see him relate to people from industry and commerce at all?**

Not really, though I mean a few occasions I met him with business people he was always a pretty impressive performer for them, yes.

**Interesting, yes. And were you in any situations where you had to brief him on anything and he could pick up issues, had to pick up issues quickly?**

Yes, I was a campaign manager for him for a couple of [elections] because I lived in the Norwood Electorate. I'm trying to think: I think it must have been the '72 and possibly the '75 campaigns, but I haven't got a record of these now, but I was the local campaign manager for two of those. And he'd be busy all round the State so that when he came back to the electorate you'd have to brief him on the whole thing: where there were problems, what he had to do, who he had to keep in with. And of course he got across things like this, particular local issues, very quickly. I was never briefing him to any great extent, I think, in bigger policy issues.

**But he was able to pick up quickly on what you were saying.**

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Yes, very quickly. And I'm sure he could get across a brief very quickly, but you'd give him lowdown on what had to be done this weekend in the electorate and what were the problems, and this family was aggravated and this was their issue ---.

**And he'd follow it up.**

Yes.

**Interesting. Well, you mentioned the 1975 election ---.**

And that's again – I'm sorry, I'll just mention – again, he was extremely convivial on the streets of Norwood. But again I suspect that it was at that political level. I mean all these people knew him and he could respond to them and he knew about them and their details, and with some of the families – some of the Italian families, for instance, and Greek families – he was very close to in Norwood, so I've got to modify that 'convivial' thing somewhat. It was trying to distinguish between, I suppose, really private conviviality, how convivial he was in more private situations, particularly when the people were not his close intimates.

**Yes. So he felt he had to be guarded at times.**

Yes. But I think, my impression of him was, that he tended to keep politics as such out of his private life. Even though he tended to rely on friendship and things like that very much from the people in his office or advisers and things like that, I always found him a bit difficult because I was interested in politics and at dinner with him and things like that he'd want to talk about everything else *but* politics.

**Oh, really? He wanted to relax a bit. And sometimes you might have got the sense – well, I don't know whether you wanted something from him, like you were interested in being a politician at some stage, so ---.**

Yes. The interesting tale, and I've never really checked – I never really checked it with him or with Hawke – but it is alleged that my sudden promotion to the seat of Bonython was because he feared that Hawke, with the backing of Mick Young, was after the seat. This was in 1976/77, when Hawke was looking round for a seat, and I know that Mick Young was supporting him for a South Australia seat; I didn't know

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it was Bonython. But it is alleged that Dunstan didn't want Hawke in his backyard and therefore turned me from being a Senate candidate – where, I think I would have been happier as a Senator than as a Member for Bonython – but suddenly secured this safe seat for me.

**Interesting. Just talking earlier about you were the campaign manager in the 1975 State election, that was for Don's own Norwood seat, not state-wide –**

Yes.

**– what did you think when he, I'll call it, 'denied' the Whitlam Government, given all the polls of the time and the information he was getting, particularly from – I think Rod Cameron had done some work for him?**

Well, I basically agreed that he had to unhitch himself somehow from Whitlam, because he'd called the campaign before the full crisis of the Whitlam Government hit, but of course during the campaign the whole Loans Affair and everything else blew up and so there was this constant stream of bad stuff coming out of Canberra. And he did discuss with me – and others, no doubt – about the need to distance himself from Whitlam; but I suspect he may have even discussed it with Whitlam. I haven't confirmed it, but I think that Whitlam probably recognised the difficulties for Dunstan of the sort of rapidly-deteriorating situation in Canberra.

**Don didn't talk to you about that –**

Whitlam? No.

**– and about Whitlam? No.**

I mean he talked to me about Whitlam, quite a lot about Whitlam.

**Just in looking at Don Dunstan, the overall time he was particularly Premier, his leadership characteristics: have you thought about that, not only in what he did but in the context of your involvement in politics later, what sort of political leader particularly a Premier of the State and the Party was he, and where was that leadership coming from?**

Well, I think that he was very much the leader of the State Government. By the early '70s, really, he'd tended to create a government in his own image. He'd got people

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like Len King, Hugh Hudson into Parliament; he'd picked the better and often the younger figures coming up in the caucus, like Chatterton as Agriculture Minister; so the Parliamentary Party was very much built in his image. And he dominated the Party outside Parliament. There was never, that I can recall until the very end, any real challenge to his authority, either in the Government or in the Party.

Now, in the Government, he tended to be very much the dominant driver of policy, but I think Corcoran probably played the role of keeping the Parliamentary Party in order because Corcoran was a very good disciplinarian and Dunstan, while he was sort of very directive about policy, tended to leave some of those management of caucus tasks to Corcoran; and similarly in the Party, while again there was no challenge to his authority in the Party, he relied very much in the early days on Toohey and Cameron, when I first came into the Party, and then increasingly Mick Young and Virgo. And with that sort of basis – I mean he was a very clever manager; he wasn't a particularly authoritarian figure, I mean he could certainly get his own way, but it was a fairly relaxed management of both the Parliamentary Party and the State Party, in which he left I think quite a bit of what might be called the 'dirty' work or the heavy work to people like Corcoran in the Parliament and people like Cameron, Toohey, Virgo and Mick Young in the [State Party].

**Did you see him as a courageous leader? Like some of the issues like Aboriginal rights weren't necessarily popular issues.**

Oh, yes. No, he was. I think he is the most innovative politician of the late 20th century in Australia, and to be an innovator always requires courage, and this was at all levels. He was in a small minority when he challenged the White Australia Policy within the Labor Party platform; that didn't endear him to people. The Aboriginal policy was not one that was popular and so it required courage to take initial steps in these areas. And in many of the civil liberty areas, again he championed what were not necessarily – well, certainly were not populist policies, and I think all that required [courage]. No, I think he was a pretty courageous political figure.

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**As a political and leadership operator did you pick up any characteristics about that, what was it that helped him get through some of these more contentious issues?**

Well, I think he did think through issues and I think the classic – not that it required that same sort of courage – but the way he thought through all of those constitutional issues suggests how strategic a thinker he was, and I think the same is true – I mean he saw, I think, that Australia was going to have to change its policy on Asian immigration and he saw it before most people. I think equally that is one of the things that gave him courage or confidence that the world was likely to be moving in his way.

**Interesting. And, thinking about where he got his ideas, some of them were his own or from reading and his observations; were there any particular people that you came across that you could say, ‘Well, here’s somebody that’s got a lot of good ideas and they’re influencing Don’?**

I don’t know about people. I mean books, certainly. I mean Tawney was influential. Crosland was influential – you know, those sort of standard books that social democrats read in that period. I think there were some American writers: Galbraith I think was possibly one of them; but certainly I know of Crosland and Tawney. Stretton was a big influence on him in specific areas of policy.

**So housing and planning, yes.**

Housing, town planning, those sorts of issues.

**What about people like Peter Ward, who was his executive assistant? I’m just trying to get some idea of were most of these ideas Don’s own or were they coming from other people and he had an open mind?**

I think a lot of them were coming from the kind of milieu in which he and his wife worked. I’m sure a lot of the discussions of the economics side of social democracy, the egalitarian thing, came out of what was quite a radical Economics Department in those days: Professor Eric Russell and Geoff Harcourt both there; I suppose Karmel in a way; Hancock. So it was a kind of milieu in which he moved, and his wife too

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in those early stages, and I think that was influential. But I think very much [he] did his own reading.

The Aboriginal thing I think very much arose from his experiences early on, I think in the '50s was the first time he encounters Aboriginal – he goes to Aboriginal settlements, I think, with Loveday, quite early on. And because he always had this – I mean inherent in everything he did was a sort of feeling for underdogs in the society and that runs through his career, and I think that those life experiences also affected him in making these decisions.

**Did you get a sense that he was more of a ‘Well, let’s see if we can do it’ rather than ‘Tell me all the reasons why we can’t do it’ person?**

Yes, very. As I say, I think he was a very strategic planner but – it’s the same with surveys: he was one of the first politicians to make use of electoral surveys, but he didn’t use them to agree with what the survey revealed; what he did was to say, ‘Well, that’s the problem; we’ve got to turn people around’. I can remember him getting surveys in - it might have been the 1970 election. Though he used some of the issues which were popular, he also tended to see surveys as showing you what your problems were and how people had to be persuaded. One of the interesting things in that constitutional campaign [was] what the surveys showed up in the middle '60s – I can’t remember whether it was the '68 or the '70 election, sorry – but the surveys showed up that people weren’t really interested and didn’t understand and weren’t worried by the Legislative Council. So what he did was to make them aware of the Legislative Council by stressing all the things the Council was stopping – that is, the emphasis was not on the constitutional question itself but on the fact that the Council was a barrier, amongst other things a barrier to a lot of the developments in Adelaide itself, in the city.

**Just talking about getting things done, you can have lots of ideas and be convincing people but you rely on a range of things: your department, your ministers, other champions around the place, including in the private sector. Did you have any observations on how he got things actually to happen? [You can] get lots of ideas and reviews and whatever else, but you need to get them implemented.**

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Well, he had a lot of – partly because of his cultural side – he had a lot of connections with individuals in the business community on whom he relied quite a lot. Now, I can't remember their names now, I think the Haywards were amongst them. But I think the passion for cultural change brought him in touch with a lot of enlightened businessmen whom he then made a lot of use of in other fields.

**What about your experience as a minister, what do you see as the key things to actually get things to happen and that resonating against what might have been or was going on in the '70s, that's – like change management, there's a big policy, the health reforms or whatever else, I'm just wondering from your experience and how that – – –?**

Well, I suppose that I learnt things from him. I mean, for instance, the question of health reform was how to make it a live issue for people. One could see that the attack – in my case, the attack on private insurance was unpopular. Therefore we had not to go on attacking private health insurance, we had to devise a tactic as to how we could get around it, and what we basically did was to do a lot of hard policy work to show that for most people the [Medibank] scheme would be cheaper than – even with a levy, would be cheaper than what they were paying for private insurance. Wasn't true of the well-off because they paid much more under the levy. So I think I learnt from Dunstan that, okay, you've got a policy; you then find out from surveys what are the problems, what have to be manoeuvred around, issues like that, and I think I applied that a lot.

**How it impacts on the person, the people.**

That's right. And I suppose the thing that's closest to a lot of things Dunstan [did] was the AIDS policies we pursued which were not popular, certainly not popular to begin with, but that you took a stand and then gradually educated people to what you were doing.

**Again from your experience as a Commonwealth politician and minister, what room have States really got to make changes? There's the social side and then there's the economic side and it's a question in terms of judging the performance of State politicians as to what real decision-making power they have in the context of the national and, increasingly, international influences.**

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Well, I think Dunstan would have felt very frustrated by the position of State Premiers today. (laughs) He was still in an age in which – though it perhaps was declining – but he was still in an age in which State Premiers were significant political policy-makers, rather than primarily administrators. But I think probably Dunstan is the last major State leader – Kennett might be an exception – but most Labor Premiers since Dunstan have been basically fairly cautious administrators with a dose of populism. I call it the Wran model. I mean not the present Rann, the old Wran, Neville Wran. The Neville Wran model was quite contrary to Dunstan's. It was a cautious, competent managerialism with little doses of populism on particular issues and really not much in the way of radical policy. Dunstan, as I say, has a record of innovative policy-making, I think outstanding. I mean I would say that Dunstan, with Playford, was the most significant figure in the political history of South Australia in the 20th century.

**How do you place him nationally? I'm raising that because a lot of people, particularly in the eastern states, might remember him but may not rate him that highly as a national figure.**

Well, I think one of the problems for Dunstan's reputation generally, but particularly in the eastern states, is that they were dazzled by the glamour, this charismatic – and his performances, sometimes he went overboard, I think – but this glamorous figure. But they tended then – not at the time, perhaps, but they tended looking back – to dismiss him as rather superficial. Those who lived and worked with him saw that that was merely sort of icing on a very tough, pragmatic, radical politician. But of course in the eastern states where he didn't have the same political impact it was the glamour impact.

**What about him as a federal politician and perhaps leader? People ask or wonder why he didn't go national.**

I never really talked to him about that. I think what happened is probably he wanted to be a leader. He committed himself in the '50s in South Australia. The role he played in the Federal Party suggested he always had a hankering for federal politics,

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that sort of sphere. But once Whitlam emerged as the dominant figure then it was clear that Whitlam in Dunstan's generation was going to be the federal leader of the Labor Party. And so I think that he wanted to be a leader in that sense and he stuck with South Australia.

**Right, yes, good. Just in terms of rounding up, is there anything you want to add to Don Dunstan's – or an assessment of his legacy and impact?**

I don't know, I think I've said most of the things. No, I think I've covered it fairly comprehensively.

**All right.**

If I think of anything I'll let you know.

**No problems. Thanks very much, Neal, that's been great.**

END OF INTERVIEW