

AN INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY BERNARD O'NEIL WITH PETER TRUMBLE OF GLENALTA, SOUTH AUSTRALIA ON THE 18TH OF NOVEMBER 2003 FOR THE PROJECT ON THE HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, PETER BEING A FORMER EMPLOYEE IN THE DEPARTMENT.

[Square brackets incorporate corrections supplied by Peter Trumble in December 2005, when Mr Trumble also proofed parts of the transcript against the recording, and January and March 2006.]

Tape 1, Side A

[0:30] Peter, if we could just begin with a little bit of your personal background, family and early boyhood and so on.

My parents were both Victorians. They grew up there. My father did agricultural science at the University of Melbourne under Professor A.E.V. Richardson. He was appointed to the original staff of the Waite Institute in 1925. So he came over at that time leaving my mother to whom he was engaged still living in Melbourne. After he'd been here living in a boarding house accommodation for a few months, he got very lonely and he suggested they get married. So she came over and they were married in 1925, September 1925, and their first home was at the Waite Institute, a little cottage behind the Waite resting against the foothills, called Claremont. They were living there when I was born in 1927, July 1927, and my brother also who was born a few years later. They moved around a bit. In those days most people rented homes rather than owning their own. But eventually we became settled in what became my boyhood home in Upper Mitcham – St Michaels Road, Upper Mitcham. From there I went first of all to Highgate Primary School and then from Grade 5 on I had my education at Scotch College, [Torrens Park], apart from two terms when I went to Trinity Grammar School [at Kew] which was my father's old school, when my mum and dad went overseas in 1939. By and large I was a Scotch College boy.

[2:45] You were growing up very much in the depression years.

Yes. I can remember the depression very well. I can remember my mother having several [Temple Bar] tobacco tins labelled milk, grocer, butcher, greengrocer and so on and putting the budget money for each of those in them, and when it didn't quite work out right, juggling between them, because my father left her to manage without getting quite het up about this battle. He was never out of work. We lived much more comfortably off than many people were, of course.

[3:25] Of course, in growing as a lad that's your normal experience. You don't have anything to compare it to whereas your parents could compare it to ...

Exactly. That's all I knew. I didn't have any clear-cut idea of what career path I wanted to follow. Science always interested me. Basically, of course, in those days you did maths and two sciences [with English and another language] because of the matriculation requirements or you did arts-type subjects if you were going to be a school teacher or you did commercial

subjects or they had an Agriculture Course at Scotch which was very much a thing for farmers' sons. It wasn't until I got to about Intermediate, Year 10, level that I started to touch on medicine as a field. One of my teachers said, 'You had better do medicine or something like it because you've got the attributes'. I hadn't thought about it before as kids don't so I boned up on the University of Adelaide medicine course and I know, I went up to the uni and got the course curriculum on those subjects and so on and became very keen about that. I was young for my level of school for several reasons, one of which was as a wartime measure they'd jumped people from Grade 7, the end of primary school, to Year 10, which was called Intermediate, in two years instead of the normal three because of teacher shortages. I matriculated at the Leaving level. I did two years of Leaving Honours. Even then I was only [17½]. Any younger than that was not a good idea for university. Anyway, when it came to the bit I suddenly decided I didn't want to do medicine, I wanted to do ag. science. I hadn't really seriously thought about that. I'm sure that was ... I'm reasonably confident that it was the subconscious influence of my father because I was aware of what he did. He used to talk a bit about his work. I spent a lot of time, holiday time, at the Waite. I knew my way around the labs. I sort of picked up by osmosis I think. I've never regretted the decision. I probably might have made more money if I didn't, but there it was. I thoroughly enjoyed particularly getting into the plant and animal sciences, which are ... Boys didn't study botany or physiology, they were girls subjects, although they were sciences. But I really loved botany and I still have a reasonable [ability to identify] plant species. In those days it was a very good course: we did the first year of basically science-type subjects which many people did – [chemistry, physics,] botany, zoology and a subject called elementary physical chemistry. Then in second, third and fourth year we did part of the time at either North Terrace in second year or Waite Institute third and fourth, and one and a half to two days as Roseworthy College where the more animal-orientated subjects were taught. That meant going up by train and feeding the College fare, which was pretty boarding house stuff. It was a great experience. One of the things was it brought you in touch with the Roseworthy diploma students who were more practically orientated than you. There was a little bit of friction between the diploma students and the uni students, not really serious.

Were you going up and staying up overnight?

Usually one or two nights. You had to catch the 5.20 train. I can remember Botany prac. would finish at 5 o'clock and you had to grab your bag and your gear and get to the Adelaide Railway Station in about 5 or 10 minutes, mostly running. The college bus would pick us up either at Gawler or Roseworthy.

And you had to have tea or something?

Yes, had to have tea. I started to develop a strong interest in plant physiology as a specialty. I didn't really have a strong farming contact or background. I had ... None of our relations had farms. So my interest in agriculture is more academic. In fact ... I did very little of the ... we had to do 36 weeks of practical work while on holiday, which could be ... some of it had to be at Roseworthy doing the actual farm work day after day. But, in fact, I didn't do any farm, commercial farm, work at all. I'm not really quite sure how I was allowed to do that because I did jobs ... I worked on the farm at the Waite, which was farm techniques but it wasn't commercial-type farming.

So in your boyhood, you were saying you were going up to Waite for short stays and so on over holidays. Did you go on farms?

I only ever stayed at a farm just out of Port Pirie with my of my schoolmates. I had a fortnight up there. Pretty rundown sort of a place too. Very dry as I remember it. No, there wasn't a big farming type impact on me at all. It was the science of agriculture that really appealed to me. I suppose that could be a natural consequence of my father's field. [Additional note: I should perhaps mention that in 1947, I think it was, my father in partnership with my brother and I bought a block of uncleared scrubland a few miles east of Meningie in the Upper South East and started clearing it for improved pastures. We struggled on doing this for a couple of years but did not have adequate working capital. In 1950 we entered into a partnership with four or five others with money to invest (mainly what were called King William Street farmers) and the property became the Balcarres Pastoral Company. My father left Australia permanently in late 1951, our family was no longer part of the operation and we ceased any association with it. That is as close as I got to being a farmer!]

[9:45] At Scotch, just to backtrack slightly Peter, did they have much in the way of animals or crops or anything, being a rural sort of situation you were coming up to.

They had about 40-odd acres of land and at least half of that was devoted to what was called 'the farm'. It wasn't really broad acre. There was no cereal cropping or anything of that kind, other than in small plots. They'd grow a number of different varieties of wheat or barley or what-not just so students could see the different types: some varieties matured early and some later. They had some pigs. I had my first lessons in the mysteries of birth seeing the pigsties up there. They had chooks. They had a good vegetable garden. They had some horses. They had a couple of cows. It was a small-scale demonstration farm of livestock and a few crops. The boys provided the labour force for that.

They had boarders at the college.

Mostly. Nearly all [the ag. students were] boarders, not all. It depended ... Some of them would be country boys who were boarding with relatives but not in the college. Most of them [were] boarders.

And, in your case, you were living at home and then coming up to ...

I was only a five minute walk away ... across the Brownhill Creek

But not much in between Mitcham and Scotch.

No, it's only a short distance.

But open land, or ...

Oh no. The Brownhill Creek Reserve, which is still there, openish land but where we were is the old Mitcham Village. A lot of that has been built on, many more recent houses, by subdivision of bigger properties and that kind of thing.

Did you have a schoolboy world from that area, going up to the Adelaide Hills or ...

Brownhill Creek.

Brownhill Creek?

Brownhill Creek was our domain and the McElligott Quarry. It was marvellous really. It was so safe in those days. Watercress and catching yabbies in Brownhill Creek. Mud slides – we used to have these mud slides down the steep banks with water carted up from the creek. Sometimes walk right up Brownhill Creek to the Old Mount Barker Road: you could get right through there. A couple of waterfalls up there. The old silver-lead mine. We had a few adventures. It was a marvellous then. There was a group of kids, not all from Scotch College but many of the boys were. We had a natural local club, not formal in any way, but we were in a club-like situation. Terrific fun.

With that kind of living environment you've got there, proximity of the hills and so on, you were encouraged to go out and do things.

It was just fun.

[13:00] Some people go through that phase, they might go rabbiting or something like that, and they develop an interest.

Anyway, so it was good open air, a lot of open air. I wasn't very good at sport. I don't have good hand-ball-eye coordination, so that the sports I played at school were ... I did relatively well at rowing and middle distance running. I was a miler and a cross-country. I rowed in the Scotch VIII: we won the Head of the River in 1944, that's my proudest achievement. I also won the cross-country in '44. Again, I mention my age. I didn't really develop ... I was big framed, I was a six-footer, but I didn't develop strength in my arms particularly so I never took on boxing, which was one of the options. (both laugh) Apart from that I'm a physical fellow.

But I enjoyed those sports. Then when I went to uni I played hockey [at] which I seemed [to do better]. I was never any good at football. Hopeless cricketer, although I love the game.

They're useful pastimes to have. Getting out and bit of exercise ...

And the team, the involvement in the team. I always had a strong affinity for team-type activity. I'm a joiner rather than a loner: all my life I've been. I like people. I like people's company. I like doing things in a team and being a member of a team. That gives me a lot of satisfaction. I hate to be on my own. I'll certainly never be a hermit.

[14:50] Then you're going through a course at university, which is with a small number of people.

That's right. We finished up only eight graduated. There probably double that number when we started. Some fell by the wayside, particularly the blokes returning from war service found it very hard: there was a couple of those didn't see the distance or missed a year. In fact, in our group of eight that finished we didn't have a single returned serviceman amongst us. That was a loss really because I'm sure that ... That was just at the start of the returned servicemen starting, 1945 you see a lot of them hadn't been demobbed by then, so '46, '47, '48 there were big numbers of CRTS [Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme] students, as they were called, doing the various courses. I have always felt that the boys going straight from school doing ag. science would have two or three ex-servicemen, made a big difference to their maturity and knowledge of the world. We, apart from first-year uni (like being first-year, you don't know which way is up, finding your feet and all the rest of it), then we had Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday at North Terrace and then off to Roseworthy Friday and Saturday. Then third year, four days at the Waite Institute and then off to Roseworthy. Same thing in the fourth year, although you might spend more time at Roseworthy if you did certain subjects (you had more options then). So we really lived in quite a little microcosm cut off from the wide world. We were not able to take much part in the university life, student life, other than just amongst ourselves. I played hockey for uni for the first two years I was there and then I just couldn't. None of us had cars in those days and you couldn't get to practice. I was out at the Waite so I joined what was called the Centaurs Hockey Club which was based on Waite staff and kept playing. Any rate at the end of it all, I did quite well at my course. ... They didn't have a medal for the best graduating student in those days, but probably I would have won it had they done (just looking at who got credits and those sorts of things). So I had a good university course. I got a lot from it and I enjoyed it very much indeed. Of course, the blokes that were lecturing us became life-long friends. We still keep in touch, those that are still alive: they are tending to die off a bit now, but ...

[17:55] You said eight graduates.

Eight graduates.

Eight graduates. Graduation year was '49?

'49 was the commemoration. '48 was the last year of the course. It's how it is at uni. You are classed as graduating in the year after you finish. Have to make sure everything is in order, I suppose. I started work on the 4th of January 1945 at West End Brewery. It was a job that my father probably engineered for me. He was a close friend of the head brewer of West End Brewery, a man called Lance Walters. The brewing company was very keen at that time to have some studies on the feasibility of growing hops in South Australia. They wanted to recruit an agricultural scientist and I had the right sort of talents and skills. I don't think I even applied for the job. I was asked if I would like it. (both laugh) Pretty free and easy in those days. The problem was that the Australian hops fields got very run down during the war, with shortage of labour and other factors. While there were plenty of hops being grown in Europe and California, shipping was a very dicey business at that time. Shipping was very unreliable: the strikes and dock closures and all those kind of things. I understand the brewery got down to one bale of compressed hops in the hops store, and they weren't sure when the next shipment was coming in. You can't make beer without hops. These days they have synthetic resins and things, that's not a problem any more. They wanted to do some studies as a long-term project and they recruited me. They said, 'You had better come and work in the laboratory, quality control laboratory, and find out about the making of beer', which I was happy to do. I enjoyed that. That was a wonderful eye-opener for me as a person, down in Hindley Street. It was pretty rough area in those days.

West End of Adelaide, yes.

It was much more residential then than it is now, and [some light] industry. But there were some pretty interesting types down there. I enjoyed it. Very good boss I had. John Harvey was head of the laboratory there. There were other people: one of the blokes who had done science at the same time as I was, he also started on the same day as I did, went on to become a chief brewer in later years. But after about a year they said, 'Look, things have picked up so much we don't think there is any point in doing this hop business, so that project that you were [employed] for isn't going to happen. But we're quite happy with your performance as a brewer's analyst, and if you want to say on and become a brewer, that's fine with us'. I said, 'Thank you very much, but really ... agriculture is my interest and perhaps I'd better get back into it before I have forgotten all I learnt'. So I spent quite some time, off and on, talking to people that I knew and knew of about what jobs might be going. As I say, plant physiology was what I was very keen to do, because I had done a major project on that in my last year, and thoroughly enjoyed that. But they weren't hiring plant physiologists anywhere at that stage. I wasn't really getting anywhere very fast until I called on Dr Callaghan, who'd been appointed

in 1949 as the Director of Agriculture succeeding Bill Spafford. I went to see him to see what might be happening in the Department. I knew he was a personal friend of my father's. I don't believe I was ever favoured in an improper way, but it was an easy access road, he knew who I was ...

An entrée?

An entrée, and that obviously that does help.

[22:25] That applied in a lot of areas in Adelaide at the time.

Sure, yes. But he knew of me and knew a bit about what I was about. He told me then about this job, that he knew of my wide-ish kind of interest and also that I was a reasonable writer of the English language. He was wanting to get a job created virtually as a technical secretary to him. Someone who had good agricultural training and was interested in the broader issues. A young person. He said, 'You wouldn't be a bum boy, but you'd carry my bags and there would be lots of things'. He outlined the sorts of things I would be doing and 'Would I be interested?'. It appealed to me very much because I've always been interested in the broad spread, the integration of things. It appealed. He said, 'Alright, now I know that there is somebody who I think would be capable of doing the job available', (he said he didn't really know that there would be anybody), 'I'll start to take steps to get the job created and then you can apply for it. In the meantime, get a bit of dirt under your fingernails, get some agriculture back into yourself'. He said, 'There's two or three jobs being advertised at the moment which you could compete for'. I applied for two or three of these, and I got the job as Citrus Research Officer working under Harry Kemp who was the Senior Horticulture Research Officer. There were about six or eight of these young ag. graduates who specialised: one was in vegetables; one in viticulture; one in fruit and veg. storage; another one, or a couple, in irrigation; myself in citrus; another bloke on pome fruits. So we each had a specialist role. We also, one day a week, had to be rostered to be on duty to take home gardening enquiries across the board. That was quite interesting: got in touch with real people.

[24:45] Were these graduates coming through ...

Yes, they were all graduates.

... or were they in the cadetship system or they ...

The cadetship system had just ... The first year of that was the year before we started in '45, it might have been '44, '45, that was when the first cadets were appointed as students I mean. The first [graduate appointees came out of the system and were appointed as officers] at the end of 1947.

So in a sense you just missed out on that.

I wasn't interested in that ... I didn't think about it. I guess my father had enough money to be not looking for the financial support that that would bring. Of course, they were bonded, bonded scholarships, as they were in those days. I would like to talk about that a little bit further down the track in relation to the development of the Department ...

That would be good. I was just curious as to why you hadn't taken up ...

It didn't ... I don't remember it ever really being seriously considered.

Presumably you got such a small number going through in your group ...

There was one of them, two of them, two at that stage were cadets – Gordon Edwards and Max Till, both dead now. They both went into Horticulture Branch. Gordon Edwards brought back a classic Marilyn Monroe nude photograph from America. That made him very popular. (both laugh) [He also introduced the butternut pumpkin to Australia.]

Another claim to fame! The other question there Peter is, of course, that you're testing the water so to speak at West End Brewery and so on but what options were there for ag. science graduates at the time?

As I say, when I went to look for it, there wasn't a lot around other than the Department of Ag.

You've got eight people coming out in your year.

They all got jobs, walked straight into them.

Each year coming out, they all can't go into the Department.

But a lot of them did. The Department was expanding ... Callaghan was really building the Department up and its scientific strength at that time.

[27:25] They couldn't all go to the Waite, and they couldn't all go teaching at Roseworthy or whatever.

So I was based in citrus research. I was still based in Adelaide. I didn't have a car. I used to ride my bike into work. I had the use of a vehicle for fieldwork. Of course, most of the citrus growing was up the River Murray from Cadell to Renmark, used to visit Mypolonga near Murray Bridge and a bit around the Adelaide Plains – Salisbury was quite a significant orange-growing area in those days. I, basically, once I got into the swing of things, I would go up the river for a week solid. I would stay at Barmera, not that there was much citrus at Barmera, but it was nice and central and I could sleep in the one bed for four nights of the week. That was a worthwhile thing: they get to know you, you get to know them, it becomes a bit of a home from home. I had a couple of friends that lived in Barmera so I had a bit of companionship in the evening and that kind of thing. But mainly because it was so central: you could get to Renmark, Waikerie in half-an-hour, or down to Loxton, the same thing.

Did the Department have any officers stationed ...?

Yes. They had the Berri Experimental Orchard as it was called at Berri, which had been established many years before. The Loxton Research Centre was in the process of being established at that time. Then there [was] a District Horticulture Adviser at Waikerie, there was a District Horticulture Adviser at Barmera, and there was a District Horticulture Adviser at Berri. They were my mentors. I worked with them continuously. They would advise me of perhaps citrus growers who were having problems or if there was something of interest to see. They showed me the ropes on citrus quality and all of that kind of thing. They were wonderful mentors. The problems of the citrus industry, they helped me define those. I spent a fair bit of time actually working out what I thought I ought to be doing. (laughs)

You were learning on the job but also learning ...

It was just trouble-shooting kind of stuff. Did cover a 'Mickey Mouse' research project, published a couple of results in the *Journal of Agriculture*, nothing very major. In the meantime, Callaghan had moved and I'd only been there a year when this job, which was called Scientific Liaison Officer, came up and I applied for that. I understand I was the only applicant. I started with him in July 1951, having had a year as Citrus Research Officer. That's when my career really started to develop, from that time on. He was a wonderful boss. He was so open, frank. He never missed an opportunity to tell me what was going on and why things were happening and so on. My work with him fell into probably three categories. The biggest and the most interesting and perhaps the most important was supporting him, and through him the Minister, in South Australia's participation in the Standing Committee on Agriculture. That was all the Directors of Agriculture from the six States, plus CSIRO, Department of Commerce and Agriculture, Commonwealth Department of Health which dealt with animal and plant quarantine, Department of Territories, because of their interest, and the Treasury. In those times it was a very ... They were some very good people on that. I mean there was Callaghan from SA. Hubert Mullett, a real old curmudgeon, Director in Victoria, a very able man. Bob Noble, New South Wales, an outstanding Director of Agriculture. Arthur Bell, Queensland, one of the, probably the, greatest Director of Agriculture they've ever had. George Baron-Hay of Western Australia, another name to conjure with, and Frank Hicks, the Tasmanian Devil as we used to call him, the only one who wasn't a graduate. He was a Hawkesberry Agriculture College diplomate. But he was a very able man in a very down to earth kind of way. A very hard-drinking man, but a very nice man. He was probably the weakest of them. Plus on the Commonwealth side you had Sir John Crawford, who was one of the greatest Commonwealth public servants of all time. He was in the Nugget Coombs kind of class. The last was Ian Clunies-Ross, the chairman of the CSIRO, another name to conjure with ... The other Commonwealth people were less significant anyway. So they were very powerful ...

[32:39] **End of Side A, Tape 1**
Tape 1, Side B

[0:10] Peter, you were just talking there on that Standing Committee and the fact you've got people beyond agriculture sitting in with the Treasury Officials and so on. A high-power group nevertheless.

Well, the thing about it is, agriculture is the production of the crops or the livestock products and whatever, and there is the marketing, and in particular you've got questions of quarantine, export standards, export issues and whereas the States have a constitutional responsibility for production, the Commonwealth has the constitutional responsibility for quarantine and external trade. Plus its got the purse strings ever since the uniform taxation was brought in. So, in those days, I don't think it's like it now, in those days there was a genuine sense of working together in a fairly federal fashion. It was really quite satisfying, mostly. Occasionally there were problems: they were more to do with the Victorians than anybody else. (both laugh)

There is always that level of interstate rivalry.

They tended to be a bit isolationist. They tended to want to do everything their way, if that's possible. But the thing was that there were issues that interlock between the responsibilities and particularly people like Crawford and Callaghan and Bell and Noble were strong federalists in their minds. If that was going to happen, then inevitably there would be money sharing kind of arrangements to do certain things. Inevitably the Commonwealth would be looked to ... Quite often the cost of the program that was going to be done, the Commonwealth would pay half and the States would pay the other half (divided pro rata). That would be a fairly normal standard. So having the Federal Treasury people at those discussions was invaluable because they asked their questions in a non-confrontational, 'bargaining chips on the table' kind of way. That's what politicians do when they get to the crux. Politics is more to the fore. It worked very well in those days. Mind you, it changed a lot in the post-Whitlam time. It's changed a lot and now the Commonwealth tends to say what is what's going to be, take it or leave it. There was much less of that in those days. It was still there a bit.

So you could say there's a logic to it, because if you're working on promotion of a product or a disease, they don't know any real boundaries ... not limited.

Of course, even in the Riverland. On our Standing Committee there was that group of people and they would meet, more or less twice a year. Sometimes if there was a crisis, it would be more often. But, basically, there were two meetings a year: one in Canberra and then in rotation around the State capitals. That helped to equalise the cost of attending. They would consider an agenda which might have anything from 50 to 80 items on it. Huge range of subjects: anything on agriculture at all which involved interstate or State/Commonwealth cooperation on the agenda, including research matters too. The CSIRO had a big part to play in

that as did the States. Then matters which were of a policy or political nature would be ... a report would be prepared after agreement following the discussion to go to the Ministers of Agriculture who formed the Australian Agricultural Council. That was always chaired by the Commonwealth Minister of Commerce and Agriculture – as it was in those days; it split not long after into Primary Industry and Trade. He was always the chairman. We had the six State Ministers and then the Minister for Territories would also attend, but none of the other Departments were represented by their Ministers. So that was at the officer level. So the agenda for the Australian Agricultural Council would probably only be 20 items. They would be matters that needed Ministerial, needed government okay, or had reached the point where that was appropriate. Sometimes matters would go on for several meetings before being resolved to the point where a recommendation could be made to the Ministers for all sorts of reasons. So the preparation for that was quite a big thing. It was a matter of the agenda would come in, the papers would be circulated and my main job was to look at those and send them out to the appropriate people within the Department, or sometimes outside it, particularly in the days when the Waite Institute provided a special advisory service for insect pests and plant diseases, for instance, and matters in that field of expertise would be sent to them for their comments. Sometimes there would be things like rabbit control. You see in those days it was in the Department of Lands, but it's an agricultural problem to be discussed, if that was an issue we would have to get comments from the relevant officers, the Director of Lands etc. Things of that nature. A bit around the edges. After a while I knew pretty well who to send what to, and I would make a point of running over the agenda with the Director when Callaghan came in and he would give me any special priorities or guidance or things that he thought I needed to know about or I would draw something to his attention. It was a real two-way feeling of two-way traffic with him. He was a marvellous man to work with in that regard. So I would get to work and sift these things out, asking for comments by an appropriate date. Sometimes you would have to go back to them because they maybe missed the point or they were running late or something might be raised that you'd need to go to somebody else. Was quite a flexible situation, a state of flux. You were working to a pretty definite timetable. More or less a month, I suppose, of lead-up time to the meetings, which was plenty in most cases and not enough in others.

Some are labour intensive – letters have to be typed and phone calls and visits made, and that sort of thing.

Yes, follow up and all that. Some of them were pretty tardy. Most of them were pretty good. Then it was a matter of ... Again as I became more experienced I would be able to select from the comments that came in, those that I thought Callaghan needed to have a look at before the final time we were about to go, because they seemed to raise issues that he might want to go a

stage further. I was a junior officer and might not think it was my place to raise that with the head of the division or whatever. You learned to keep ... because personalities come into it in all these things, as one knows.

Were there occasions where Callaghan would say, 'This is a topic we need to look at. You must go...'
Yes. He would indicate ... We had a preliminary talk over the agenda and say this and this are the ones that we need to pull out all stops on these and perhaps we ought to go a bit wider this time. That kind of thing. Don't ask me to name what the topics were.

No. He would have had his own personal vision for agriculture and ...
Particularly after I had been doing this for a couple of years, I got a good feel for what he was about. I could always – not always, not universally – but a lot of the time I could read the direction he would be heading. It would be just a matter of him saying, 'Yes, that's right, that's what I want'.

One can assume that he wouldn't have kept you on in the job if that wasn't working, that situation wasn't working.

That was the biggest chunk and that happened as I say twice a year and it was the most intensive and I suppose the most significant. Callaghan was also an avid writer of articles and giver of talks on matters mainly about the future of agriculture. He was a very visionary man and he always had plans for the future. He was a very prolific [writer with a good command of language and] a clear thinker. He expressed himself very well on paper or in spoken word, often one precedes the other. I did quite a lot of leg work for him, digging out of material, sometimes drafting stuff for him, or fleshing out certain parts. [I was by no means a co-author.] I don't mean to sound that but I was an amanuensis. I worked very closely with him and also in the editing. He respected my input as an editor. Perhaps he had a liking for another eye over things. So we forged a very, you can imagine, a very close personal working relationship in that way. Then the third thing was the on-going administrative type, that was all manner of things that he felt I could help with: that were costing ... it might be the preparation of submissions to the Minister about something or other. In the later stages of his reign, which was about 10 years (1949 to '59), he had formed and revitalised the whole country research centre situation. We had a body called the Research Centres Policy Committee which actually looked at the programs from the whole Department's point of view of each of these research centres. They tended to be going their own way. I was secretary of that committee for instance. That took quite a bit of work. We would have a meeting about the research program and development program of each of about a dozen research centres once a year, which would go for probably half-a-day, sometimes longer, depending on size and complexity of it, and there was a lot of preparatory work in that, writing up the things. So a number of things of that kind.

I also looked after the cadets [as a sort of] 'den-mother'. I kept in touch with them. They were required to come into the Department during a substantial part of the university vacations and work in the Department, no extra pay, the cadetship allowance covered them. They got travelling expenses if they had to go out into the field and it was a matter of keeping in touch with them, finding out where their interests lay or where they were developing, what they were developing, and negotiating with the various branches for them to take on these cadets for the holiday work, mainly in the long vacation. I didn't worry them too much in the short vacations unless we had some critical things, we might try and fit a couple in for that. I'd go through their courses and they were required to discuss with me if they had options. Sometimes they ... Not many options in those type of courses. They tended to be very general and broad, everyone does the lot. In later years there are some choices and so that is something the Department took an interest in. I talked to them about it but we did help them focus on things that were their top priority in terms of their Departmental needs. So I was a fairly busy boy, but it was very enjoyable.

[14:00] You had a good grounding in the activities of the Department.

Yes, and I knew everybody in the Department.

The people, the personalities.

I knew them well. But, again, there were a few little problems. Seen as Callaghan's creature, if you like. I had to make sure that people didn't think I was a tale-bearer or a trouble stirrer, which I wasn't anyway, but people have great ... believers in conspiracy theories. I had a few brushes with one or two people. Firstly, they were due to misunderstandings. Confronting the issue, we took it through and there'd never be any trouble again. I remember one particular case which involved ... I worked very closely with the Director's secretary-stenographer, lass called Margaret Cumming. 'Megs' she was called: she had ginger hair, she was called Megs. She was a very competent typist and she did all his typing which was quite onerous, but there were times when there was an overload, and it wasn't ... The Department wasn't over-endowed with typing resources, and we were having something or other done. I forget what it was now, it was needed. I said to Doc Callaghan, 'Look, we might have to get some typing help to get this done in time'. What does Doc Callaghan do? He rings up Stan North, who is head of the administration, and says, 'Can you provide some more typing for Peter Trumble?'. Stan thought that I had gone to Callaghan and set him up. Stan rang me up and said, 'There will be a typist down to see you in a minute'; very cross I could tell he was. I said, 'Mr North, can I see you?'. I explained to him what happened. I was discussing with him what it was. Did he feel we needed it, and he'd taken the bit and he backed right down. We were very good friends after that. He could see that I wasn't a threat. He was the other person who was very close to

Callaghan. I mean he ran the admin. side of the Department, a set of offices in an area, superbly well. Of course, I suspect he might have been just a bit jealous.

[17:05] How did that work? Which building were you in at that time?

We were in the Agriculture Building, the old Simpson's Building.

In the old Simpson's Building. Were you situated closely to Callaghan?

Not at first. At first I was tucked away in a room down on the ground floor, one floor down from where he was. When the Minister of Agriculture who had his office there moved out – he went to the Education Building, he felt too isolated in there, he moved out, must have been Glen Pearson – Callaghan moved into the Minister's Office, Stan North moved into Callaghan's office and I moved into Stan North's office. So we were all together.

Right. A couple of things there Peter. You got a typist, but it seemed a very small Executive pool, so to speak. Was there a secretary for the Department?

The secretary was this fellow, Stan North. He was the administration.

Okay, that's him. Right.

We had an accountant. We didn't have a personnel officer in those days – the Secretary was the personnel officer. Any request that was made was to the Public Service Board ... And what else did we have? Transport, Supply and there was a big calculating machinist operation. One of the big tasks that we took on which involved a lot of number crunching was the herd recording. Someone might have mentioned something about that. They test milk on a monthly basis, butter fat content and yield and all that has got to be ... Now it is called computerising ... 'The comps'.

The comptometrists.

The comptometrists. They were under Stan North. There were a few clerks around the place, in the branches, the filing and that sort of thing. Correspondence, of course, was a big part of it.

I was just wondering there about that physical proximity, the physical arrangement. The directors were often elsewhere in the building and you could be seen to be to having immediate entrée to Callaghan, but any ...

I think people ...

Or do people understand ...

I think they knew that's the way I worked. I was his offside, if you like. People came to understand that I was a person of integrity and I never abused anybody's trust, that I could be relied upon. I certainly set out to do that.

Presumably if the directors or the chiefs had an issue, they could go straight to Callaghan?

Oh yes, his door was open.

Did they have regular meetings?

Yes. They had Branch Heads meetings. Callaghan didn't do that as much as Geoff Strickland and Irving did. He was more of ... He operated as though he were an autocrat but not in an autocratic way, if you know what I mean.

Anybody wandered in, it was a matter of getting it done.

Yes. He was a very ... He was such a strong personality and expressed himself so forcibly that ... A lot of heads of departments worked like that in those days ... Looking back, life was simpler. It may not have appeared so at the time. (laughs)

[21:12] The other thing, Peter, that follows on from that is the Minister. There's various issues there: Callaghan's relationship with the Minister; the fact that you've got a Minister actually sitting in the Department, that is something that wouldn't happen these days.

No, no. Ministers didn't have the raft of politically appointed assistants and offsiders and minders and things that didn't really start until the Dunstan era.

So did the Minister have a typist or secretary?

Yes. In fact, there was a Minister of Agriculture Department. It was one of the 57 or 64 mini Departments that they had till Dave Corbett went through it with a vacuum cleaner.

I saw that in the staff list in 1964, I didn't know when that began as such, it was going in your time anyway.

Yes. It looked after a few things like bushfires, the Egg Board, some of the Ministerial boards, the Advisory Board of Agriculture. What was the other ...? It was just a small, largely administrative support kind of things like that which were appropriate to the Minister of Agriculture but weren't part of the Department. The Phylloxera Board was another one.

The Minister also had other departments.

Well, he did, yes,

Forests and Lands.

Well he certainly had Forests. Sometimes had Fisheries, sometimes ... Not usually Lands.

Chemistry came up one time.

Yes. Chemistry, of course, yes.

Those people there – the secretary, the typist – they were handling all those ...

Yes. They were. Even those other Departments had their own onsite staff. It was never more than six to eight people all up – the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary, couple of male clerks, couple of female clerks, typists, six, eight people that sort of thing. And, of course, when it came to Corbett they were amalgamated into the Department; the Minister's Office became just a section of the Department of Ag, apart from the political type of thing.

Did the Minister or his office return to the Department any time after that, when you said Pearson moved out?

Yes. It came ... When we moved into the 'Black Stump', into 25 Grenfell Street, the Minister was within the group of floors that Agriculture occupied. Could have been the 16th Floor [the same floor as the departmental Executive.]

Did you see the Minister about very much?

Coming and going. See him in the lift.

I was just wondering in either the Simpson or the Black Stump would he have been able to spend much time in the Department?

No, virtually none. Tom Casey would. Tom Casey was a very ... and Gabe Bywaters: they were very friendly outgoing, 'ordinary' guys, not as intense as some.

It is interesting that you said it was Pearson moved out.

Yes. Well, of course Callaghan and Pearson didn't get on. Callaghan used to say [the biggest problem he had was] that Tom Playford's cabinet was full of farmers. I think there were eight Ministers and I think six of them were farmers. To a degree all of them thought they knew all about agriculture, or that they ought to be seen to know all about agriculture, and that did cause Callaghan a lot of trouble, particularly with Pearson. He got on very well with George Jenkins. He was the Minister when I first started. Lovely old chap. He got on very well with Arthur Christian, who unfortunately had a heart attack while fighting a bushfire, having only been in the portfolio a short time. And then Pearson who was also from Eyre Peninsula from near Cockaleechee, southern Eyre Peninsula. He and Callaghan didn't ever really hit it off at all well. A lot of the stress and tensions that led to Callaghan's resignation or retirement in 1959 was due to that difficulty. Pearson ... A famous story about him. The woolshed at Minnipa. We needed to build a new woolshed at Minnipa and the cost of it was such that it had to have ministerial approval and Pearson didn't like the design. He wanted it designed like the one on his farm. He really put his foot down about it. He didn't understand that a woolshed on a research station has to be quite different. It had to have a lot more small compartments to handle small, separate lots of wool, separate lots of sheep, the whole operation is non-commercial, although it looks like it on the face, that kind of thing, and ...

There's an element of friction building over time?

I don't think they took long. Of course, Pearson went on to become [Treasurer] of the State government. He was a man who had ambitions, wanted something more than Agriculture [or better than Agriculture].

What about Playford himself? It's well known that he was an orchardist and so on.

Yes. He thought a lot of Callaghan. I know he thought a lot of Callaghan, because he backed him and, of course, he knew him very well through his involvement in the War Service Land Settlement Executive between his Roseworthy College days and coming into the Director of Agriculture in the Department of Ag. He was running that land development authority. Callaghan got his CMG for that work, so I know [Playford] thought a lot of him. Early on Callaghan set out to strengthen the Department and its services in a number of different ways. He wanted more graduates in. He wanted the graduates in extension work, advisory work to farmers. Are you familiar with that term that technical term, 'extension work'.

Yes. I've been told. (laughs)

OK. It's something more than giving advice. In fact, it's an educational role. Perhaps start with the farmer, not where you are. Subject matter specialists tend to say, 'Hang on. What's the good of all this? If you want to, do it'.

It's American origin or something isn't it?

Yes. So I knew he did a number of things. I would like to talk about that a little bit. Doc Callaghan's, what I saw ... When Callaghan came in, the first thing we did was to strengthen the leadership in a number of areas where it was not, in his opinion, strong enough. For instance, you had the Animal Health Branch or the Stock Diseases Branch staffed by vets. That was okay. They were professional people in that respect though sometimes there were difficulties working with vets, but the quality and professionalism of the staff was not in doubt. There were many fine Roseworthy and other type of diplomates in the Department, who were the backbone of the extension services in particular and some of the regulatory group. But life was getting more complicated ... the input of more graduates was needed to get the leadership, so the first appointment ... The only branches which were led by graduates were Horticulture, which was led by Strickland and he'd been there since 1933 I think, a uni graduate, and the Soil Conservation Branch which was established in about 1939 under Bob Herriot, who'd been, firstly, a school teacher and, secondly, a soil surveyor with the CSIR and both of them had the talent and the ability and the perspective that comes with the difference between a graduate and a diploma holder. I'm not knocking it. Some of the diploma blokes were quite outstanding people and were as good as many graduates and better. But the generality was not that way. Then he appointed Graham Itzerott to be the Chief Dairy Instructor, as it was called in those days, to head the Dairy Branch when the incumbent, Lofty Barlow, retired. He brought in a high level of dairy technology and the understanding of dairy science and led that area in South Australia, put South Australia's cheese industry on the map over many years. Quite successful. Then we look to the ... what one might call the field crop side of things – general farming, cereal cropping. He brought in Lex Walker and Newton Tiver on the pasture side,

Walker more on crops. They were a very wonderful asset again for the Department. Tiver didn't stay all that long, he went into consultancy later, but Lex stayed with us for the rest of his career. Solid body of understanding and knowledge and leadership in that area.

Are these appointments ... some of them are to replace people who are retiring and some were new positions?

Some of them were new. Itzerott was a replacement of a retiree. Lex's was a new position under Len Cook. Len Cook was the first agriculture experimentalist appointed to the Department and he did a lot work down at Kybybolite and Minnipa, particularly on the use of superphosphate fertiliser ... Lex came in as Len Cook's number two and then succeeded him when he retired a couple of years later.

[32:25] **End of Side B, Tape 1**
Tape 2, Side A

[0:15] Peter after a short pause there, perhaps we'll pick up on some of the points you wanted to make.

Yes, I think I was about to launch into some reference to Callaghan's development of wider range of expertise on the animal side of the staff, particularly what I might call animal husbandry. When he came into the Department there was quite a significant poultry unit under Cyril Anderson, who looked like a turkey gobbler; there was one pig officer, Bill McAuliffe, who looked a bit like a Tamworth boar; there was Dennis Muirhead, who was a fat lamb chap; and a fellow called Steve Reid, who was a wool [sheep] expert. That was kind of it, plus the veterinary people in the animal diseases area. Callaghan felt that particularly the services available to farmers in the grazing industry, rather than the [intensive animal industries (like pigs and poultry) needed more and better services. Because of the separate Dairy Branch, the dairy industry was particularly well served in numbers of officers.] It was the [grazing industries, sheep and cattle], they were the areas that were very thin on the ground and so he set to work to try to up the ante there and he appointed a Senior Research Officer in Animal Husbandry, Cyril McKenna, who actually was a vet, but had an interest in those sorts of things, and gradually this built up and an Animal Husbandry Branch started to form itself, which included all the animal people except [vets and] the dairy. The dairy industry was always separate because of its special manufacturing side, collecting milk and its processing, butter and cheese. So it was intimately linked to the dairy cow production side of it: allegedly warranted it being a separate branch. Politically it had to be. [This is comparable, in principle, with the view of the Liberal Government in 1979 when it excised the Fisheries Division from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and recreated a separate Fisheries Department.]

Was that politically within the Department and within the industry?

In the industry. Dairy farmers were – there were a lot of dairy farmers, a lot of votes. Like the French. It's why French policy is so heavily weighted towards agriculture because of the huge number of small French farmers and the huge number of votes. But their farms are too small, but no-one's going to take off the family farm that has been in one family for five centuries or whatever – the problem is self-perpetuating. A lot of the problems of the European Economic Community stem from that kind of thing. Then progressively he moved into other areas. These laid the foundation I suppose of what the Department is today, apart from its [elements of] regional management which Callaghan didn't get around to doing [in his time as Director].

We didn't have an economist at this time. I'll never forget the extremely embarrassing circumstance within the Standing Committee arena. Callaghan was always throwing out new ideas and one of his ideas was that farmers, we're talking general broad-acre farmers, shouldn't have what were called sidelines. Sidelines were having a couple of cows and a few chooks. Mainly it was the farmer's wife who'd look after these things: it gave her a bit of pocket-money [and helped with] the house-keeping. It was [her bit], but they were sidelines. They really only worked because they didn't cost the labour into them. And that they provided some diversity – partly to supply of materials for the farmers, they normally had large families. They also sold off the excess. He said that's not the way to go: if you're going to have diversity it should be on the basis of an enterprise that could stand on its own two feet. It needs to have a critical mass, if you like, to be able to stand as an economical entity. He was advocating this as an approach, Australia-wide, for broad-acre farms. He asked me, he knew that [I studied ag. economics as an undergraduate], to work up some figures to illustrate this. I did some things. I produced all this and we put in this wonderful stuff and I hadn't provided [for the cost of many of the inputs]. The Poultry Unit did wonderfully well because there was no charge made for the grain. ... I just didn't think of that and it was extremely embarrassing. But plus-wise it gave Callaghan an unbeatable hand for the Public Service Board to get an economist appointed to the Department. That's what happened with David Penny's appointment. He was made responsible to me. (both laugh) He was my first staff member. Oh dear! So that was the start of what is now quite a major thrust of the Department and became more so as the years went by.

[6:15] Doing that sort of research work and coming up with the figures and so on, did the Department have a library or information service.

It had quite a good agricultural library, good holdings of journals and texts of one sort or another. It also had a biometrician who was actually part of the Horticulture Branch, but he was available for minor activities [for other branches]. Of course, we had access, theoretically anyway, to the experts within the University of Adelaide and that sort of thing. They weren't easy to use because they weren't in-house. You could perhaps have a minor telephone

conversation, a question about something or other, but to actually to get them to be involved in something meaningful, usually it was too difficult to do.

I was curious about ... You've got the Waite; you've got Roseworthy College; you've got the State Library; Barr Smith Library; Department's sort of library. Obviously you can't be running around to all the libraries, but there was plenty of information available.

Yes. The Department had a library which was well tailored to its own needs. It had excellent [agricultural material], full holdings of all the State journals of agriculture for instance. Very significant, plus the [abstracts of scientific papers produced by the British Commonwealth Agricultural Bureau] of this, that and the other, which abstracted the world literature, and you could then find out, follow through what you wanted over the years. [These were heavily used by departmental staff.]

Your own departmental publications, were they being supervised through the extension services?

Originally, there was a library and a librarian who was [also] the editor of the *Journal of Agriculture*. In fact, he got tuberculosis and I acted in his job for about six months at one stage during this time, which was an interesting change. Had to produce a journal monthly and all that kind of stuff, liaise with printers; it was a very valuable experience. But then, of course, when the Extension Services Division, which I'm about to come to, was formed that came [under it]. That aspect of things really started by Callaghan pressurising, as a number of people did in Australia at the time, the need to make advisory services educational in their thrust, rather than mere information purveyors and to provide training to advisory staff at all levels, including public speaking, communication, the use of media, preparation of visual aids, the psychology of learning, starting where the other guy is. Famous story, one of the great, *the great*, agricultural revolution in southern Australia was the development of legume-based pastures to be associated with cereal cropping – the so-called dryland farming technique where you have either clovers or medics forming the basis of a nitrogen-producing pasture and organic matter producing element of rotation. Then you grow cereal crops, say, or other grain crops, after two or three or whatever number of years of this enriching phase on which you raise sheep and cattle. That was practised in the Saddleworth district by a well-known farming family in the area, the Colemans. They had excellent results of this in the 1920s, '30s. It was not taken up by anybody else in the district because they were Quakers and [were isolated within their local community so normal over-the-fence farmer-to-farmer communication did not take place]. They had their own community and their extended family. The penny didn't drop until quite late in the piece that those issues, while they're not the be all and end all and they were not questions of prejudices or bias etc., it's a fact that you have to be able to communicate to whoever it is that you want to influence and in a number of different ways.

Exchange process there.

[Bob Herriot, Soil Conservator, because of his teaching background and his interests], he had used a lot of these sorts of techniques with his soil conservation advisory staff, he had started to do this. Callaghan asked him to start running what [were called in-service training schools] which were usually held at Roseworthy College and brought in a number of departmental people with expertise [but] also some outsiders. Over a period of years all the advisory staff had to go through this in-service extension training school. I think it was a week up there at Roseworthy. It was very effective. Out of this grew a number of other things. One was the Rural Youth Movement. It was the brainchild of Callaghan. A young farmers' club. He settled on that and got it approved by the government. He appointed a leader. He was very good at picking the right person for a job. He identified Peter Angove, who'd been a District Adviser at Jamestown (he is now dead), to be the right man. He had a wonderful approach with young people. Very sincere, genuine kind of guy. He was the first leader of that. Another thing Callaghan said, 'I desperately want there to be Rural Youth Clubs in urban areas as much as possible, because it's so important for urban dwellers and young people [in towns] to be able to have some appreciation of what the rural life is like'. So there were clubs established in Adelaide and some [in] schools [teaching agriculture] in the metropolitan area.

That's an interesting contrast to 20, 30 years before. The lads growing up then, the children growing up, had much more of a connection with rural life.

Yes. There were many more farmers of course.

Small farms around Adelaide. And when I asked you earlier about going off to stay on farms, kids did that.

Absolutely, they did indeed [and a lot of kids had uncles who were farmers]. I forget the numbers now but [there are] only about half [the number of farms] now of what there were, producing three times as much. He also, I think I have already mentioned this, sought an array of specialist scientific expertise and gradually he initiated this. That continued over a number of years. Much of that was made possible by injections of Commonwealth and the industry funds. Do you know what I mean by industry funds? You have heard about those?

[13:40] There are that many different groups.

Yes. Well the other thing, of course, he did was he started one of the first of those schemes in Australia which was the barley improvement program. It was his initiative with the leaders of the brewing and malting industries here in South Australia. Have I mentioned Lance Walters and Sir Walter Jacobs, who was the managing director of SA Brewing Company, and Arthur Barrett, who was the [local malting icon] and former Lord Mayor of Adelaide? [Callaghan] got the Institute of Brewing all fired up for the brewers and maltsters to make a contribution to research programs to improve the quality [of barley], its malting and brewing quality. He told

them that ... huge advances that had been made in wheat, which had done wonders for the baking industry because of the range of qualities and types etc., etc., Nothing virtually had been done in the barley industry. It must be possible, wonderful opportunities just waiting: all we need is some resources. So he sold them on that and he got the Barley Board to kick in money: there was no capacity for South Australia, of course, to levy growers, it's a Commonwealth responsibility, it's an excise – levy at that time was an excise. But the Barley Board agreed to put in money and they funded a program which produced a first-class barley breeder in David Sparrow at the Waite Institute, plus some excellent plant [physiology] work which was a great help in improving the malting processes plus some work in Victoria which was the other main barley-growing State, plus work in the Department of Ag. which was field trials and tests and that kind of thing. [The program was managed by a Barley Improvement Advisory Committee, largely representative of the contributors of funds, and a Barley Improvement Technical Committee, representative of the research institutions. The latter proposed the projects and budgets; the former assessed and supported or not; the SA Minister of Agriculture approved the programs.] I was the secretary of both committees. (laughs)

[15:40] Another job. (both laugh)

Another job, yes. When I left the Department to go to the CSIRO they said it took three people to replace me: they had [another bloke] to take that over, they had [another bloke] to be the Secretary of the Bushfire Research Committee, plus my own job. (both laugh) That was the tongue in cheek of course. I mentioned the cadetship scheme – Soil Conservation and Horticulture began in that in 1945 when there was a new ag. science course: a revamped ag. science course with much better balance was brought in, which my father and Callaghan had quite a lot of involvement with because [their roles] – Callaghan's role as Principal of Roseworthy College; my father was Dean of Faculty of Ag. Science – much better balanced course. [The Department was] able to sell the government on a range of cadetships: at any given time there would be perhaps 30 of these young men [– all males in those days].

You said this was 1955?

1945 ...

1945.

... when it started, it was only quite small then, but it grew in the latter stages of Callaghan's time, including agricultural economics where they sent you to the University of New England at Armidale. They had the best animal husbandry-type course in Australia at that time run by a chap called Jim McClymont. So we had cadets in those topics as well as here at Adelaide Uni. Of course, the veterinary scholarships which were a little bit different because they were given

the option of either coming into the Department when they graduated or going into rural practice, which was seen as being an equivalent contribution to the service.

Did the university get involved in ... I'm thinking of economics or agricultural economics? Did that come into ...

The University of Adelaide?

Yes.

No. It was not at all well developed. They did have one fellow. What was his name? He became the Professor of Economics later.

Frank Jarrett.

Jarrett, that's right, Frank Jarrett. But he was really the only one and it wasn't really well integrated with the ag. science course, it was a bit of a type of introductory course, mainly about farm management, not a lot on economics, but the real science ... sorry, the University of England one was a well integrated course and we put quite a few cadets through that over the years. Most of them came into the Department as rural economists. On top of that, Callaghan was a big wheel in the field of agriculture. Callaghan was always a leader and that was really quite an achievement given that South Australia is the third smallest State, and the smallest Department of Agriculture other than Tasmania. But he was so dynamic and positive, and he worked well with Crawford. They were a great team together. He had a lot to do with the development of Commonwealth assistance for rural and agriculture services – Commonwealth Extension Services Grant. He also took the lead in trying to contain CSIRO's encroachment into agricultural extension and applied research field. (laughs) Nice barneys with Clunies-Ross about that.

[19:48] I thought we might come to the CSIRO next time. (both laugh) You've given them a good serve!

He was instrumental in getting the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science set up where they [established a paid secretariat. The AIAS was] the trade union if you like. Allan was the Australian President and I was the [Honorary] General Secretary for three years at the same time. He was quite dynamic in selling that idea and getting some funds out of the Commonwealth to help set it up. He also took the initiative in the establishment of the *Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture and Animal Husbandry*. This was an Australia-wide high-class scientific journal which was available for publishing the results of the more applied type of [agricultural] research. You understand the difference between fundamental and applied? Most of the work that the Departments do necessarily is targeted on problems. It's related to local difficulties that need solving. The other established Australian scientific journals are really not interested in that. They are more into the cutting-edge kind of stuff,

CSIRO-type of work and university work. There wasn't a good journal really for the Departmental research staff to publish and have their work appraised by their peers, the usual publication exposure. Callaghan was a leading force in getting the idea of this to be established and funded by the Commonwealth and the States. It was initially run by the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science, which had its own journal which was more for brief note-type things; an interesting observation we made the other day on something or other, or review-type articles. That was really its forte, plus its professional stuff. But they had good editors and they were established. The money was contracted to produce this [new journal] until at a later stage it was handed over to CSIRO because some concerns were felt about the Institute's longevity long-term, and its ability to maintain continuity of editorial expertise. It's always the problem with small operations. It kind of stagnated a little bit. Any rate, I had the misfortune to be the leader of the working party that recommended that change (laughs), having worked with Callaghan to set it up. (both laugh)

Some things go around.

I felt a bit of a traitor on that one but it was the right decision. Well, where are we?

[23:00] One of the things that's coming through Peter, I know you've got a few more things on your list perhaps so I hope I'm not cutting across your ...

No, no. It's lucky I've got them written down. (both laugh)

But you mentioned South Australia had the, perhaps, weakest Department ...

I didn't say the weakest. The smallest.

Smallest. What was it's reputation like?

Good. We had very good people ... South Australian farmers, we say, are the best in Australia, partly because our environment is tougher. Western Australians are very good too, although many of what are the now the leading farming families in Western Australia originally came as transplants from South Australia. The large proportion of our farming land which is low rainfall or marginal rainfall ... I mean, I always think of the Mallee farmers – they have to be good farmers to farm that country. They've got to be able to stand one drought [every three years] and survive, that kind of thing. The South Australian Department, particularly once Callaghan and his successors were able to get more resources provided, had a good reputation. Certainly some of our people were regarded as leaders in their particular fields in terms of being invited to give papers at research conferences and that kind of thing. I don't think I can answer it any better than that.

That is something I've got to learn more about. I mean, each State would always claim it's the best.

You had better ask people outside the State, really.

[24:55] Yes. What about – and you’ve already touched on it – the state of agriculture in South Australia. I’m thinking here of the time when the Department started to expand. That’s the era of secondary industry, manufacturing being boosted up by Playford (you know, ‘We can’t rely on agriculture only’) and so on.

And, of course, the unravelling of the skein really took place not in Callaghan’s time, not in Strickland’s time, but in Irving’s time. The famous 4th of July 1971 when the memo came from the premier – ‘What is the purpose of the Department of Agriculture?’. A three-line request. ‘Why should the State government be expending – whatever number of millions pounds/dollars it was in those days – to help farmers when we don’t provide anything like that sort of help to those who make tennis balls or whatever’. It was a very tough time for Marshall. He took it very hard and it hastened his early retirement.

No doubt we’ll come back to that. But, in a sense, it was a question to ask in the ’50s.

I guess what saved the day, really, was the big influx of Commonwealth and industry funds. We were fortunate enough to be enabled to [secure substantial amounts of additional funds]. In those days when we had some security of funding (it wasn’t forever and a day, but it was long term obviously [accepted as] long-term projects), the Public Service Board was prepared to create permanent positions and there was a kind of guarantee, an undertaking, that if the funds did dry up, the State Treasury would pick it up. That wouldn’t happen today. That kind of arrangement would not be. It’s all so different. Anyway, there’s no permanent employment anymore, is there? It’s all contract and things, to a large extent.

[27:40] In relation to that then, Peter, is this ... The notion of expansion from Callaghan creating positions and re-organising the Department and so on. Did he have a role model to follow or was he ...? Again coming back to Australian comparatives, what was happening in other States?

The other State departments were much better developed. [They were] bigger States [and had bigger] Treasuries and all that sort of thing, but even comparatively, they were better developed, they had ... I can remember back at this time I was doing some studies on trying to evaluate the cost of the Department of Agriculture in relation to the State’s agricultural production, export earnings etc. We were far behind everybody. I don’t remember the figures, but it wasn’t [a] 10% difference, it was much, much, much more than that. It’s funny, you see, because I don’t really know why that was. It was probably, as in most cases, a complex of things. It may be because there were so many farmers in the Liberal, LCL Cabinet of those days: they didn’t really see a lot of need for [expansion]. ‘Anyway we’ve got the Waite Institute. You don’t want to build another Waite Institute, Dr Callaghan do you?’. That kind of thing was said to him in the Pearson era. But, on the other hand, when the government decided in about 1936 or ’37 to establish the Institute of Medical Science or, in fact, Medical and Veterinary Science, I understand that one of the primary reasons for including the veterinary

element [in it] was Playford's decision to include that in order to sell this kind of establishment to the farming community who were interested in having proper veterinary science services of that kind, because there wasn't any, whereas they weren't quite so motivated about human medical services. That's how it became the IMVS and, of course, it remained in there until it came to the Department of Ag. as a Veterinary Sciences Division in about 1981 or 2. That's another part of my story. (both laugh)

We can leap ahead and cut back.

It's an interesting ... Talking about attitudes and that sort of thing. You never know with these things. I don't think its possible to plot very clear paths – a lot of opportunity.

A century before South Australia was the granary capital producing grain for all of the country ...

Until New South Wales were able to get over the Blue Mountains and open up the western plains, and the Victorian wheat belt started up and, of course, then Western Australia once again.

Which is one of the important things in trying to follow through is ... to look at how the Department related to the agriculture industry broadly, and the agricultural developments in South Australia. It's all interdependent.

Of course.

And, of course, the underlying thing is, you talk about the memo saying 'Why do we need a Department?': as good as you're going to be, you can always be better.

Well, of course.

Industry-wise, Department-wise.

How much is enough? (both laugh)

We'll come back, but perhaps we can carry on with your ...

The next thing I want to mention was in terms of Callaghan's achievements and that sort of issue because you'll appreciate I was not around for most of Strickland's time. Callaghan really ... He set the scene and started off or sowed the seeds for so many of the other things. He was the great innovator. He took the Department from something that was very pre-war: I won't say 19th century because we weren't in the 19th century. It was non-scientific and not a very dynamic organisation. He made it all of those things. He established the divisional structure: he felt that there needed to be another tier of management in the Department between the branches and sections, so he set up what was called the Industry Divisions. There was the Animal Industries Division, which was Animal Health, Animal Husbandry and Dairying. Animal Husbandry included the pigs and the poultry and so on. Dairying remained separate ...

[33:00] **End of Side A, Tape 2**

Tape 2, Side B

[0:05] [Plant Industry was the other of the] so-called Industry Divisions which comprised the old Horticulture Branch which still existed as a unit within the Division. That's when Tom Miller became Chief Horticulturist when Strickland was appointed the first Chief, Division of Plant Industry. Lex Walker was the Chief Agronomist which was the field crops side. The Soil Conservation Branch which wasn't an industry branch but it dealt with plants and soils so it had a scientifically disciplinary link – it was seen to have at that time. Then there was [the third division]. The big thing that he did was to establish the Division of Extension Services and Information. That was established under Herriot. The iconoclastic thing that he did was that, although this Division had perhaps only 5% of the number of staff of the Industry Divisions, it had the same status as the other two. Now that, once again, in Public Service culture is unheard of: the number of people who were responsible to you. But it was functional. It was responsible for the development of extension and advisory programs and publicity programs and the like. It ran the library and the publication of the *Journal of Agriculture*, did all the extension in-service training and things of that kind. Also looked after the Agricultural Bureau, the Rural Youth Movement and the Women's Agricultural Bureau, which were the associated organisations of farmers, [farmers wives and] young farmers – and did the organisation bit of all of those things. It was, I think, anathema for the die-hard Industry Branch people, the people whose great strength, and I don't belittle this in anyway, was in their expertise as horticulturists or agronomists or veterinarians or what not. In fact, when Callaghan left, that job was downgraded. Herriot had resigned and taken on the job of Principal of Roseworthy College by then because he had the same sort of difficulties as I did in working with Geoff Strickland. Geoff was very much the archetypical ... highly competent and very able, but scientific discipline based sort of person – goods on the shelf rather than advertising/marketing them and both had their parts to play.

[3:15] Anyway, that's what [happened]. Callaghan introduced that system and it worked quite well. He also introduced, I think I might have already mentioned this, the Research Centres Policy Committee. The research centres were [not coordinated in any way]. Some of them were under the direction of a branch – like the horticulture ones: they were all part of the Horticulture Branch and they were specialised in horticulture crops – but ones like Kybybolite and Minnipa and Turretfield were a mixture of agronomy and animal husbandry (for instance, pastures, crops, production of animal products), so some Departmental net was necessary for that. That Research Centres Policy Committee brought that house fairly well into order.

[4:14] The Waite Institute. I've got a note here. I just want to mention that. When the Waite was established in the mid 1920s, there was a clause inserted in the *University of Adelaide Act* which provided for a regular on-going financial grant to the Waite Institute in return for the provision of advisory expertise on plant diseases, insect pests and systematic botany. That was a kind of quid pro quo. It didn't pay all the costs of the Waite: they had to get the rest out of general university funds or from industry research funds or wherever they get them, but it was a kind of a floor [spelled out]. With the increasing development of, particularly insect pests and plant disease, expertise in the Department of Ag., particularly when it got its own laboratories out at Northfield (we're now moving more into the Strickland era), the Waite Institute people were very apprehensive about that and sort of see this somehow undercutting this small but significant slice of money which they valued very much. Of course, before the advent of Callaghan a lot of people on the Waite Institute staff did a lot of advisory and applied research type activity on farmers' properties. I know my father had pasture study plots scattered on farmers' properties all over the place. Whenever we were in the country we would often be stopping to have a look a plot. (both laugh) In fact, once I remember we were driving from Murray Bridge and took a drive into Monarto. It was dark by that time, but he said, 'I've got some plots just up here. I must have a look at them' and he's out looking at them by match light. Dedicated. (both laugh)

Lucky he didn't set them alight.

No. So that was a great tragedy when Callaghan, I think, because he was only 55 when he got this paroxysmal tachycardia. I understood that he actually was invalided out of the service, but it isn't what it says in his biography so I'm not quite sure. I thought I did know that, but I'll have to put a caveat on there. In the event, of course, he went on and, after recovery, he became Commercial Counsellor in Washington and dropped out of the Department, and ...

[7:10] That was about 1959?

1959, yes. I lasted two or three years with A.G. Strickland with whom ... Geoff Strickland, as I said, was a very able man but he had a huge ego. He was quite difficult at times to work with, particularly after I fell into the trap several times because I had been so used to working with Callaghan in a completely open and free and frank way, and I soon learnt that I had to choose my words more carefully with Strickland so that he didn't get the feeling, quite wrongly, that I was telling him he'd forgotten something or missed something, or he was off the beam – he tended to take suggestions made by, particularly young people, that it was implying criticism and I got a few tongue lashings out of that.

But by then you'd worked for some years in the Department. You might be young in age but you were not young in experience.

Yes, [but] junior in rank of course. That was very important to him.

Because that's reflecting the hierarchical structure of the Public Service.

Yes. I was at the level of the top of the graduate range, I wasn't even there. That's what I would have been – something like that.

Was it 'natural progression' for Strickland to take over or ...?

I don't know what you mean by natural progression.

Well Deputy taking over?

He wasn't the Deputy. Actually Bob Herriot was the Deputy.

Right.

But that was pretty hollow. I don't know really what that meant. It wasn't a full-time deputy job like when I was later to become Deputy to the Director-General. That was my job and nothing else. No, Strickland, he was the most experienced. He'd been in the Department as a Branch head, the longest of all of them. He knew South Australian rural industries very well. He was fairly dynamic and presented very well. He was articulate. You would see him as a leader, He had charisma about him. The other ... The Chief of the Division of Animal Husbandry was Marshall Irving who had been in the Department much less time, he was younger and he succeeded Strickland. Strickland's tragedy was that he died on the day he retired – his 65th birthday. He had cancer and was off for quite a while. It was very unfortunate for him and more particularly for his wife whose long-lived retirement she'd liked to look forward to.

It's uncanny how many people die in office or upon retirement, not necessarily the first day, but it happens quite ...

Often enough to be noticeable.

Yes. But ... you're working on a seniority basis there in terms of ...

I suppose it was. Seniority was much more important in those days than it is now.

Was there any thought of someone from outside coming in? Did they advertise?

I don't know whether they did nor not. I can't remember. They probably did. Certainly Strickland would have to have been seen as the heir apparent really. No one was surprised that he got the job in terms of proven ability and leadership and all those things. But he did have these flaws – haven't we all? (both laugh)

None of us are perfect ...

No, but Geoff wouldn't realise that he wasn't.

Peter, what about the Public Service Commission. Did they have ...

Yes. They would be involved. The Public Service Commissioner as he was in those days. It was before the days of the Board. Yes, he would have had the handling of the machinery of appointment, but the decision would be a Cabinet decision. Was Playford still premier then?

Yes.

[12:00] I think he was. That's right, he was. I remember going to a Premier's Conference in Canberra. There was a huge yike in the Agricultural Council about the Wheat Stabilisation Scheme. This would be in about early 1960s, late '50s, early '60s. The Wheat Stabilisation Scheme was something which required complementary legislation between the Commonwealth and the States, because you had to ensure that all the wheat had to be bought by the Australian Wheat Board and that was the exporting agency and in order to make that work, Section 92 and things like that, there had to be real interweaving of six States' legislation and the Commonwealth legislation. There was a great yike: Victoria was holding out for something or other, I forget what it was, but [you could bet your bottom dollar it would be them]. The Ministers of Agriculture were unable to resolve it. They had a couple of meetings, a couple of special meetings of Ministers. [There was] a five-year term and it was coming up to the new harvest, it very well had to be. So, in order deal with it, it was the Ministers of Agriculture handing it on to the Premiers' Conference which was due to be held in early December. Right on the death knock, more than the death knock, because the harvest had started, and so it was really pressure stuff. Menzies was the prime minister. John McEwen was the Minister for Commerce and Agriculture. Playford was our State premier. So we had an Ag. Council meeting – one last chance to resolve it, right on the day before. Then it went in the first morning of the Premiers' Conference and they set aside an hour or two, whatever, to deal with this matter. It was the first and only time I ever went to a Premiers' Conference. It was a real three-ringed circus. We had all the State premiers and all the State Ministers of Agriculture, and their supporting staff. It was a room full of people. It was quite interesting. Bob Menzies was in the chair. He sat in the chair, it was in the Senate Chamber in the Old Parliament House, smoking a cigar, big Corona Corona, probably wouldn't be able to do it these days. He appeared to be [uninterested in the proceedings]. He had a constant stream of people bringing bits of paper that he was looking at and signing. He was running the country while chairing a Premiers' Conference but he was taking it all in. Tom Playford, I was amazed. He didn't say much. He was, in fact, doodling. He had a plastic ashtray and he was drawing circles around that and then another one and then he put his nose on the ashtray and moved it backwards and forwards [on his desk but] he wasn't missing a trick. It got to the point where he caught Menzies' eye and he said, 'Mr Chairman', he said, 'I would like to move a motion that may resolve this matter' and moved a very succinct and appropriate form of words, just like that.

Somebody seconded it and it clicked and it was all resolved. It was quite an amazing thing. I can't remember the details of what it was, but it was quite staggering. The result was that we were all set to go home early. I had a relative of mine: my father was the oldest of eight children and Tom was the next one down. He was a member of the Committee of the MCG. It was the first day of the Test Match at the MCG against the West Indies, the final, the Fifth Test it was. No, it must have been in January when this was, might have even been February. Yes, it must have been. I'm wrong about saying December. That was that wonderful series, the first really great West Indies series: they had the tied Test in Brisbane.

1961 or so.

That's right. 'Slasher' McKay at the Adelaide Oval, terrific stuff. So I said to Geoff, 'If we can get an early morning plane tomorrow and I can get on to my uncle, I might be able to get us a couple of tickets. What do you reckon?'. He said, 'Yes, go for it'. So I rang that night and he said 'Yes, call at the ticket booth and ask for tickets in the name of Trumble and they will be there, two there for the Members Stand'. We managed to get a Fokker Friendship, and as we were going out Tom Playford – they were staying on for the Premiers' Conference for the rest of that day, it must have been a Friday – Tom saw us going out and he said, 'Keep a straight bat, Geoff'. He knew exactly what was going on. (both laugh)

[17:15] He didn't miss a lot.

He didn't miss it. He was very astute. I remember when I became [Secretary of the Bushfire Research Committee]. Another one of his tricks of his trade, he set up the Bushfire Research Committee. There was due to be a State election in about March I think of the year and it was following the summer in which the Kongorong fires – you may have heard of them, bad bushfires just south of Mount Gambier and there was quite a lot of anecdotal evidence that the fire actually burnt acres of mainly grass lands, some properties, some buildings were destroyed by the fire and others were not. Somebody said that there must be a reason for that, we ought to try and we might learn some lessons from that. So, with an election coming, Tom Playford in his policy speech said, 'Well ladies and gentlemen, the government will provide £50 000 a year to the Waite Institute for Dr James Melville as the chairman of the new Bushfire Research Committee, they are going to study all this'. He hadn't told Melville that this was going to happen. (laughs) So this was set up with Melville (he was a marvellous man: he was my boss at the Waite); Geoff Strickland as the Director of Agriculture; Brian Bednall from Woods and Forests Department; and three landowners – one from the Adelaide Hills, one from the [Lower] North and one from the South East (all with big fire, bushfire, type experience with the EFS); and guess who was the secretary – me. (both laugh) We got into publicity, a lot of publicity about cleaning up hazards and taking care on fire days and all that sort of thing, we started all

of that. We got our terms of reference widened because we realised that was really more important than the other stuff. We had the idea of Clean-up Week in October: we were going to have a focus to get people to clean up their properties, reduce hazards on the north side of the property and all that sort of stuff. We launched this: we arranged this with the CFS (the EFS as it was in those days), organised a big parade, fire trucks down King William Street, we got permission from the Council, down to the Parade Ground, and we wanted Tom Playford to take the salute and inspect it when we got there. He was very keen on bushfire protection. So we had a public relations consultant that was working with us on these things. They drew up a sort of a layout. I asked for an appointment to tell him what it was all about. [He had told [David Brookman] the Minister, 'I want to know what it's all about'. So I go there and I give him this thing. I'm sitting on this side of the desk and he's on the other side. He started looking through it and I tried to explain it at the same time, he's not – I don't think he had it upside down, but he was on the wrong page. I said, 'Excuse me Mr Premier, could I perhaps point out ...' so I came around beside him and I stood beside him. I said, 'This is that, and this is where we'd like you to come in'. Suddenly I realised he's not looking at the book at all. He's looking up at me: 'Don't you stand over me, young man', with a gleam in his eye – not the way Geoff Strickland would have said it. (both laugh) Barry Graham who was my offsider, saw and heard it all and nearly choked. He was right. Some wonderful stories. Do you want more stories?

[21:00] There's always more stories. One question, though, just coming back to your ... you'd gone off to conferences, to the [Agriculture] Standing Council with Geoff Strickland. Did your job change when Strickland came in or did you still remain this liaison ...?

Oh no. It had the same title and it was the same job. It changed from time to time, just like the bushfire thing came in. That was an add-on. The other thing I was responsible for was the preparation of the Department's annual report for tabling in Parliament. That was a huge, boring task. (laughs)

Is that something going back to when you started in the job?

Yes. I don't know who did it before.

I was wondering, the librarian or someone?

I don't know who did it before, probably the director himself. Yes, there was a framework to it.

[22:00] Also, the other thing I did was right through that time in the days of the Grants Commission; there's a clause, a section of the Australian Constitution – provisions for grants to be made to the States that are less well off – and they were ... the level of those grants was assessed by a Commonwealth Grants Commission that used to come around once a year, taking evidence which was [the basis for their recommendation]. For the Department of Ag. it was

really about the state of the agricultural industries of South Australia and their ability to support the economy, their place in the economy. So that was another job I did. It was an editorial job – I didn't write it from scratch. The material was supplied in accordance with the format by the various nodes around the Department and I would knock it into shape. I would be the editor of it, really. I always reckoned that me and the director's typist were the only people who ever read it right through.

[23:10] I can understand. (laughs) Amongst your jobs, Peter, the wide range of jobs, were you getting around the State very much?

Yes. Callaghan was good on that. He used to like to go out to the Bureau conferences, the district conferences, particularly Eyre Peninsula as that was the more remote. He always spent about a week: we'd go to the Upper North one which was up somewhere near Wirrabara, Melrose, Port Augusta sort of area; then there would be one on the Cleve part of Eyre Peninsula; one the Port Lincoln part; and one in the far west – where the Agricultural Bureaus had their annual conference. Talking about the Agricultural Bureaus, they were, of course, very important in those days because it was before the days of radio: there was a bit of a 'Country Hour', but the *Chronicle* or the *Stock and Station Journal* [were the main information media]. The Agriculture Bureau was a forum for discussion amongst farmers. They would often run their own discussions. They would have guest speakers, local advisory staff of the Department, other people – useful information. They'd meet once a month. In the 1920s they used to meet, I think I told you this haven't I?, by the light of the full moon because they were all horse-drawn vehicles in those days. But the Agricultural Bureau which was set up in the 1890s was avowedly non-political – it was educational. They didn't form deputations to the Minister for pressure on this, that and the other. They were self-improvement like a WEA kind of thing. They were very effective in those days – in the absence of the current media over-kill, Internet, you name it, now. They are wasting away now: I guess they are still going.

The Bureau is still going, and I have been curious about their relationship with the Department, because in one sense it seems, for an outsider, it seems to overlap with some of the work the Department has been doing and is still doing.

The Department saw them and they saw themselves as a vehicle for the Department and others to use for self-help, a self-education kind of function. That's what they were about. Some of them were more ambitious than others: they would run field days and have crop competitions and things of that kind. Others, particularly the smaller ones, were no more than [that group]. I'll never forget the first one I ever spoke to which was at Mypolonga. Mypolonga was unique amongst the River Murray irrigated settlements because it had mostly dairying on the reclaimed flats and horticulture on the hills behind. So the Mypolonga Bureau was a mixture of dairy farmers and fruit growers. I went there ... I was asked to go and speak to them about the

future of the citrus industry and what my research program was going to be about. It was my very first time. I was pretty callow. In those days you had to stay the night at Murray Bridge. (both laugh) You wouldn't do that these days. Anyway, I go there and they got through a few preliminaries and then I was introduced to speak. I'm about five or ten minutes into my talk when I realise about half the audience is fast asleep. That it really put me off: 'What have I done? Surely I'm not that bad'. So I staggered on through the rest of my stuff. I said to the chairman, 'That must have been terrible. Half those blokes were fast asleep'. He said, 'I'm terribly sorry. I forgot to tell you. Of course you would realise half our members are dairy farmers, half are fruit growers. They never look to see who speaker is. They come if they are coming; if they don't, they don't. If it turns out to be a dairy topic, then all the fruit growers have a night off. And vice versa. The dairy farmers they've got to be up early in the morning; what you had to say was of no interest to them'. (both laugh)

They got a bit of extra sleep that night. (both laugh)

Yes. ... falling asleep.

[27:40] But things like, I asked if you were going around the State, things like the field days, local shows and the Royal Show. In your capacity in the Department did you have to ...?

Well, yes. The Royal Show. The Department had its own hall in those days. We always put on quite a big exhibit there and I had to [coordinate it at one time]. The Extension Services Division, when they were formed, did most of that. My involvement with that was really quite peripheral.

I was thinking there of your role as Liaison Officer. Was Callaghan going along to all these ...?

Liaison was a misnomer. It was a con by Callaghan as I may have mentioned.

But I was thinking in terms of that job. Was Callaghan having to go along to put in a public appearance at some of these things?

He did go to the extent that he could, but it was a managed thing. He didn't go to every one. He didn't go to every field day that was held either on farmers' properties or field days on the Department's Research Centres. But some senior officer always would be there, wasn't always him. I didn't go with him every time either. I didn't [seek to accompany him always] because it was good for him to go off and I could get on and get a few things done. (both laugh) I always had to have my annual leave of course.

What about, at a different level, with the Minister or Tom Playford as premier, did they go out on trips with Callaghan or yourself?

Not a lot.

I asked because I know on the Mines [Department] side of things that Playford and McEwin would go out, and they would spend, Playford would spend three or four weeks of his annual holidays, touring to see some of the developments, so he would be going out to the Far North East and so on ...

No, there was nothing comparable with that. The Minister would be invited to open a field day from time to time and some he would and some he wouldn't. Sometimes it would be deemed to be highly appropriate that he do so because there was some issue that was particularly important that year in that area. But, no, in those days the Ministers didn't have a big [public profile], didn't show up all that much on those sorts of occasions. Callaghan, as I said before, didn't go to them all either. He liked to go to the Eyre Peninsula because he could get to other parts of the State sort of an overnight stop or even there and back in one day in many cases. By then the roads were quite good, the main roads, and cars were faster and that kind of thing. The Eyre Peninsula was a different kettle of fish. He kind of made that his big effort for the year and he loved Eyre Peninsula. Perhaps we could call it a day there?

We've got up to the Strickland era beginning ...

We're ready to do that.

... and a transition in your own working experience. So we'll probably call it quits for now, Peter, and pick up on another session from the 60s onwards.

To talk about that, I had about three years with Strickland and we've opened that up a bit. I've probably a lot more to add to that. I don't really know of my own knowledge what happened between '61 when I went to CSIRO and then two years later to the Waite Institute, but I didn't come back until '71 when Irving had been Director for a year. Then I worked as one of his Assistant Directors until he became ill and went on to have this terminal leave. I was Acting Director for about 18 months while they were making up their mind what to do – I don't know if I ought to tell you about that (laughs). Then Jim McColl was appointed Director in July '76. I very happily became his deputy and I enjoyed that. We had some very interesting times. Some of the things that were happening later on were structural changes in the Department, say, like the Corbett Report which brought us the Rural Industries Assistance activities, the Vertebrate Pests activities, our own changes in ...

[32:25] **End of Side B, Tape 2**

Tape 3, Side A

AN INTERVIEW WITH PETER TRUMBLE OF GLENALTA, SOUTH AUSTRALIA ON 27 NOVEMBER 2003 CONDUCTED BY BERNARD O'NEIL ON THE HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, CONTINUING THE INTERVIEW OF THE 18TH OF NOVEMBER 2003.

[0:30] Peter, after that introductory session, you might have some additional comments before we pick up the story again.

We have pretty well covered the Callaghan era and my involvement with him: a fairly significant period in my own personal development. There is one element of that that I want to touch on before we move on. As I started to get more hands-on type of experience and developed confidence in operating as a support person in the higher level of management of the Department, working with Callaghan as I did I recognised that I was getting tremendously valuable experience upon which a future career might develop. But I also became very conscious of the fact that I didn't have a theoretical or professional framework in which to interpret it, as I did on the agriculture side which had been my primary training. So I decided I'd better ... I'd like to try to do something about that. I started moseying around the University of Adelaide to try find somebody who could assist me. My original idea was to be provided with some reading lists and texts or journals or written material which I could read up and would help me to understand the theory, if you like, and the background to the political and administrative processes that I was experiencing as Callaghan's offsider. I eventually finished up with a man called Leo Blair, who happens to be the father of the present prime minister of the UK. He was a Scotsman, a trained Scot's Advocate as they call it, a lawyer. He was a Senior Lecturer in Constitutional History in the Department of History and Politics at the University of Adelaide. A very pleasant man. I met him and told him what the issue was. He said, 'Yes, I could provide you with some reading, a reading list, but you would really get a lot more out of it if you did some structured coursework. You would have the benefit then of assignments and essays, tutorials, apart from the benefit of lectures'. He said, 'There are some subjects within the then Public Administration Diploma, which would be very useful to you. They would be the Public Administration subject itself, which is a third-year subject called Politics IIIA, and there is another smaller subject called Public Finance. They would be the ones that you'd really get most out of. Unfortunately, in order to do Politics IIIA you've got to do Politics I and II, which are basically constitutional history and the background to the development of our political system, and Political Theory, Politics II'. He said, 'Now I could get approval because you're a graduate to take those two subjects concurrently if you wanted to – two lectures a week and one tutorial each. One is a first-year subject and one is a second-year subject. Then you could tackle the Politics IIIA the following year'. I said, 'Yes, I am prepared to make that investment, sounds a good idea'. So I did that. I absolutely loved it. I really had very little involvement in an educational sense with history and the social sciences since about sub-intermediate because I'd taken a science stream. Blair was a marvellous lecturer. He took the first-year subject of Constitutional History. Then there was another fellow called Bob Reed; and W.G.K. Duncan, the professor who took the second-year subject. I just thoroughly enjoyed that. I decided I would put my heart and soul into this. I would try and do four hours a night, five nights a week if I could. Obviously family things got in the way sometimes, but I set

out to do that. I did quite well. I then went on to do the Politics IIIA, which was taught by a man called Gordon Reid, who had been Usher of the Black Rod in the Federal House of Representatives and later became Governor of Western Australia. A very nice man, very able man. He taught what was Public Administration. Well then a funny thing happened. They said, 'You can't do Public Finance because we only do that every second year. That's a minor subject'. So I said, 'Alright, a third-year subject is probably enough on its own. I'll do that next year'. I went to enrol and they said, 'Have you got the pre-requisites?'. I said, 'What are the pre-requisites?'. 'Either Economics I or Social Economics' (which is a first-year course for people who want some Economics but aren't going to do it as a mainstream). I said, 'I've got Agricultural Economics. Will that do?'. 'No'. So I had to turn around and do Social Economics then. I said, 'Well I'm going to be with a bull's roar of doing the whole diploma'. So I sat down and reviewed the situation, which was seven subjects [for the diploma] (that's three-quarters of a BA), so I set out to do that and I did it. I decided to take a couple of accounting units so I did Elements of Accounting, which is the first-year subject and decided I would do Financial Accounting, which was the third-year subject which together with the Social Economics and the Public Finance gave me the seven subjects for the diploma. I did that in five years, keeping up the hard work. My family suffered a bit, but I was very stimulated by it. It provided me with a degree of uniqueness. (Anymore than there are degrees of pregnancy, are there? You're either unique or your not!) But I was close to being a unique person, certainly in the agricultural field, to have taken those two things. It provided me with (a) what I set out for it to do, which was an understanding of how ... what I was seeing in terms of [day-to-day] political and public administrative processes, what they meant and what the standards and [how they fitted into the scheme] of things; but also it provided me with a terrific entrée in terms of communicating across the board of the whole field. I was accepted and respected, I think, and understood as an agricultural scientist – at least I'd trained as one. But I had the same sort of rapport with the auditors and the Treasury and the Public Service Board and those sorts of people because they knew that I spoke that language and understood the values as well. So that became the focus of my career from there on.

When did you finish that diploma?

I finished that in the last year before I joined CSIRO, which was ... '60 was my last year.

So you started in the mid '50s?

So five years going back – '56, would it be. Yes. '56 that comes to five years.

There was a benefit, of course, you ended up with a diploma, unexpectedly.

Yes. For the sake of another subject or two, it seemed silly not to do it. I did do very well at it.

I won the Royal Institute of Public Administration Medal and Prize for the best graduating

student in my final year, which I was very proud of, being just an 'Aggie boy'. I made some very good contacts with a number of people, particularly in the ... who saw themselves in the Treasury – Public Service Board sort of stream would do this because it was their kind of bread and butter training. People like Graham Inns and John Holland. Graham Inns, of course, became the chairman of the Public Service Board and head of the Premiers Department. John Holland became a long-term serving officer in the Premiers Department. They were people that it was very handy to be able to ring up say 'John or Graham, Can you give us a bit of a steer on this?'. They knew me and knew that I was not playing silly buggers. So that was another spin-off. That was great. Anyway ...

Just on that aspect of the diploma, Peter. Did you get time off to do any ...

Yes. There was a provision that you were allowed to have for approved study up to three hours a week off without loss of salary or anything – study leave provision – which was very good. But otherwise it had to be done after hours.

Three hours would cover your lectures?

Three hours would cover the lectures, that's right. But there were [many evening course options]. A lot of people were doing these sorts of subjects part-time so there were evening lectures as well. Sometimes they would start at 6 which meant I was late home for tea.

Did you qualify for that special time off even though you weren't doing the diploma ...

Yes. The terminology was 'approved study', so people could do just odd subjects.

Work related?

Work related, and seen as appropriate to your work and your capacity and career possibilities.

[10:30] Was there anyone else in the Department doing that sort of ...

I don't think there was. I don't think I created any spin-off in that regard. Anyway, by the time we got to this point, I'd had a gut full of working with Geoff Strickland. Another friend, a former student colleague of mine, Peter Butler, had had a job as Assistant Secretary, Agricultural and Biological Sciences, it was called, at CSIRO Head Office in Melbourne. He'd been appointed to a job which was called Scientific Liaison Officer in London. CSIRO had one in London and one in Washington. These were appointed there to facilitate interaction with focal points of western science, and were able to provide information, provide contacts with research institutions in the western hemisphere and in Europe generally. Anyway, Peter Butler got that job and his position became vacant. Just when I was feeling a bit depressed and despondent, I saw the ad. and I applied for it. I was lucky enough to get that job, which involved moving to Melbourne. I won't ... The work I did there was very similar in some ways to what I did with the Department of Ag., particularly the Standing Committee servicing work.

A member of CSIRO, a fellow called Christian, who had been Chief of Division, he was the CSIRO member of Standing Committee – Clunies-Ross having died not long before – so I worked closely with him. I worked across the whole range of agricultural and biological divisions providing a gophering, nuts and bolts kind of linkage between head office and the divisions and the two members of the Executive who particularly were focussed on the agricultural and biological divisions. They were, as I say, C.S. Christian and Sir Otto Frankel. I did other things as well. I had some involvement in publications. Another job which I did ... the CSIRO was given a property near Cootamundra in New South Wales, and I, together with a more practical colleague who was the officer-in-charge of one the pasture research stations at Canberra, were given the job of taking over this property and arranging for its interim management and its disposal. That was pretty interesting, very rewarding and happy occasion. So those are the things that I did in that two-year period.

What I got most out of in terms of my longer term career was a good understanding of how important it is to go to a lot of trouble and to have sensitive and appropriate methods of evaluating research staff. CSIRO really did that very well. This was life-blood stuff to them. While research staff weren't the only people in the Department of Agriculture situation, they nevertheless were an important part. They were the ones who, of course, were working in a classification and reward system which was not really terribly well attuned in those days to what their real needs were because most public servants weren't engaged in that kind of thing. They were working in highly structured organisations with pecking orders and all that kind of thing, which were based on 'How many people do you supervise?' and 'How much responsibility do you take?'. While they are not irrelevant, not totally irrelevant, to a research person, they are much less so and there are other factors that are not ... don't come into it: consideration of [promotion of] administrative staff for instance.

Eager to get on with the research ...

Yes. And the qualities for which you should have, or develop, for which you should be rewarded, are not measurable in the same way. That was something that really came to me as valuable which I picked up by osmosis. I wasn't much involved with it, but I was very aware of it and kept closely in touch with it. I could see the significance of it. Anyway ...

You worked across Australia?

Yes, throughout. I didn't ever get to the Kimberley but I went everywhere else: north Queensland, Northern Territory, Tasmania, the southern States which I knew moderately well. I thought I had made what was to be my final career move, and so it would have been provided I continued to behave myself and hadn't got sacked, when Sir Frederick White, the chairman of

CSIRO, and the Executive, decided that they would seek to move head office to Canberra. They felt they were too remote from the political centre of Australia and that maybe they were missing out on the opportunities to influence and to be seen to be and all those kinds of things. I had seen enough of Canberra on my visits there and knew enough of it to quickly make the decision I didn't want to bring my kids up in that environment, which is so ... It's a flawed system as for all federal systems, I believe, particularly where the federal capital is created out of nothing, as it is in Washington and Brasilia and Canberra – three examples that quickly spring to my mind. They all have an artificiality, an unreality, an 'ivory toweriness', which I suppose has its advantages in the sense that you can be detached from the hurly burly, but they become so detached that they don't [understand reality]. Whereas State public servants live next door to real people who make cars or repair cars or do plumbing or run an accounting practice or whatever it might be. And you are subject to much closer and continuing contact and pressure, if you like, from people who are real rather than those who are insulated from all that. While modern communications perhaps has changed that to some degree, I don't know, I suspect it hasn't. You were starting to get third generation public servants in the departments in Canberra by this time, and there are probably fourth, maybe fifth, generation by now. Anyway, I didn't [want to go].

A different environment.

Totally. You could see it. I can remember we used to have meetings about certain things, later on I'm talking about. I remember the Commonwealth was interested in regionalisation and there was an interdepartmental committee on coordinating regions in South Australia and a guy used to come from whatever the Commonwealth department was, and he talked bullshit the whole time. He had reams and reams of stuff which were his briefing papers which was all so unreal. I became very unpopular with him. I interrupted him in full flight. I said, 'Mr Chairman, this is extremely interesting stuff but we have a lot on the agenda to get through. I wonder if our colleague from Canberra would mind perhaps with providing us with copies of this material and it could be attached to the minutes of our meeting'. Well, see the look on his face! (laughs) Oh dear. So that was a decision I took ...

[19:20] You didn't want to go to Canberra.

We'd made the move to Melbourne and it was good. We had a nice home, made good friends. It was good for us in a way to make that move, for all of [the family], it had some downsides, but anyway when that decision was made after I'd been there about a year, I then said, 'What am I going do?'. A secretaryship or the chief administrative officer's job at the Waite Institute was coming up because the man who was the first appointee in 1927 was about to retire, at the age of 65, Garfield Lockhart Gooden. I knew him quite well. Again I mention my close

association as a small boy as a student at the Waite. I knew Jim Melville, the Director, very well. I talked to him. He was a part time member of the Executive: the Executive of the CSIRO had five full-time members like what you call them in companies – they're Executive Directors. Then they had four part-timers who would just come to meetings of the Executive and make their input: they were from universities or industry, a mix of people with scientific backgrounds who would add depth and variety and adaptability if you like, to the membership of the Executive. So I used to see Melville about once a month when he came over for the full Executive meeting. I took the opportunity to say 'Well this is coming up. Would you be interested in me making an application for the job?' He said, 'Yes, I would'. I'd worked with him as secretary of the Bushfire Research Committee. It was something that was extra-departmental really and not entirely relevant. I might come back to that. He had known me as secretary of that. He was the chairman. I guess he thought that I was an OK operator in that role. And he knew of my repute in both the Department and CSIRO. Gooden was a purely an accounts-based administrator: lovely man, did a terrific job, but he didn't have a scientific background which I did. Jim, I think, was keen to widen the scope of this job. Any rate, to cut a long story short, I applied for the job and I got it. We came back to Adelaide to live in December of 1962: '61-'62 the years I was with CSIRO.

You had a couple of years with the CSIRO. Had you actually resigned from the Ag. Department?

Yes. Had to. No transferability. I lost my long service leave and superannuation. I'll come back to that in a minute. I'll probably get it back in the end. (laughs) ... See superannuation was not transferable, but I was young enough for that not to matter too much. That's the thing. [I could] make it up fairly quickly.

At that time Peter would it have been possible to have taken leave or ...

I don't think so, no. That sort of concept was, I would venture to say, unthought of.

Even in that situation of Ag. Department–CSIRO ...?

No, they weren't seen as that. The administrative structures were not attuned to that in any way – staffing structures [Commonwealth vs State administrations]. These days it would be much easier.

Peter, if you had gone say from the Ag. Department to the Waite, you would have had to resign.

Yes. In fact, vice versa, because ... Anyway, I started at the Waite ...

[23:45] Just another quick question there. We're going to come back in terms of your overall career, but at this point in time, what was the relationship or attitude between Ag. Department and CSIRO in particular: one was a State body and one was a Commonwealth body. How did you get on?

They basically saw themselves directly as complementary but there was friction at certain margins. I suppose the classic case was the Agriculture Research Liaison Section established in

Clunies-Ross's time. I think I did mention that briefly. That really got the Directors of Agriculture, the leaders of the basic advisory extension services to farmers, quite up in arms, because CSIRO was relatively well-endowed financially. It established this Agriculture Research Liaison Section under a fellow called Reg Pennyfather, who had worked in the New South Wales Department of Agriculture in the Riverina [and] was an experienced extension person in that area. They set up in many cases to run things that were seen as quite legitimate. For instance, the ARLS became the focus for the organisation of Australia-wide conferences in agricultural science issues, fruit research conferences, animal health research conferences, where workers from universities, CSIRO, State Departments of Agriculture and, indeed, private industry in some cases, would meet together for two to five days in some selected part of Australia and papers would be given on the cutting edge of the particular field and a lot of interaction and exchange, seminars, symposia would be part of it and the proceedings would be published. It would really be a very valuable framework for speeding up the exchange of information between and interaction between workers who were in parallel or similar fields. That function of ARLS was warmly welcomed and well done and no quarrel about that. When we got into the publication field, they started to produce *Rural Research*, I think a quarterly publication, that may have changed from time to time, but it was a periodical several times a year. That purported to report the results of up-coming progress reports on research of farming interest. It quickly seemed to spill over into [the extension field]. They said it was really for extension [officers], for advisory [officers], but it was also [directed] to all sorts of farmers as well. It started to creep into [the Department of Agriculture field]. It was very well produced, excellent quality publication. It was definitely seen as an encroachment on the field of the Departments of Agriculture and their extension programs. There were problems, real and perhaps sometimes a little imaginary, about some of the information purveyed: was it appropriate because it came from a centralised source and maybe was not perceived as taking enough account of local variations which [could be important] – but it was real bread and butter stuff to the Departments of Ag. Anyway, there was a considerable yike about it and the shit hit the fan in the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Clunies-Ross was under sustained attack about this from all of the State Directors of Agriculture, the other Commonwealth people tended to sit back and watch the fun. (laughs) But I think I mentioned that in connection with Callaghan. Callaghan played a leading part in that along with Bob Noble and Hubert Mullett and I think Arthur Bell from Queensland. But they were all in it. Anyway, there was eventually some toning down and it stopped the creep, if you like, into that area. Certainly relations after that became more normalised, if we are allowed to use that word. They were never ... That's in the institutional/political area, it was pretty hot there for a while.

[Additional note: Talking about the work of ARLS reminds me of two significant involvements I had with them while still an Ag. Department officer. One was in the early 1950s when I was joint organiser with a CSIRO chap of a conference tour of the Upper South East of South Australia – Coonalpyn Downs – where major land development had taken place based on superphosphate, trace elements, land clearing techniques and selection of suitable pasture species, both legumes and grasses. The other was to be Organising Secretary of the first Australian Fruit Research Conference which was held in residence at Roseworthy College in 1958. Tom Miller was chairman of the conference committee and my secretarial colleague was an ARLS bloke who gave me the guidelines and let me get on with the job. The conference, attended by more than 100 fruit research people, was voted an outstanding success and I enjoyed it immensely. In those days there was an official program of agricultural conferences for the whole of Australia, approved usually several years ahead by the Standing Committee.]

In terms of at the officer level I would say that generally speaking relations between the scientists was very good indeed. They understood each others' role and contribution. These periodical conferences were most valuable in fostering that sort of thing too. We were lucky in South Australia because we had three or four divisions of CSIRO on-site as it were at the Waite Campus: soils, mathematical statistics, horticulture. No just the three. Australian Wine Research Institute which was of the same ilk. But we all knew those people. CSIRO people were occasionally used as lecturers by the university in specialist fields, particularly the soils area. I remember Charles Stevens, who was a very fine soil surveyor, came and gave us a couple of lectures about soil surveying and soil classification in the field. So we had that kind of contact. Of course, up until soon after the war, CSIRO Soils and the Waite were all housed in the one building. As the Waite expanded CSIRO had to build across the road. That did make a difference to them. Nothing like propinquity: that is, the casual meeting of people as they're coming in from car park or going out the door to the canteen or going for a walk in the rose garden, or whatever, sharing the library. That is a valuable lubricant to that interchange, whereas if you've got to go across the road while that's not very far and you may say you will, you don't as much.

A bit more territorial ...

Yes, that's right. It's just the fact of geography really.

What about for you personally when you went from the Ag. Department to CSIRO. Even though you were going to Melbourne, was it seen as if you were 'converting to the enemy' or ...?

I don't think so. I never thought that. Nobody ever said or hinted that to me. I was never even called a 'dirty rat' jocularly. I think people were happy for me, that knew me and had some

regard for me and could see it as a good career move. I was seen by CSIRO as bringing something that they were happy to have. I know Chris Christian said to me in terms of my briefing of him for Standing Committee, he said 'I've never had any service like this before'. He said it was marvellous. There was a good feel about it.

Were you able to maintain relations with people in the Department ...?

I got to know the Victorian Department of Ag. people better than I had before. (laughs) Again, the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science is relevant. We might talk about a bit further down the track when we come to your check list, but that was good place for meeting people of the other organisations and from private, increasingly, from private industry. There were very few people, trained agriculturalists, working in private industry until substantially after the war when it started to happen with some of the agricultural chemical firms and things of that kind. Fertiliser firms started to employ graduates.

You were able to maintain some relations, of course, with the Ag. Department or at least in Adelaide because you end up getting this offer from the Waite to drag you 'home'. (both laugh)

[32:45] **End of Side A, Tape 3**
Tape 3, Side B

[0:05] I had a month overlap with the chap I was replacing, Gar Gooden, which was very valuable. This was a much more nuts and bolts job. I was responsible for the financial administration of the departments of the Waite Institute. I was directly responsible to the Director. When I say I was responsible for the financial administration, they were university departments with professors in charge: academic freedom reigned and it was a somewhat delicate line that one had to walk in that regard because the one thing that professors value is their freedom. Some are very freely cooperative and understand that despite that, they're working in an organic whole and that there are certain rules. There were some mavericks and they were sometimes a bit difficult. Many of the departments, the professors and their individual academic staff, had research grants which came to them in recognition of their particular skills and abilities. They came with conditions, some of which forced the university administration and, in particular, myself to be involved because we had to submit financial reports each year ... part of which certified the terms and conditions of the grant had been fully complied with. That sometimes brought a little bit of room for negotiations, shall we say, given particularly to some of the profs. I was also responsible for the appointment and promotion processes of all non-academic staff at the Institute, which was a very interesting job. I was also responsible to the director for the overall management of the various service functions of the Institute: the farm, the library, cleaning and caretaking staff, clerical/administrative, telephone service, gardening staff and grounds maintenance, and the minor works and building program.

We had several workshops: we had a carpentry workshop, engineering workshop, electronics workshop ... mechanic workshop and a photographer. All those support services were nominally under my, shall we say, guidance. It was a pretty loose rein but I was their boss if they needed a boss.

This was all based at the Waite?

All at the Waite, yes. The Waite was in the process of developing at that time the Mortlock Field Station. This was a large property which was bequeathed to the University of Adelaide for the Waite Institute, up at Mintaro, the old Martindale Hall, Martindale property. That was acquired during my time, taken over by us, and the initial steps in staffing and developing it were taking place. I had a fairly heavy involvement with that also. But it was the best job in terms of enjoyment that I ever had. It was a lovely atmosphere to work out there in those days. It was a very nice environment, physical environment. The staff were all pretty ... there was a family feel about it in those days. Melville was a great boss. I had a few run-ins, as I say, with some of the profs because my interpretation of the terms and conditions of the grants was not always exactly the same as theirs, but we always parted on friendly terms. It never came to bloodshed: they probably would have won if it had.

Were you involved with the university administration at North Terrace?

Yes, indeed, yes. Some people at the Waite thought of it as organisation in its own right. In many ways it operated that way. It had its own budget, which was separate from the university, but that had to be fought for and delivered out of the total university funding, apart from the research funds which came specifically to the Waite. The Registrar as the overall chief administrative officer of the university and the Bursar, in particular, were my bosses in fact although I was responsible to Melville. Particularly, I worked very closely with the Bursar's Department: the questions of expenditure control, the passing of accounts for payment, all that kind of stuff, the ordering system, the entering into contracts and things of that kind. Obviously one worked closely in with Wal Meiklejohn who was the Bursar and his senior staff, I think we had a good understanding. I used to go in there [frequently]: they didn't often come out to the Waite ... (laughs)

From the university point of view, the Waite was always out there ...

Yes. They respected Melville and myself as the administrators, if you like, at the two different levels, two different ways, running a reasonably tight ship. I don't think we caused them too much grief by failure to attend to the matters that were needed. But that was a very good hands-on type skill. I suppose I brought a different flavour to it, to what my predecessors had, naturally enough. I introduced things like a Safety Committee, which it had never had before. Funny, I felt it should be composed of academic staff of the departments, but the professors

didn't see it that way. They saw safety as something that was either personal to the individual academic staff member, and particularly the professor, or it was a matter for technicians. So what we got, which was three-quarters of a loaf I suppose, was in fact a committee chaired by an academic member of staff with myself as sort of executive officer of it and a senior technician, usually the senior technician, in each of the six academic departments that comprised the Waite. Because nothing much had been done, it was reasonably successful because there was a fallow field. We got some sensible across-the-board systems and precautions and protocols introduced. I was quite pleased at that.

[8:00] You say you introduced that, Peter, what sort of things were you looking at?

Laboratory safety, machinery safety, fire (that's laboratory safety), field safety (if you're talking agricultural chemicals, sprays and pesticides and things of that kind), fire precautions, electrical hazards, lifting, the whole shooting match.

Something that hadn't been done before but you saw a need for it.

I felt that it needed to be not a draconian, rigid 'You will do this', but a common framework that would be compatible across the whole of the Institute because people were moving through the laboratories and the fields and all that kind of thing. It just was sensible to have it done in a reasonably standardised way without, as I say, trying to go to the lowest common denominator or anything of that kind.

A lot of people want a safe working environment.

Of course they do, yes.

Was this something that was happening across the university or within ...

No. It was something I brought from CSIRO really. CSIRO had really got stuck into this. It started before I came there, but it really was flowering, if you like, at the time I was there. I became seized with the significance of it and felt it was appropriate. Melville and the heads of departments agreed. It was not something that I just thrust upon anybody. I wouldn't have been able to do that anyway. But, no, but I did initiate it and got the support of the director and the heads of departments.

The CSIRO was working towards better safety measures. What about in the Ag. Department and things like that?

It was starting to be [an issue]. Occupational health and safety was starting to become an issue. There were changes in the workmen's compensation entitlement insurance arrangement as I recall it at that time. If it could be shown that the employee was at fault, then he wasn't covered. I don't think that applies now. I think it's a no fault situation and that's an interesting line. I remember we dealt with one case at the Waite where a bloke chopped the ends off his

fingers because he insisted on trying to free up a little hammer-mill thing by sticking his fingers down to pluck the stuff out of it and he'd been told. But there it was ...

[11:00] Modern requirements to have these safety measures and so on.

Yes. Guarding of machinery and all those sorts of things for fail-safe, deadman's handles and all that, yes. Anyway that was, as I say, that was an enjoyable job. When Strickland died, on the day of this 65th birthday, from cancer, I was actually approached by the chairman of the Public Service Board to apply for the job of director. It hadn't occurred to me. I was happy where I was. They were looking, as I understand it, to have included in the field (let's put it that way because they made it quite clear to me I wasn't being offered the job on a plate or anything like that), but they were keen to have me as an applicant and to be included in the field. They wanted to have in the field somebody [or bodies] ... who hadn't grown up entirely within the Department itself, but had a wider experience. I obviously fitted that bill. I consulted with various people, particularly some of my respected and experienced colleagues at the Waite, a couple of the heads of department, a couple of professors who, in particular, I respected their level-headed judgement about such matters and knew that they knew me. And, of course, there's Melville. Melville put no suggestion of a barrier in my way, He was supportive of the idea. So I applied for it but didn't get it. Irving was appointed. He'd been the senior person and a well-merited appointment in its own right.

Is that Marshall Irving?

Yes, Marshall Irving.

He was in the Department.

Yes. He was the head of the Division of Animal Industry and was clearly the number two person. Herriot having gone by then to Roseworthy for the same reasons that I left [the Department], more or less. (laughs) So I didn't get that job.

How far down the track did you go in the process?

I was interviewed by the Public Service Board and I was interviewed by the Minister. So I must have got fairly close to it.

You kept in contact with the Department?

Yes, though not daily, but from time to time ...

Did the work at the Waite involve contact with the Department?

Not a lot, no. Not a lot, really, but it was more friendship sort of basis. Australian Institute of Agricultural Science was probably the most regular forum for that. But one of my very best friends is Lex Walker ... He's godfather to my youngest son so we saw him on a friendship

basis quite often. Some of my old sparring partners from university days, like Peter Barrow, he and I were in the same year, Reg French, would be in occasional contact.

[14:45] You had an idea of what was going on in the Department?

To a small extent, yes, to an extent. Some 12 months later, Irving had taken hold and had formulated a new top management structure for the Department, which was himself as Director, with three Assistant Directors. One was Assistant Director, Research and Extension. [This was] functional so the concept was of a corporate executive which collectively had the line responsibility for the operating branches. One element of that was this Assistant Director, Research and Extension who looked after the functions of research and extension across all the branches. That became Lex Walker. There was an Assistant Director, Technical and Industry who dealt with subject matter, on relationships with farmers organisations and the agricultural industry in that sense. So that was what you might call the nuts and bolts of all branches. [This became] Peter Barrow. Then there was an Assistant Director, Administration and Finance which was the position I decided to apply for, of my own volition. I wasn't headhunted on that occasion. (laughs) But I had become interested, because of the other experience, in what the Department was doing. I liked Irving and the other senior people and it reawakened my interest, not that I was unhappy at the Waite at all, it was great, but I suppose the idea of a challenge was awakened by the approach that I had from Max Dennis, the chairman of the Public Service Board. So I followed it up by applying for this Assistant Director, Admin. and Finance job, for which I felt I was well qualified having done those two accountancy subjects (laughs). Here comes the pay off! So I applied for that job and got it. Now that was less ... It was more like a line job because you tended to be working through the accounts branch, the administrative staff and the management services [people] – it was still called 'Personnel' in those days.

Human Resources these days.

Yes. It was called 'Personnel' in those days. It was a little bit different. At the time I was appointed I was classified one rung below the other two Assistant Directors. I didn't think that was appropriate because ... I applied for a reclassification actually, after I been there for a decent interval, on the basis that these were three colleagues who operated across the Department and were equal in their responsibility, in the way which they participated in the decision-making process and so on. I was able to strengthen that because, although my brief was Admin. and Finance, my background and training enabled me to be more participative in all issues of the management of the Department, not just 'How's the budget?'.

You talked several languages!

Indeed, that's right.

[18:40] When did you re-commence with the Department?

So I re-commenced with the Department on the 1st of June 1971.

This structure had been up for some time?

No, we were the first appointees to it. Yes, the jobs were advertised in January, February, something like that. I was the last to actually take up the job because I had a job to do the right thing by at the Waite, so I negotiated that between Irving and Melville, that I would start on the 1st of June. OK. Now ...

On that structure, Peter, was that something that Marshall Irving wanted for Ag. Department or was it something that was ...?

No, it was his concept. No, I understand it was his concept. The lynchpin in a way to this was Viv Lohmeyer who had taken my old job of Scientific Liaison Officer. It was still called that but it had nothing to do with science or liaison in any specific sort of way. It was really a technical secretary to the Director is the best simple terminology I can use. He was the Executive Officer of the Executive Committee. He did a very good job of it. V.K. Lohmeyer.

He's still about.

He's pretty unwell. I haven't seen him. He hasn't been to any reunion lunches for several years now. I must ring him up – see how he's going.

I might do so as well.

I don't know how he is, but that's up to you. Alright. Now, coming back to Assistant Director, Admin. and Finance.

We'll pick up on the story now.

Yes, back to the story. Back home. I was made very welcome I felt, particularly amongst my agricultural colleagues. There was some ... I had to build some bridges with the chap who'd been the senior administrative person in the Department, Hugh Mathews. The job had been Secretary. I told you about my relationship with Stan North in earlier years. Well somebody else came in and Hugh Mathews was the Secretary. I guess he had seen himself as the heir apparent to take on this job. Then, blow me down, this outsider comes in and he's not even a qualified accountant. (laughs) So I had to ... One of the first things I had to do was build a bridge with him. I didn't have the same sort of problem, because their noses weren't out of joint, with the accountant and the senior personnel bloke. They were most supportive and helpful. But Hugh, his nose was out of joint and he was disappointed and resentful to a degree. Took a while for him to settle down and accept me but he did, within a reasonable time. I really never had any problems with him of an on-going nature. We did differ in our approach to solving certain problems or addressing certain problems, not unexpectedly. He was basically a

career public servant in the general administrative area. Pretty conservative. That wasn't a bad thing: I was inclined to be a bit rash sometimes and he'd calm me down. (laughs)

A bit of a balance there.

A bit of a balance there, but our personal relationships became ... They were never close. We were never intimate friends. I never had a friendship with him like I did with Lex Walker or Pete Barrow for instance, or what I formed with Morrie Zobel who was the Personnel Officer at the time. Not that we used to go to each others homes, but it [had] a freer and easier good colleague feel about it.

It's always a difficult situation in the hierarchical structure, particularly in that sort of area of finance: you can only go up the ladder or to another department.

That's right. And Hugh was getting too old. This was his last chance really, because he retired in about '74.

What about the rest of the people – as a group?

I had no problem. I've always had an easy frank and open style, I suppose you'd call it, with people. I've never been one to stand on ceremony because 'You're a base grade clerk and I'm a Chief Executive Officer'. I always try to treat people as people. People quickly recognise that and value it and accept it. I was always approachable. My door was always open, with due process. But I think people came to feel that I was somebody who would listen. I'm a good listener, as well as a good talker, my wife would say. (laughs) But I do, I believe in listening. I do listen. A number of things happened fairly quickly.

[24:45] This was about the time of the move to the 'Black Stump'?

No. The 'Black Stump' hadn't been conceived at this stage. This was '71 and Marshall Irving said, 'Your main brief, Trum, is to get departmental headquarters built at Northfield. The preliminary planning has been done. We've been through Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works. We've got funds: they're approved. You're my man on the planning stage of this'. I spent half my time for the next 12 months, something like that. It was a huge process. It was a big project, very complex, a lot of laboratory-type stuff as well as office buildings and special types of things. I worked with an Assistant Director of the Public Buildings Department.

PBD?

PBD, that's right. Fred Crosby by name. He was the nominated senior person from that. He and I were the client and the architect. There was also, of course, the project architects which were Neighbour, Cheeseman & ...

Doley?

Doley. That's right. So there [we were] ... the overall architect, project architect and client, and we met with other people from time to time. They varied depending on what we looking at – safety issues, electrical, da-da-de-da meeting, meeting, meeting. We used to meet in Cheeseman Doley's office in Hutt Street there, weekly I suppose, sometimes more often. It was a huge task, it really was. Of course if all came to nothing because Monarto reared its head. I need to say it was delayed getting to this stage. It had been conceived that the Department's head office should consolidate itself somewhere and Northfield was deemed to be the right place for it to go. But Geoff Strickland was dead against it. He said, 'There's no way I'd go out to Northfield. My office must be in the city'. He was very rigid about that. That's hearsay: that's what Marshall Irving has told me. I did never hear Geoff say that himself, but I can believe it. (laughs) Highly believable. He delayed and delayed and that's why it never got built, in a way you could say, probably.

The land was under government control at Northfield?

Yes. It was the old prison dairy farm, dairy farm associated with the Northfield Prison. When it stopped doing that, it became the Dairy Research Station. Then they gradually added up a scientific field laboratory type thing, often built with industry funds, that was all. I don't know much about that. John Feagan would be able to tell you all about that. John Radcliffe probably too: he was heavily involved in that. But that was it. So we got to the stage where the tender documents had been prepared. It was about to go to tender and there were a stack of documents, a metre high, huge thing.

This was for building the whole complex or individual components?

Well, there was a number of separate buildings. There was no high-rise. I don't think there was anything taller than two storeys, from memory. Anyway we were ready to go and, of course, the great Monarto dream came upon the scene. Don Dunstan's dream. He had a love affair with Monarto. You know he grew up in that area as a small boy and loved the Monarto mallee area? I'm not suggesting that that was the be-all and the end-all of the proposal, but he felt very emotionally involved in the concept of that ... for that to become a new satellite centre, if you can have a satellite centre. (laughs) I'm not sure that you can: that sounds like a paradox. So that's what it was going to be and there were funds for decentralisation, Federal funds. We were in the Whitlam era now. They were heady days for the centralists and the decentralisers and all that kind of stuff, the pent-up energies and hopes and aspirations of the Labor side of Federal politics had free reign. If you had a good idea you could almost certainly get money. Dunstan, as I understand it, was right on this bandwagon. He said, 'We need to [decentralise]. Adelaide is hemmed in by the hills: we don't want to get too much into the hills. We're getting too far to the north, too far to the south (which has happened, of course, since). We want to

build a satellite city within reasonable distance but something which is separate – decentralised. We've got just the spot and the South Australian government will spearhead this development. We've got three departments I've identified which can become the focus, the initial focus, of this development. They are the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Lands ...'. I can't remember for the life of me what the third one was: might have been Chemistry. They were, with the greatest respect, seen as ones from which there would be no real political backlash because they were largely serving rural communities and rural electorates, which were becoming increasingly less significant in the political frame. If you'd moved certain other ones, there might have been political backlash. That's just my assumption, interpretation. I haven't got that as an authoritative view but I suspect it's right.

There was certain logic in

But, also, they were able to say, 'Look we've got the plans ready'. Now, we never got to the stage of determining how transportable the plans were to a new site. To a significant extent they would have been. You'd have had to look at footings and things like that. They might have had to be different. And drainage and water supply and things of that kind. But it was not a totally untrue or illogical claim to make. But, of course, what happened? We had the 11th of November 1975 and we also had a new report on population growth forecasts. The two of these killed Monarto stone dead. I can't remember the name of the report: it was a professor somebody who brought out a fresh set of Australia-wide population forecasts. These showed a very different picture to what the euphoria of Monarto and [similar proposals] – Albury–Wodonga was another case in the eastern States – and there were probably others. With the return of the Fraser Government after the ... [the Monarto proposal was killed].

**[32:35] End of Side B, Tape 3
Tape 4, Side A**

[0:15] We were just talking there about the end of the Monarto dream.
Yes.

I suppose we could talk about a couple of political factors and the reports and so on, but attitudes within the Department itself and within the Public Service ...

A lot of negativity. In fact, why I can pinpoint this to a degree – Marshall Irving became very ill. We've got to go back over his reign, but let's finish off Monarto here. He became very ill. In fact, he came back to work a couple of times, but he just couldn't handle it. I'm not exactly sure what the nature of his illness was, to give it a name, but in the end he accepted that he was going to have to take early retirement through invalidity. But from about early 1974 he was really out of action. Lex Walker acted as Director for a while. Peter Barrow acted as Director for while. Then I acted and became the continuing Acting Director until Jim McColl's

appointment in '76. Now in August–September of '75 I went overseas for a six-week study tour to look at two things in particular. One was what's involved in decentralising government agencies, relocating substantial government agencies, based on experience in Britain and, in particular, France where they'd done quite a lot of it. There were three things. The other areas I looked at to complete the record of that, was research management (relating the management of research programs to policy concerns and issues, where the resources go and that kind of stuff) and, thirdly, regionalisation. We'll just focus on the decentralisation bit. I found that all the experiences that I was able to detect and be told about, particularly in France where decentralisation from Paris was into quite substantial provincial centres, which usually had quite a significant infrastructure, including particularly a university (might be a small university or colleges of higher education, a tertiary education establishment), plus other things, size, an existing community with all the infrastructure that went with that. Whereas Monarto was not like that. Now coming back to your point, that you raised before: how did people in the Department or departments that were involved in this feel about it. There was a lot of very negative feeling. Partly it was just the gut stuff: 'How am I going to travel all that way? Here I can get to work in 15 minutes, and it's going to take me an hour and a quarter, each way'. But there were some more serious concerns such as the easy interaction with other scientific organisations in the case of our technical scientific staff. Possibly the most significant one of all – day release classes for trainee technicians. The fact that you could [do that so easily in Adelaide]. There was the system that we talked about in relation to my own public admin. diploma course. There was a system of time off with limited number of hours per week to attend classes in whatever was appropriate training, would have become very difficult from Monarto. The whole question of that was very much a significant thing for technical-technician type staff. For graduate staff it was less significant because they had other ways of keeping up with things. But it was the turning of unqualified technicians into qualified technicians, very important and a highly significant group of people in any scientific organisation. So those things were the ones that spring to mind. There was a Monarto Steering Committee, with a PSA representative on it, which might well have been John Feagan, because obviously there were union type considerations, Public Service Board and the departments that were in the firing line. But in the event it all came to nothing, of course, because the scheme blew up in ... Well it must have been starting to blow up in that year, because we had moved into the 'Black Stump' by the time Jim McColl came, which was 1st July '76. I can remember being involved with the fellow – what was his name? – from Public Buildings Department. He was the furniture and fittings guy: can't think of his name, but he came to talk to me about [fitting out the Grenfell Centre]. By that time we had a ... I was substantively in the position of Deputy Director, that had been created. I'd been appointed to that, but was acting as Director

in the interregnum between Irving and McColl. So the layout on whatever floor we were on, the 16th floor, there was a Director's office on one side and then forming an 'L' with it was the Deputy Director's office (a bit smaller of course, as is appropriate). Discussions about the furnishings to be provided for these. I can remember saying to this guy, 'John', (John Flaherty) ... He said, 'You're classified at such and such a [level]. This is the desk that goes with it'. I said, 'For goodness sake, I don't want a desk that size. I'll only cover it with paper'. Big desks are for people who have to handle and spread out a lot of paper. So I said, 'I'm not going to have a desk that size'. I picked one that was a reasonable size, but we had to come to a compromise. And then colour scheme for the chairs. I said, 'Well, I've got a very nice ...'. Just turn it off for a minute.

[8:00] Peter, you just had to grab a piece of memorabilia ...

I'm holding in my hand a print of couple of tanagers I think they are called – summer tanagers, one of which is bright red and one of which is yellow, on a briar rose – a piece of a briar rose plant. They are very striking colours. I'd spotted this in a print shop just the near Department's offices and I thought, 'Gee, I like that. It's nice and eye-catching, two primary colours'. So I bought it and had it framed and had it hanging my office. I said, 'Well, why don't we be a bit bright?'. All the woodwork was that white wiping stain, a pale ash blondie sort of colour, greyish colour. 'We want a bit of brightness to offset that neutral carpet, let's go for red and yellow. I don't know whether I am going to finish up as Director or as Deputy, that hadn't been decided yet, but if we had one of the offices red and the other [yellow], my picture will go in either'. (both laugh) So that's how it was decided.

The rationale!

You've got to have a rationale in these things – I am a great rationaliser.

Of course you were in the situation there in the position as 'Acting' and having to make decisions.

Exactly.

Someone's got do it.

Someone's got do it, that's right. So that was how I made that decision. Jim McColl was quite happy to have the red chairs and I had the yellow ones when the time came. (laughs) That's perhaps enough about Monarto, unless there are any questions.

There are a couple of questions and also a comment because we're looking here from '71 through to '76 and there was a hell of a lot happening. We've touched on things as we've been going along here, so we are going to re-visit ...

I just picked up on the Northfield which became Monarto which didn't become anything because I think there is a chain through there that I thought was better to deal with that as ...

The transfer of Northfield plans to Monarto ...

For them to disappear in a puff of smoke. The decision must have been taken before the Whitlam time because there's no way we could have planned the move to the 'Black Stump' to be in there in the early months of '76 if the process had started in November '75. The more significant thing probably was this report on the future population growth. That resulted in it going on the back burner, being put on hold – the Monarto idea. This is a more correct statement – with the advent of the Fraser Government it was killed stone dead.

[11:00] I'll do a bit more work on that chronology bit. When Monarto comes along, Northfield's put on hold. The Department ... was the situation the Department had to go somewhere? Obviously Monarto was not going to be built over night, you've got the building in Gawler Place ...

We had the old so-called Agriculture Building, used to be Simpson's Building, we were still in that and we moved out of that into the 'Black Stump'.

Was there any pressing need for you to move out of that building?

It was absolutely shocking, quite untenable in terms of changed expectations and provisions. It was an old factory converted with special PBD partitions. It was unairconditionable, other than the odd RAC. In fact, it was so hot on the upper floors that the female staff, anyway, were told that they could go home if it got [too hot]. It really was quite unbearable.

Was there at temperature rule for that?

Yes. A rough one. When the Secretary said it was too hot, the girls were told they could go home.

A thermometer sitting next to a desk?

I don't know how he did it, but you could tell; you didn't need a thermometer. It was very airless. It was not only the temperature, it was the airlessness of it. There was no air movement through it. It was a very poorly designed – undesigned – building. Of course, field staff were alright. They were able to get out into the field and do their own thing and that wasn't so much of a problem for them. But those [who] were tied to their desks it became very uncomfortable.

In regards to ...

And it was crowded and overcrowded, and unsatisfactory, and it was only leased.

I was wondering if the move to the 'Black Stump' could have been in relation to other pressures aside from Northfield falling over and Monarto not starting up.

Yes. We needed somewhere anyway. That was part of the rationale for the approval of the Northfield project as a head office anyway.

They had this brand new building that needs tenants.

Yes. Mr AMP was very happy.

Was it the AMP Building to start with?

Yes. Well AMP built it as an investment. They never occupied it.

One of the other people I interviewed referred to it as the AMP Building.

It was build by the AMP as a rental income-producing property as part of their financial arrangements. They were the landlord.

[13:50] Coming back to Monarto, there this notion of the whole Department moving. That's following on from the Callaghan report on regionalisation. The Callaghan Report of '73?

There are two Callaghan ... The Callaghan Report, let me just think. Can I come back to that through a different route, because I would like to now take the opportunity to pick up on the government's questioning of the Department – 'What is the purpose of the Department?' and 'What is its future role?' – which then leads on to Callaghan.

[14:35] We'll do that. I'll just ask you one quick question on Monarto. You talked about the Department moving up there. How did Peter Trumble feel about moving? Would you have relocated for example?

I wouldn't have. Shifted my home, you mean?

Yes.

No, because I lived in this area, Blackwood, and it's only 10 minutes across to the freeway. I'd have put up with it. Also, undoubtedly, at the level at which I was, I would have had to spend part of each week in the city of Adelaide. It was recognised that the Department, the Executive and maybe other elements, would have had a pied à terre in the city for those sorts of purposes. We never got to really fine tune and develop that as to the detailed mechanism, but that concept was certainly more than mooted, it was envisaged.

You could have coped with ...

Well, I hope so. (laughs) You've got to give it a go.

It got to the stage of planning house allotments and so on. You didn't get to the stage where you chose one?

No, no, no. I never saw any of the housing designs. It didn't really ever get down to the nuts and bolts of that that I am aware of. The PBD may have done some translating Northfield plans to Monarto – plans of buildings, the buildings of the Department's concern, they may have done that, but the issues that we were looking at were the sort of ones that I talked to you about that the Monarto Steering Committee wrestled with under the chairmanship of Iris Stevens. Commissioner Iris Stevens was the – she was the first female member of the Public Service Board.

That's the great 'What if?'

Of course, 'What if?'

...

Well, anyway, the point was that it was evaded. (laughs) This is part of the Geoff Strickland philosophy: if you keep procrastinating long enough, the problem will go away. Often you're right. I mean you're often right in the public sector, gosh.

You lost out on Northfield. Lost out on Monarto ...
But we get the 'Black Stump'.

[17:15] Yes. Perhaps if we turn ...

I'd like to do that because I think we need to canvass these issues because they underlie all the other things to a large extent. 4th of July. I think it was the 4th of July 1975. The Minister of Agriculture, Tom Casey, initialled a memo signed by the Premier asking that the Director of Agriculture spell out for the information of the government the purpose the Department of Agriculture – it was about a two-line minute. I had only just rejoined the Department and I can remember, as though it was yesterday, Marshall Irving coming in to chair our regular weekly Executive meeting, Mondays I think they were, put it on the table and said, 'What do you think of that, boys?'. (laughs) He took it upon himself, with the assistance of Viv Lohmeyer, to prepare that document. A lot of input was made by branch heads and by the three Assistant Directors, but he put a huge amount of his time into doing this. He recognised the importance of it. He consulted with the other three members of the Executive regularly. He asked us to read through his drafts and all that kind of stuff. So we made input, but he carried that can with a dedication and a drive that I'm sure brought about his failing health.

It was a two line memo but it required a ...

It required ... The answer was, I can't remember how many pages. The reports I'm sure still exist. I hope so. Anyway, so there was quite a bit of canvassing of other Departments of Agriculture interstate about how they saw some of these things, trying to put it into an Australia-wide context I guess, which was fair enough. Interactions – one of the topics that you've got here would have been covered in it. So that was submitted after several months. It's hard to remember exactly: three or four months I think it was. Marshall, in effect, said to Lex and Peter and I, 'You guys get on with running the Department while I put my back into this'. So that was submitted and a few weeks later it came back saying, 'Thank you very much Mr Irving. That was very interesting. Yes we can see and we now understand. What do you see as the Department's future role?'. Same thing all over again. That was, in a way, tougher, but it followed on, and again the same thing happened. Marshall did it himself, with a lot of help from Viv Lohmeyer. Lex and Peter and I got on with what we were all supposed to be doing. I can't for the life of me remember what the thrust of this document was, but it talked about the

sort of many things that happened, the need to improve in the areas the Department needed to focus on, where its resources were needed. It was, I suppose, a forward plan. In a sense more of the same. So that went back to the government and then they said, 'Hmm, we don't know quite what to make of all this. I think we'd better get some advice'. So we come to the third step in the process which was to invite Sir Allan Callaghan, who had by this time returned to live in Adelaide. After he retired from his Commonwealth jobs, he and Doreen went to live in Surfers Paradise, which they found was a mistake. They came back and were living in Adelaide. He was asked to propose the implementation of Marshall Irving's proposals to what extent and in what way. Out of that came a number of things. One was the regionalisation. Another one was the appointment of a Deputy Director as such, not merely the designating one of the chiefs of division as a next in line or a lieutenant, but a deputy who would do what my job became which was to see to the basic on-going running of the Department, seeing that it was on track and all those nuts and bolts kind of things leaving the Director freer for addressing policy and development issues. ... By this time, Marshall really had come to realise that he was not able to cope. I think it must have been a bit like Callaghan's condition when he retired in whenever that was, '59: a mixture of mental, nervous and heart-type conditions. I think Marshall had high blood pressure and some sort of heart trouble. He didn't ever talk about his health much. He was not a hypochondriac.

[23: 25] He was stressed out?

Stressed out. He was stressed out and it was not going to go away. He tried. He came back several times and he'd last three days and then he was off again. Very sad. But he was a great guy, full of fun, terrific sense of humour, he had the most wonderful stories. (laughs) I wish we had him here telling the oral history! A very penetrating wit, very level-headed guy and, for a fellow who was a vet., he was very broad-minded, because vets often aren't. (laughs) Thus speaks the Ag. Science guy, who see themselves as the great integrators.

Was he a good boss?

Yes he was. He was very straight and direct. You knew where you were with him, but he would give you your head if he was satisfied you knew what you were about and in your competence. He expected you to perform. He expected you to keep him informed on things that were happening without burdening him with a lot of bullshit. No, a good boss. A very nice man.

He had the respect of the Department?

Yes, he did. He was a great believer in the camaraderie of staff. He did more than any other director in the Department, almost than all of them put together, to support and develop the Departmental Social Club. He was a very strong supporter of that and looked to it to help in a

positive way, not just to be there but things to do and that kind of thing. Very positive about that.

[25:10] Anyway, things started to go sour for poor old Marshall and the Department didn't know quite where it was. I'd become Acting Director in about May of '75, yes that's right, and did my little overseas trip. Tom Casey had been the Minister of Agriculture. Tom was an easy-going kind of fellow, well met kind of a guy, not in anyway doctrinaire as a politician. If there is such a thing as a small 'l' Labor you could probably say the same as a small 'l' Liberal corresponding, I would say he didn't have a trade union background: he came from a country electorate ...

He had a bit of farming background or something.

Well they had property, they owned pubs. Had a pub up on the Broken Hill line – Peterborough I think somewhere – and with some pastoral interests. Very nice friendly chap, but you wouldn't call him God's gift to either politics or public administration. But he was there. He was an Upper House member: of course there had to be some members of that [in Cabinet] so that partly assisted him to become a Minister, but he didn't have any ideas much of his own. Some public servant would say, 'That's a jolly good idea'. But you need a balance. Of course, agricultural policy issues really weren't all that red hot prior to these questionings that took place, starting in '71. That brought a focus. Anyway ...

[27:10] Just to put a date on things Peter. That memo – questioning the Department was '7...?

'71, July '71. The second request was some months, four or five maybe six months, later. Can't be sure about that.

Not sure of the date.

No, definitely '71, I know I'd only been back in the Department a month.

It must have come as a bit a surprise.

Yes, you're not used to being questioned like that, are you? (laughs)

Did you every find out the reasoning?

It was a Dunstan government type focus on 'Why are we spending all this money on it?'. We help farmers, 'They are just another industry', they would say; 'What about the makers of tennis balls? We don't provide them with assistance'. A lot of that first report went into the reasons why the rural industries are different ... The long production period, for instance. Unless you're into vegetables, the great bulk of crops it's a 12 month or longer period: the decision has to be made and the result isn't achieved for another 12 months or longer. If you're talking horticulture crops, tree crops, you're talking five to seven years lead periods. The

decisions that are made today don't have fruition, for good or bad, for that length of time whereas a manufacturer of a secondary industry, the manufacturer, unless he has to re-tool, can change the volume of his production almost within a day, at the sharpest part of it, maybe a bit longer. But he is much more able to relate to market changes, plus the fact, of course, that he's immune to climatological factors which the farmer mostly isn't unless he is irrigated. But then you've got water quality problems and those sort of things. We used to think the irrigated producers were protected but in fact they are as vulnerable as everybody else for different reasons.

Did you become aware of any other department being issued with a similar request to justify their existence?

No. I'm not surprised that it came, because it was a lack of understanding ... a genuinely acknowledged lack of understanding and a decision to be [probing and responsible]. There may have been others, I didn't hear of them. We had enough trouble dealing with our own to ask others. I'd be surprised if there were many. We were quite a big department. We were worth having a good crack at. Spending – I don't know what the budget would have been in those days, but we weren't a small department.

It is something that is still happening, of course, continuing that sense of continuity. You now find in recent times, the last 12 months or so, the questioning of the need for a Department of Business, Manufacturing and Trade, or Economic Development, why is money going into these areas ...

... But this was ... Up until that time development had taken place by growth. Government revenues generally were rising, the general economy was buoyant, the tax system was yielding money and enough of it was flowing through to the States for most departments to at least stay the same and probably get a few more extra positions funded each year. That was the way of it. The idea that you'd get less was unheard of, absolutely!

[31:30] Yes, anyway, Ministers I was talking about. Now Casey was sent away on an overseas trip in April '75, and came back as Minister of Lands. He was moved sideways because the government, the Labor Party, were grooming Chatterton, who was a qualified agricultural scientist – not an Australian degree, he had a degree from the University of Reading in England, although he is an Australian by background himself. But he had been on the horizon as the future Minister of Agriculture. He used to write columns on agricultural topics and those sort of matters in newspapers, and was an active [forward thinker]. He might have been chairman of the Agriculture Policy Committee of the ALP at that time. You could see him coming, but he wasn't immediately appointed. There was an Acting Minister who was Des Corcoran, who again had a rural background from Millicent ... [although he had also been in the permanent army – I'm not sure what rank, might well have been a sergeant-major].

[32:48] **End of Side A, Tape 4**
Tape 4, Side B

[0:05] ...

[When Tom Casey went to Japan he was accompanied] by Arthur Tideman. It might be worth asking him about that one. I was Acting Director. I got on very well I felt with Des Corcoran. He was a man who knew about the way the Westminster system was supposed to work. He understood very clearly the role of the Minister. He understood and made clear his expectations about the role of his senior public servants and advisers. I would see him normally once a week for from five minutes to an hour, depending on what I had to say to him or he wanted to say to me ...

A regular appointment ...?

A regular appointment on a Monday morning. I would discuss with him issues that I felt needed discussion, before they were submitted in writing, that might have broader implications or might be a bit hairy around the edges or whatever. He would question. He'd say, 'What about this? What about that?'. He would almost always have a question to ask about implications or what about ... how does that interact with something else? He was on the ball in an appropriate Ministerial way. He would say, 'Alright, I will go with that. Put that up and you can be assured that I'll approve that'. Or he'd say, 'Well I am sure that from your point of view as an agricultural bureaucrat that what you want me to approve is right and proper from your point of view, but politically I don't like it and these are my reasons'. He'd be open and frank and say, 'This, this, and the other. What have you got to say to that?'. So you'd think about it and say, 'Well it mightn't mean much, but the two things would be kind of different in their significance'. Or you might say – I can't just think of any examples – but this didn't happen all that often, and he'd say, 'OK, so I'm not going to approve that Peter. What do you think I should do to protect my back from the Departmental point of view, not politically as such'. So there was a clear recognition of the two separate but interacting roles. He managed that interface in an open, frank, clear-cut, uncomplicated way. You knew exactly where you were and so did he. The only things that you could ... He would back his public servant, but if he felt that you were ... were certain that you had misled him knowingly, or even unwittingly, and he felt you should have known you were misleading him, you would get a kick up the backside so fast and so hard you would hardly touch the ground for another week. He really could blow his top, and he had a very trenchant way of expressing his feelings. But it was just – you felt so comfortable with him. He was Acting Minister for about two months, as I recall, ... He went back to being whatever he was and Tom Casey came back and became Minister of Lands and Brian Chatterton came in as Minister of Agriculture. But that, as I say, is another

story. Des had a habit of saying 'fuckin' about every third word in private conversation, but I never ... It was just a habit I think from his army days.

A military background.

A military background. But it was constant, constant. It might have been every five words, but it was ...

I know what you mean.

More often than a question of emphasis called for (laughs). But I never ever heard him let it drop in public. He must have had a switch that said, 'You're on air, Des' or 'You're not on air'. But he was a very nice man. I found him very warm and no nonsense.

[5:00] He was Acting for a couple of months. Were there other Acting Ministers?

I don't know. There must have been. He probably was doing Lands as well.

Also, I mean in terms of going overseas, that sort of thing.

There must have been.

[5:40] Nothing sticks in your mind?

Later there was ... I think. Casey didn't go away long enough other than this trip to Japan to require there to be an Acting Minister. Just before we leave him, Casey's great claim to fame was to cause the abandonment of the table margarine quotas. Margarine was the absolute bogeyman of the dairy industry. Margarine produced overseas by countries with cheap labour. There were tremendous restrictions up until certainly the post-war period. You weren't allow to colour margarine yellow: it had to be clear. The fat that margarine is made from is not yellow – that's butterfat. I had an old ... What's his name? Cameron, who [became] the Speaker of the House, South Australian member [who at one time was Commonwealth Minister for Commerce and Agriculture]. He said, 'If I had my way I'd make them colour it black'. (laughs) Archie Cameron. Then there were quotas. Each State had a quota of table margarine which was agreed in Ag. Council and that was the limit. It got a little bit fragile, of course, at times because of the section 92 business that trade between the States shall be absolutely free. So there was a little bit of slippage there. It was getting out of hand. There was pressure and the Ministers were finding it harder and harder to hold this line. Tom Casey, I'm not sure whether he had Cabinet approval or he presented it as a *fait accompli*, but he told the Ag. Council that he was going to abandon margarine production quotas in South Australia. I think that there was a growing awareness that you couldn't sustain it as a protectionist measure any longer. I suspect that dairy farmers were becoming less important politically because there were fewer of them. Any rate, it came right out of the blue at this Ag. Council Meeting. (laughs) Of course, when one State did it, it just disappeared in smoke.

This is something he decided without taking departmental advice?

We didn't know about it. And I'm not sure, I'm not sure whether he actually had Cabinet approval to do it. I think he may have sensed he would get it. OK, that was Tom's great claim to fame.

[8:15] Did you deal much with him?

Yes, a bit. Because of my role as Admin. and Finance less so than Pete Barrow and Lex Walker would have, or Marshall. The Director tended in those days to be the main conduit and he would be the one who had the regular meeting with the Minister – not that other senior officers were cut off and certainly in later times that became a lot more open, but that's part of the other story.

We'll get on to that ...

The interview you want to tidy up here.

Casey, for example, did he have an office in the building?

He had an office in the Agriculture Building – yes, we'd moved in there ... No he didn't.

Did you have to go out to ...

I'm just trying to think now. When the Department occupied the 'Black Stump', the Minister's Office was there on the 16th floor, the same floor as the Executive, but prior to that it wasn't. It must have still been hanging over the from the Pearson days, when Pearson moved out. I think we talked about that earlier. But it was good when the Minister – I think it was a better arrangement having the Executive and the Director's office and Minister all cheek by jowl, as it were. It did make for easier and less conspicuous visiting. (laughs)

When you said the Minister's Office had moved out, I just wondered had he moved back in or anything ...?

No. I'm pretty sure the reunion didn't take place until we moved into the 'Black Stump' which was roughly early '75 – sorry, '76.

Another thing you touched upon when you were talking about Des Corcoran, he'd ask about the political implications for staff and the advice of the Department ...

He wouldn't ... That's not what I intended to say if I've given you the wrong impression. He would – a proposal being made would not be without political consideration, but primarily it would be what we would think of as objective based on the industry and technical and economic needs. Now obviously those things can run into politics, but the primary focus from the Department's point of view, certainly at that time, would have been on what do we in our professional judgement feel is the right thing to do, having regard to all the circumstances. That covers practically everything. But there would be sometimes, not often, sometimes there

would be overtly party political issues. This was a factor with Ted Chapman too, who was a very political animal rather than a Minister, but we must not get onto him. Des recognised both sides I suppose is what I'm saying and what he would do would be to say for reasons that are important to me, the Minister, I'm not disposed to approving the course of action that you're recommending as a Department. So he would introduce that element of political ... Then he would ask for comment about that. Sometimes one would be able to comment immediately, sometimes one would want to take advice, depending on the nature of it and how fully aware one was as an individual about the surrounding issues. That was fine, he didn't mind that. Then having confirmed his decision that he wasn't going to approve it for what were essentially political concerns, he would then ask for advice on damage control on the basis that what would have happened as recommended was going to make some ameliorating, some improving, some positive advantage and if that was to be denied were there negative consequences that had to be some how eased, abated, prevented or whatever. Okay? Does that make sense?

[13:20] Yes, that's fine. A couple of other quick ones to finish with. Not just for Corcoran obviously, but all the Ministers – were you dealing with ministerials?

All the time, all the time, yes.

That was standard?

Standard, yes. They would come through – that was the role that was managed by Viv Lohmeyer or his successor or predecessor, yes. They'd come into the Director's office and Viv would assess the nature of it. They varied from hot potatoes to Dorothy Dixers almost, you might say, and in the case of hot potatoes or things that he was perhaps uncertain about or particularly worried about, he would informally mention to the Director before taking any action to obtain a response. But often he would know clearly where the answer had to come from, it would be shot out to the relevant focus in the Department. He would keep a register of whoever it had gone to and when. Again in Marshall's time on (I can't speak for what happened in the Strickland era really, don't think it did – that was less structured then and there was less of them) it became a bit of a stock in trade, a growth industry. But certainly from Irving's era on the Executive would review outstanding ministerials. We'd say, 'Well that's been out for too long'. We'd agree whether we wanted to stir somebody up or there would be some indication it was proving complicated. Sometimes the Director would use that to be informed to tell the Minister, 'Look, we know that it's still out there but it is proving pretty messy to get all the information ... so it's going to be a little while longer' kind of thing. It was used to keep the Minister informed in areas where it was deemed to be necessary or desirable to do so. Some things the Minister probably couldn't have cared less about but there would be

areas where he would be wanting to know what was happening. Yes, so there developed over time quite a definite and working structure to manage the flow of the material in and out.

[16:10] A final one, Peter, for the moment. You were dealing direct with the Minister, you or Marshall Irving ...

The Director, the head of the Department for the time being, whether it was the man in the job or somebody acting in the job, would be dealing directly with Minister. It would be the regular briefing interaction, sounding out ideas, receiving instructions, 'This is coming up. We have got to focus on something from the Minister'. It was two-way traffic. But there would be other occasions, of course, when there might be matters of special importance that you would need to see the Minister about outside that norm, what you would call the routine. Something that couldn't wait until next Monday, or you thought it probably couldn't wait until next Monday. The Minister, of course, could call the Director in whenever the whim struck him. Something might be happening in Parliament that he wanted to briefed about. Varied with the Minister. Some were more their own men; others were more dependent on departmental advice. But, again, even within those two groups there were variations, depending on the topic, what the spread of knowledge and understanding and feel for particular issues there were.

[17:40] You have given a bit of a starting point for another session, of course. We'll pick up on Brian Chatterton coming in.

It all changed. (laughs)

The other thing, the reason why I was asking you that question in particular, it's in the mid '70s, late '70s, you start to get this trend for ministerial advisers, so it might be another little theme to ...

As far as I'm aware, the first ministerial adviser was Chris Schacht who was Tom Casey's Press Secretary. They started off as just press secretaries, but they were political appointments. Chris Schacht went on to become quite an important figure in the Senate.

Was he the Press Secretary when Casey was Agriculture Minister?

Yes. He was appointed when actually I was still at the Waite because I remember Tom Casey came out on an official visitor as Minister and brought Chris Schacht then. I don't remember – there may have been some development before I returned to the Department but certainly Chris Schacht was the first Ministerial Press Secretary I ever laid eyes on. Strange breed, I thought. (laughs) He asked more questions than the Minister.

As I say, part of that trend for ministerial advisers ...

Indeed. They proliferated. Then again this was very much a feature of the Dunstan era because there were feelings (even Public Servants have feelings!) that the Public Service was essentially conservative to the point of becoming obstructive. The more left-wing sorts of politicians certainly felt that and may have had good cause in some cases, I don't deny it. I can

remember Dunstan saying ... I think in Parliament there was some question asked about why are all these ministerial appointments being made. Of course they were appointed by Ministers, they don't have Public Service standing or anything of that kind. Him saying, 'Well, it's come to the point where I'm finding that in some instances I am not able to get the advice that I require from the Public Service for reasons of this, this and this, conservatism, lack of responsiveness, failure to understand the needs of the new times kind of thing. In some cases, I regret to say, ladies and gentlemen, Mr Speaker, that I have serious doubts about their political reliability, that they may not be as neutral as they seem to be or purport to be, and in government one must be confident that one's advisers are loyal and true'. I made that up, but that's the burden of it. I'm not quoting his actual words, but he made a statement along those lines. Of course, it's become a growth industry. More of that anon.

More of that in the next session. Thanks very much for your time today, Peter, it's excellent.

[21:10] **End of session, Tape 4, Side B
Tape 5, Side A**

**AN INTERVIEW WITH PETER TRUMBLE CONDUCTED BY BERNARD O'NEIL
ON THE 16TH OF DECEMBER 2003 AT GLENALTA, SOUTH AUSTRALIA IN
REGARDS TO THE HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE IN
SOUTH AUSTRALIA, CONTINUING THE INTERVIEW OF THE 27TH OF
NOVEMBER 2003.**

[0:30] Peter, if we can pick up some of the threads from last time and we've been talking a little bit chronologically, so we are probably roundabout the 1975 era.

We're in 1975. We talked about the ministry of Tom Casey who just died the other day and the brief time that I worked happily with Des Corcoran. Also at this time, we had the illness of Marshall Irving and the series of acting directorships which by the beginning of '75 I found myself sitting in that saddle on a temporary basis but it looked as though that was going to continue. The Callaghan Report, which had advised the government on the implementation of the Department's future role [i.e. the second of the Irving reports], had recommended there be a deputy directorship (a direct deputy) to undertake the more routine elements of the top level of management in the Department leaving the Director relatively free for involvement in political and developmental and leadership in a more upfront way than he otherwise had time for.

The Public Service Board was very keen about this and they recommended the creation of that position, which the government adopted. That job was created in the second half of 1975. It was first advertised with the strong implication that whoever got the job would become the next Director. I didn't like that at all: of course, I wasn't consulted about that really. It was an idea of the Chairman of the Public Service Board of the time, Graham Inns. I have always held

the view that deputies are not necessarily, and in fact often they are better not, to be appointed [as the chief] because the qualities of a deputy are different from those of a leader who, of course, is the head man. The role is so different and the better way is to have a team with two people who have complementary talents and abilities and drives.

So I didn't apply for the job. I remember having a phone call from a senior Public Service Board officer saying, 'We don't seem to have had an application for the Deputy Director's job Peter. Do you want a bit more time?' I said, 'No, I'm not applying for it'. Deathly silence! 'May I ask why not?'. I said, 'Well, I disagree with the concept of it being labelled as the heir apparent. I don't think that's right and I am not prepared to apply for it on that basis'. So I then had the phone call from the head of the Public Service, 'What's going on!'. So I applied in due course ... He said, 'Well alright, we'll re-advertise it'. He sort of accepted the view. It was re-advertised as a straight deputy's job. I applied for that and I was successful in that. I continued in that role until McColl was appointed on the first of July '76. Installed as Deputy Director of Agriculture but acting as Director.

[4:40] In the meantime, in about July '75 Brian Chatterton, who was [a Member] of the Legislative Council and a graduate in Agriculture from the University of Reading in the UK, became the Minister of Agriculture in Dunstan's Labor Government. He'd been ... noted by the press and community generally that he probably was going to be the Minister of Agriculture some time in the near future. That took place in the middle of '75. I was Acting Director. I was quite looking forward to working with him, because I was aware of some of the ideas that he'd expressed and I thought we'd get on ... from there. But Brian was a man who communicated much more ... had much more facility on paper than he did in the spoken word. He wasn't a good communicator. He seemed often to be nervous, almost shy. I don't think he really was but he came over that way. He would often appear quite indecisive. You'd finish a conversation with him about something or other and you'd come away feeling not really quite sure as to what had been agreed because he didn't have that decisive expression in his conversation. That came as a little bit of a shock to me. It wasn't quite like what I had experienced before. Or expected.

Also, I'll never forget I went with him to ... Of course, the Minister of Agriculture in those days was responsible for the Emergency Fire Services. There was a conference of all the Emergency Fire Service leaders from around the place, which the Minister of Agriculture (Chatterton) attended and gave some address to at a morning tea reception. I set out to try to introduce him to a number of the people that I knew from country areas and thought that he

would want to meet them, and they would certainly want to meet him. I was quite flabbergasted when the only people he wanted to talk to were people from the press. I'd never struck that before. I knew that Ministers were interested in the press and the media and all that kind of thing. I said to Jon Lamb, who was his press secretary, 'What's going on? He doesn't seem to want to meet people'. He said, 'No, he's really concentrating on building up his image with the press'. That's what it was all about. I was quite horrified actually about that, I really was. I thought that was an abuse of the occasion. He was very strong on that and he and Lamb worked together quite assiduously in building up in any press releases, statements about this, that and the other. That's all fair enough. I'm not saying it shouldn't happen, I'm not saying that at all. But it was the priorities ...

So as it went on, I continued to find surprises about these things. The hardest thing I found in working with Brian was I don't think he felt comfortable with the Westminster system. Of course, because he had a trained agricultural mind, scientific mind and [qualifications in] economics, he had a facility to be able to talk to professional technical staff in a man-to-man peer sort of basis. That's fine but a typical situation is that I would have a session with him on a Monday morning, probably about 10 or 10.30, before the afternoon Cabinet [meeting]. Anyway, we would discuss some matter and he would ask me to attend to some development or to make some changes to get some people to do something. I'd get on the phone to whoever the relevant person was and I found that he'd already spoken to them about this! I couldn't hack that. I found it quite off putting and it really annoyed me. There wasn't much I could do about it. That's the way he worked.

[9:55] He was very much hands on?

Yes. But also I don't know to this day whether he realised how insecure that really was for the poor man who happened to be the head of the Department and the Chief Executive Officer. He wasn't an organisation man. I think if he did know, he didn't care. (laughs) I found him quite difficult to work with, I really did.

Did he ever see himself as the Chief Executive?

I don't know if he did. I think he saw the role of the Minister as different. Ministers can be like that. Of course, he saw himself more in the American style, where the secretary of the department, who is the politician, the political appointee, has a whole raft of other people under him at the senior levels of the management and operations that, whatever the level they are, are also political appointees. The career public servant in America stopped at some level of senior middle management. The senior levels are appointed by the president from his party faithful. They change with each election. That is the presidential style of government but that's

not what the Westminster system is about. I didn't enjoy working with Brian because I never felt that I had my feet on firm ground for that sort of reason.

Did you get an opportunity to point this out to him?

I found it very difficult to do that. I was also very conscious of the fact that I was the Acting Director of the Department. I felt sensitive about that and I never really faced him in a direct way. I talked to the chairman of the Public Service Board [Graham Inns] about it. He said, 'I don't think there is much you can do about it. You've just got to live with it'. Again, those two factors put together, I didn't really manage to live with it did I?! (both laugh) We got on quite well in other ways. It was just sort of ... not exactly backstabbing, it wasn't that but it was ...

You weren't sure of your ground.

I wasn't quite sure where I stood. I felt bypassed. I felt uncertain. Didn't he trust me? That kind of thing. I did tackle him along those lines once and he told me that he didn't think I was the right sort of person to be head of the Department in the modern day and age. I would have been a very good one ten years before! (laughs)

He was up front!

Yes [on that occasion].

[13:05] Perhaps if we just go back a little bit Peter. You were saying you were Acting Director and establishing this relationship, such as it is, with the Minister. When you came in as Acting Director, how long were you expected to serve? Did you have any idea?

There was no time on it. The head of the Department job was advertised in January or February of '76. The appointment wasn't announced until the middle of June. I understand that Chatterton clearly wanted McColl because Jim McColl was a very appropriate person for the day and age. I was very happy to serve with him as his deputy. We made a good, if not a great, team. I never had the slightest problems about that at all. I did apply for the job. I didn't get it but I understand that some members of Cabinet felt 'What was wrong with me?'. I hadn't ever heard that directly from anybody but just reading between the lines and there was a senior officer in the Premier's Department [I think the Head of that department] saying 'What's going on? I hear there is a terrible yike going on in Cabinet about the directorship of your Department'. I suspect Des Corcoran might have backed me because of his experience of me, rather than bringing in this guy from Victoria (nothing against Jim).

Anyway it did drag on and in the end, quite correctly in my view, the Minister had his way because he's the Minister and he should have the person that he wants to work with. He called me into his office in about the middle of June to tell me that McColl was going to be appointed and that Jim was sitting over there. I had met him before through the Australian Institute of

Agricultural Science, just on one occasion and knew him favourably. I accepted the position totally and completely and said, 'I'm going to be the best Deputy Director of Agriculture that's ever been'. I was happy in that role. I would have been happy to be Director too. I worked with Jim very closely. His appointment dated from the first of July '76 but he didn't really take up the appointment on a full-time basis until just before Christmas because he had unfinished business in Melbourne, divesting responsibilities, to see through. He would come over typically for a week once a month. We quickly established a warm and effective working relationship, which I was very happy with.

[16:40] I'd like to back track a little yet again. You mentioned earlier you were reluctant to apply for the Deputy Director's job because of that condition about ...?

[Given that it was an implication, a strong implication, that it would lead to the directorship] I didn't apply formally ... because I hadn't tested the thing yet.

Well when it comes to the Director's job, you were happy enough to apply?

Yes. I had enjoyed much of my work. I don't think power went to my head or anything like that. As I got into it and had more experience of it, apart from this uncertainty, uneasy relationship with Chatterton but I guess I thought that will evolve, I can live with this. But in the event that didn't transpire.

While you were Acting Director, was there an Acting Deputy Director given that the position been created?

I don't think there was. No, I'm pretty sure there wasn't.

Did you have someone who may not have formally been Acting Deputy but played that role?

Lex Walker was the senior executive. He acted in my office when I was overseas which I did in [August–]September of '75. Lex was the Acting Director. Hugh Matthews was a bloke who thought he would probably become the Assistant Director, Admin. and Finance when I was appointed [in 1971], but had remained as what was called secretary in those days, a Chief Admin. Officer. He became the Acting Assistant Director, Admin. and Finance when I was promoted to [Deputy Director].

[18:35] So the Department was more or less in a bit of a holding pattern?

It was very much and that is not good for a department at all, particularly going on and on for as long as that. While one tries very hard to keep things moving as they should, I always had this feeling that if I knew that I was going to have to live with this for the next five years or however long (a reasonably long period), then I know what I would do. Because I'm not sure that maybe next month somebody else is going to [take over], how do I commit to that? Obviously sometimes you have to but it did tend to slow down the decision making and the development of a forward moving type of process.

This is on top of Marshall Irving being unwell.
He was out of the picture by then.

This follows on from that.

From that period, yes indeed. The Department was not well served by events of that time really.

[19:45] You mentioned earlier, Peter, the Callaghan Report or recommendation there be a deputy position. Was that also something that was happening throughout the public service anyway?

I don't know that it was. I don't think it was. It was something that was seen ... Because of the wide ranging and complex nature of the services provided by the Department, I think it was seen as being especially significant more so than perhaps a more monolithic kind of department that focused on ... I'm not suggesting that other departments had less important or less complicated tasks to perform, but Agriculture has such a diverse array of issues. It's research, it's extension and it's regulatory function as well as it is just base-grade administration, along with all the people management kinds of issues that are important. It became a fairly big department by then, nearly a thousand people. I think it was quickly accepted that that was a particularly suitable development to take. Other departments I know did have deputies, particularly the bigger ones. I guess that's part of the justification.

[21:15] With the appointment of Jim McColl you go back to that or go to the Deputy Director's job.

As I say, I was really still sitting in the Director's chair as it were although Jim was becoming part of the system. He had a lot of learning to do. He was not a South Australian and didn't have necessarily the familiarity with the political, social and all those kinds of issues that many other of the senior people of the Department did. He worked very fastidiously and very hard at sliding into that and quickly picked all that up. In my arrangement with him, I concentrated on running the department, if you like, in the routine way leaving him as free as possible to meet people to find out what made them tick, plus their strengths and weaknesses and all that kind of familiarisation stuff. He also asked me to retain completely, the responsibility for the Fisheries management at the Director level until he had the chance to pick that up. I was de facto, still Acting Director as Fisheries at that time. This might be a time to just bring that in and get rid of it.

[22:55] Can do. I'll just ask one little topic rather than a question I suppose. How did you go about forming a relationship with Jim, particularly given that ... (speaking over each other)

He came and we did a lot of talking outside office hours. We got on well.

He was only coming over every week or so?

A week, once a month.

And so that went on for five or six months?

It went on from July till they came just before Christmas, might have been the beginning of December.

So in one sense you were effectively still, not in charge, but in control of the Department?

The reins were in my hands on a day-to-day to basis. We communicated easily. I never felt ... You can ask him – I don't think he ever had any problems communicating to me and I certainly didn't communicating with him. We were on very similar wavelengths, very quickly that was established. I was determined to make his task of coming in and picking up as effective as I possibly could. I really put my back into that. I was happy to do so. I felt very fulfilled in doing that. It was a great job working with Jim. I don't think we ever had any serious misunderstanding or rift in the lute or anything like that

In this early period, at a mundane level Peter, were you keeping in contact with Jim when he was in Melbourne via a daily or weekly phone call or anything of that type?

I don't think we did it on a regular basis. I don't have very clear memories of that which makes me think it didn't happen much. Where there were matters that he wanted something to be done, he would indicate them while he was there and I would go ahead and do them. He would check up and make sure that I had if he felt he needed to when he came back the next time! I'm sure we did have private phone calls. They weren't frequent and they weren't regular.

I imagine in those first few months there was not much push for dramatic change since he's not going to be about and so on.

He had to get his handle on it as I say.

[25:45] Well we will come back to it.

It would be useful to get into the Fisheries now.

We can go onto the Fisheries now.

Get that out of the way as it were. This was, of course, about the time of Corbett and all that. The Fisheries Department was quite a small department, less than 100 people from memory, well under 100. Mick Olsen was the Director of Fisheries and a very forward-thinking fisheries management expert, I suppose you'd call him. Some of the members of the government were unhappy with the way Mick went around doing things. He was inclined to not guard his tongue as well as he might. The Labor Party had a Fishing Management Committee made up of some of its members, the chairman of which was Gavin Kenneally who was the member for whatever the seat is that contains Port Augusta. There was an issue about commercial licenses and fishing licenses that were A and B class. A class you had to be a full-time fisherman, it was your principal livelihood and you were ... that was it. The B class was meant to be for people

who had seasonal opportunities to be fishing. For people who were harvest workers perhaps and who would turn to fishing in the winter months, or who were shearers who would even out the year's income. That was the concept. But it was a damn nuisance administratively. Quite a number of the people who held B class licenses were in fact shift workers in the railways in Port Augusta and Port Pirie and places like that, which was kind of Labor heartland. The Department was really keen to get rid of them. Apparently there was some discussion in the ALP Fisheries Committee about this and Mick was recommending that these sort of people be excluded. Of course, Gavin Kenneally in particular was saying, 'No, I don't think that's right'. Mick was unwise enough to say, 'Look there's only a handful of votes in it'. You know you don't say that! (both laugh). That was probably the best example that he was a bit unguarded in that way. So he kind of fell foul.

Ironically for a fisheries man, loose lips sink ships! (both laugh)

So the government said, 'We want Olsen out of this job'. The solution we could find was to amalgamate Fisheries with Agriculture. (I didn't find this out until afterwards.) I knew that was mooted. I attended a meeting with Mick Olsen and the Public Service Board before I went overseas in '75 to say that the government was considering this. How did we feel about it? I wasn't very enthusiastic about it. I said, 'I'm sure we could make it work. It's a common arrangement in other parts of the world. In Canada and in Britain particularly you've got a limit to your bag of fish and many other countries too, so if you've got the will you can make things work. It's not incompatible'. So I then went away overseas and when I came back I rang the office to say I was back and that I'd be in the next day. The girl who answered the phone said 'Department of Agriculture and Fisheries'. (laughs) I said, 'It's happened!'. It happened about a week before I got back. So I came back and found myself Acting Director of Fisheries under the *Fisheries Act* and a department where I knew nothing. I had Mick, who is a good friend, a nice man and we get on well. He was pretty aggrieved [at the time] and I was dependent on him for everything really. I felt almost as though he was reluctant. I had to ask the questions and he would give me the answers but I didn't necessarily know what were the right questions. I decided we'll have to sit down and I'm going to have to get on top of this. I've got a statutory obligation, a requirement to manage the fisheries according to the Act, regulations and proclamations. Now I'm going have to put about half my time into that until I get a handle on it, which I did and which I enjoyed. I worked [with Mick]. Well he was never obstructive but he wasn't always helpful ... I got on pretty well with all the specialist people underneath.

The Public Service Board, I guess at the behest of the government, required something which didn't really make sense, but we had to accept it, and that was that. They didn't want Olsen to

have anything to do with the fisheries licensing side of things. So he was, in effect, the head of the Research Branch of the fisheries element of the Department. The licensing and inspection side came under our Department of Ag. central administration. Chief Admin. Officer Harry Shaw became in charge of these additional people and the Inspection Branch and the Licensing Branch became elements of the Department's admin. It was very cumbersome and caused a lot of difficulties with communication and that sort of thing, particularly when the people who were senior in charge were new to the job like I was and Harry Shaw was. So we had to work pretty carefully and pretty fast and pretty hard to make that work. You never felt comfortable with it.

Did they shed staff in the Fisheries?

No, ...

But if there was an accountant in Fisheries ...

I think we did the ... [Additional note: ... accounting for them before the amalgamation anyway. They had probably one accounts clerk who handled the basic paperwork and passed it on to our Accounts Branch, so there was in effect no change there. He did their personnel work too. They had their own stores clerk who came into our stores and procurement section.]

**[32:35] End of Side A, Tape 5
Tape 5, Side B**

[Additional note: Further down the track, when Jim McColl and our executive were looking at departmental reorganisation in relation to regionalisation and the divisions, we saw the opportunity to do something about the inapt structure the Public Service Board had foisted on us. This was to create a Fisheries Division with one head and three branches – research, licensing and enforcement. We sold this to the Board and they created a post of Chief of Division of Fisheries.] Ian Kirkegaard, who had been Mick Olsen's number two man as principal research officer, actually became appointed to that job. That brought them back together again but, of course, within a year or so the Liberal Party won government again. They had told the fishing industry that they would detach Fisheries from Agriculture if ever they got back in. It made the task fairly easy. There was a Fisheries Division sitting there [waiting] just to be excised with a simple stroke of a bureaucratic knife, again Fisheries was a department. [This was 1979.]

Became a department.

Mr Kirkegaard was head of it for a while but was soon succeeded by Richard Stevens. That's another story. Both Jim and I ... Once he found his feet in early '77, he took over a lot of the general policy work on the Fisheries side of things. I still backstopped him, as I did as Deputy

– that was part of the role of the deputy to be prepared to step in there. Between us, he carried most of the work there. I went back to being more of my agricultural sort of self. It's quite interesting in this period from that time and going back into Olsen's time, there had been a series of cases brought by fishermen who claimed that all of us – Olsen, myself, McColl, Kirkegaard and Stevens (that's five directors of Fisheries in terms of the *Fisheries Act*) – have been accused of malfeasance (misuse of public office) and knowing that we were doing wrong and all that kind of stuff and thereby costing these fishermen huge amounts of profits that they weren't able to make because we wouldn't give them the licenses to which they should have been given in their view. They brought a huge series of cases, which were heard in the Supreme Court and have been appealed [to the Full] Court. Their cases have been thrown out. I understand that one plaintiff in particular, has lodged an application to appeal to the High Court. I'm surprised if you haven't heard of that one!

They've got more time for ideas, for stirring the mind.

Yes, and all that kind of thing. But they are quite, what's the word I'm looking for, driven or obsessed with [their sense of being wronged]. Of course, they're hunter-gatherers. They're not like farmers who have a patch of dirt that they're attached to and that they guard. It's like the old ranchers versus the dirt farmers in America when they had the ranch wars. They're free spirits. They don't recognise limits or any change, well some of them don't. That's enough of that. I enjoyed that. We were able to provide a better founded administrative, if I can call it that, infrastructure for the Fisheries people to work in than perhaps they'd been accustomed to. Again, that's part of the bigger department kind of thing. You can afford to have more and better management services officers or accountants or transport areas. The level of expertise is higher and more resources can be drawn on, particularly in an emergency type situation you've got more flexibility whereas if you've got a quarter of a personnel officer and one and a half accounts staff and that kind of thing, you're constantly dotting words in the dark, you haven't got time to see the bigger picture. From that point of view it worked out well. The simple matter was most of the Fisheries people seemed happy enough to work in that environment. I never had the feeling that they resented it. Mick did because he lost a lot of status being head of the Department. I don't blame him for that. I could understand how he feels.

Just a personal reaction, a demotion in a sense.

It is yes. It's a slap in the face with a damp cod. I don't know that I need to dwell anymore on that.

Were they physically in the building?

The licensing and some of the staff were but the Research Branch as we called it, the Fisheries Research Branch, were just down the road in Gawler Place. The offices have now been knocked down and had something else built on top of it down near Wakefield Street.

So they more or less existed: the people in the Ag. Department were aware they existed but not a great liaison between them?

No, not really no.

Looking, Peter, at the earlier time '75, '76, '77, were you expecting this merger to carry on?

Yes. I didn't see any reason why it couldn't and shouldn't, particularly once we got the Fisheries Division structure back again so we had an integrated fisheries operation. It was a political decision by the Liberal Party to gain the support of the fishing industry, or many fishermen in it, by saying 'We'll give you your own department, none of this bureaucratic stuff that the Labor mob brought in'.

So in '79 when they get elected, the Fisheries Division ...

Yes. That's when Chapman became Minister of Agriculture and Allan Rodda was the Minister of Fisheries.

And the Fisheries Division just got hived off holus bolus?

With a stroke of a pen.

So you went back to 'normal' (in inverted commas!).

I had ceased to have anything much to do with them by then. In fact, I took some long-service leave. I was away overseas on a holiday when that election took place. I remember being told by the Agent-General Max Scriven in London. I called into South Australia House and he said, 'You've got a new Minister of Agriculture called Ted Chapman'. I said, 'Who's he?'.

We'll come to him in due course. We better go back over some of the other pressing issues.

That's really all that I can usefully add. I can go on about that, there's been a lot of interesting experiences. I became adequately knowledgeable about the intricacies of fisheries management and the policies of the government in relation to what were called the managed fisheries, which were the high-priced ones like abalone and prawns and rock lobsters. There were big export markets at high price and extra pressures that came. They were limited entry fisheries. There was an attempt to match the amount of effort that was being put into those fisheries so they didn't get fished out. Of course, that created a barrier that fishermen were constantly trying to climb over and hence these court cases I was telling you about. I enjoyed it really, in a slightly macabre, slightly masochistic sort of way! It was very interesting ...

A discreet four-year block?

That's why I thought I'd bring that in and get that out of the way. As I say, I had less and less to do with that as Jim became more and more settled in the job. He really carried the can from probably the end of the first quarter of '77.

Just to round out, this ongoing court saga. Is that a worry for you?

It was a bit. I didn't believe it! But you never know when you get into court with lawyers and all these sorts of things! I put a lot of, as we all did ... The Crown Solicitor represented all of the defendants. I think what amazed me was you could hardly have five more different personalities than the five guys in terms of perpetuating a series of malfeasances over the period involved. It's just totally unbelievable but there you are.

Are there likely to be any repercussions if this case goes to the High Court, or the appeal goes to the High Court, could it come back on the State of South Australia?

Possibly. The sixth defendant was the Crown State of South Australia of course. None of us had enough money to compensate these blokes; the 20 000 000 etc. they claim they lost. I think it's highly unlikely. Our lawyers, the Crown Solicitor's people, can't see it happening. Of course it's a possibility but they think that they are unlikely to grant leave to appeal because of the relationship of the High Court to the State Supreme Courts. They usually, almost always, only give leave to appeal if there's an important issue of constitutionality arising, or if there's some very important principle that they need to have resolved at the highest legal level. That doesn't apply in this case.

This goes back some 30 years?

It goes back ... Well Mick Olsen, I think it goes back to about 1971 or something like that so it's 30 years as you say. Memories! Enough Fisheries.

[12:25] OK. We'll get back on to agriculture per se.

Yes.

You started talking about two people in particular – Minister Chatterton and Director McColl. Want to pick up on either of those?

The whole time that Brian was Minister, let's say on the surface our relationships were quite cordial. We never stopped speaking to one another or anything of that kind on either part. It was made more difficult when he married his research assistant, Lynne Arnold she was. She used to stick her finger in all sorts of departmental pies and was a very unpopular person and didn't help Brian's cause I don't think. This all came unstuck later on when, as I understand it ... Jim McColl will probably be able to ... Have you interviewed him yet?

We've started, we haven't ...

Have you got to this part?

No.

He was closer to this than I was, but as I understand it eventually Chatterton was told to get his wife out of departmental affairs. She became a research assistant or something in the Premier's Department, which she didn't like and I don't think he liked much. She was, on the face of it, a stronger personality than he was. He always came over ... As I said, didn't express himself strongly and didn't come over strongly in a spoken conversation or discussion mode. He was a much more of a literary person and could write quite trenchantly with a pen on the paper. Whereas Lynne, she was a bit stroprier than he was. She didn't help his case at all I don't think. I don't think people trusted her but Jim will tell you more about that, if he chooses.

I think there's a book by ...

Yes. I haven't read that yet. I must read it. See what mention I get!

I would like to see a copy. Did she have an agriculture background herself?

No. She had a BA from Flinders. I'm not really sure of this, but her interests were largely history, that kind of thing, maybe a bit of social economics. I'm not really sure about that but certainly she was a graduate from Flinders University and that was back in the [Brian] Medlin times! (laughs) I'm not sure if she was a student then: she might well have been.

[15.35] It's not a trick question Peter, but what level of support did you get from the Minister, or in this case the 'Ministerial Adviser' in the role she's playing? Were the Chattertons ...

I never really had, personally, a lot of trouble with her. I don't know whether she, I hesitate to say, avoided me or just ignored me. I'm not quite sure about that. But other people in the Department had more run-ins with her, but she never seemed to bail me up really. I can't remember a single occasion. Whether I was seen as being inoffensive or inconsequential or what not I don't really know. Other people like Bob Walkerden, who was the Minister's Secretary in the official sense of the word, had a terrible time with her because he was there daily working with the Minister [running] the Minister's Department (or the Department of the Minister of Agriculture as it was called – the Office of the Minister of Agriculture). It eventually became part of the wider Department in the post-Corbett reshuffle. Bob, who was a very nice guy in the real traditional Westminster system way: he found her [very difficult to handle], it was an unpleasant situation.

I had less and less to do with him, of course, after Jim came. He carried the can with him and when Jim was away, as he was from time to time, then I stepped into his shoes for a period of a couple of weeks to a month sort of thing. Then I would have more to do with him. But in the end probably the really important thing was 'Wait until Jim comes back!'. I mean Jim was the

man that Brian wanted as head of the Department and Jim had an economics background. Brian thought that was very important and I don't disagree with that at all.

That was a big thrust that came from Brian Chatterton, the development of macro-economic and farm management economic kinds of issues and thrusts of policies in that part. Jim was ideally suited to that in a way that I never could have done on my own, off my own bat. I might have managed the work of others who had the expertise but Jim's personal know-how that's a better thing, particularly when you're developing it. The man at the top has got the strengths and abilities in his own hands and head. Apart from this business that I've already mentioned about this feeling of him going behind my back and putting things in motion that as far as I could tell from the conversation I had with him, he was asking me to do, that was really the main issue. I never really felt comfortable with him. I felt he didn't have confidence in me really. The closest he got to saying that was what I've already told you.

[19:20] You sort of answered my question at the end there Peter when you were talking about his ideas for macro views and so on, that you had a Minister who was supportive ...
Of the Department?

Yes.

Oh yes. Ideas-wise, policy-wise, he was fine. I really thought he had a lot going for him, but it was the way he went about doing things. He came badly unstuck at the end. I don't know if I'll tell you about that.

Always open to other views on it!

I'd left the Department when all that happened. I don't know about what Jim's told you but he's the one to tell you about that.

But Chatterton as Minister comes on top of that previous experience we described last time of the memos saying 'Why have a Department of Agriculture?', 'Why do you exist?' This is the reverse in a sense: you've got someone who's very pro.

Yes indeed. Very pro-active and involved in what I would have said were day-to-day issues that were departmental as opposed to ministerial. Well there's a fine line of course but they run into each other. Brian went a lot further into 'interfering' in departmental matters. There's a very famous story about I think it was the Minister of Education who wanted to do something but his Director of Education said, 'But Minister, you can't do that! You can't do that!'. 'Why not?', he said. 'It's against departmental policy', he said, 'I'm the head of the Department!'

[21:00] You mentioned the travelling overseas. Did you travel with the Minister?

No. I was going to go with Tom Casey. That would have been April/May of '75. I was to go with Tom Casey to Japan but that was when I got appointed (in inverted commas)

'Permanently Acting Director' and I felt that I couldn't do that. I had a number of things to be done. Arthur Tideman actually went with Tom Casey. So I never went overseas with the Minister. [Additional note: I also had to withdraw from an opportunity at that time to do the three months senior management course at the Australian Administrative Staff College at Mount Martha.]

Nothing to do with to Libya or anything of that type?

No, I wasn't involved in any of that. Peter Barrow was the main senior person in those projects and Iraq.

Because overseas is ...

Jim, of course, took a great interest in that. He'd had significant experience in overseas development projects, in Thailand in particular. Brian Chatterton was very keen about that and together they worked on a whole lot of that sort of thing. It was in that area that their relationship came unstuck in the end in about 1980 I think that was.

The overseas work programs, those projects were going while you were ...

They started and Jim developed this Overseas Project Division and established that and then you had Sagric International also. Anyway, that's Jim's field. I really had nothing to do with that in any substantive way at all. Sometimes I became involved in some of the consequences of it in terms of managing situations where key staff had become attached to the projects and we had to reshuffle staff. I was aware of it in a general way and it was talked about at executive meetings but I was very much on the fringe of it.

Did it seem an odd thing for a South Australian department to be doing?

I didn't think so, no. I mean the government wanted to do it. It was setting out to market our technology and a system which we developed very well here and had a lot of expertise. Chatterton was very keen, and the government as well, to go overseas to sell that expertise. It wasn't done as an aid project which is, of course, another thing. We were entrepreneurs selling our skills in the world market. In many cases we did that quite effectively, given all the uncertainties and difficulties of cross-cultural transfer and all that kind of thing, not to mention political hassles.

It's an interesting episode in the Department's history.

Yes. I really can't add anything more.

No. It has also become clear that certain people were closely involved and other people, as you say ...

Initially Peter Barrow. Pat Harvey later became very much involved in that. Jim McColl, of course, himself. A number of people were specifically recruited to carry the middle management of those affairs. Some people, some technical people from within the Department

became heavily involved in it to the point that they never came back to the Department like John Doolette as an example, Glynn Webber became very involved in that [but never left the Department].

[25:15] Well Peter just to perhaps wrap up talking about ministers. You've talked about Chatterton ...
Ted Chapman.

You've got Ted Chapman and, of course, Brian Chatterton came back after Chapman ...
For a very short time.

... so I'll throw it open!
Ted never really thought other than as a backbencher and a local representative, a local member. The issue for him primarily always was the people of his electorate. He made no bones about that. But we used to, not shiver in our boots but shudder when an issue came up that the Department was going have to deal with which involved part of his electorate. You couldn't feel very confident that he would be willing to look at it in an objective way. He couldn't help that: the political scene, grass rootsy kind of level was the thing that always motivated him.

He had a great ego. Well, most politicians do. You have to. That's what you're massaging! He told me once that his objective was to get a lower number on his ministerial car number plate than he had and particularly a lower number than Jennifer Cashmore because she was a woman of course. She was I think number six and Ted was number eight. He wanted to be number five. He said, 'I know I'll never be premier but that's what my aim is'. I'll never forget once when I was Acting. Jim was away and he was the Minister I had to have regular dealings with him. I went in and he wouldn't talk about anything! He was just sitting there looking foul. I said to Leon Murray, who was his secretary, as I went out, 'What's the matter with Ted?'. He said, 'Oh God, his car's had a bingle, minor damage, but it's had to go into the workshop for a couple of days work on it so he's having to be driven around in a pool ministerial car. Guess what the number is? 24!'. And that really affected him.

I tell you these things because it illustrates what his approach to life was. He wasn't interested in the issues in any on-going, long-term sort of way. I mean obviously he had to be but you always felt you were battling to brief him about things and he really would rather not be here, unless it was something close to his heart and then he would.

Because his qualification is, for the portfolio, that he's come from a rural area – Kangaroo Island.

Yes. Well he was a shearer, a shearing contractor rather than a farmer. He was so frustrating because you could never feel you could get him to address an issue seriously. I found that. Jim got on with him better but I'm probably a bit too theoretical or something. Jim coped alright with Ted but I never enjoyed working with him. That's how I came to resign or retire. When I retired I was 55½. It was the State election of 198...

1982.

'82, that's right, '82. I remember '82, I remember it clearly as if it were yesterday. I sat down looking at the Saturday morning paper, which had all the final wind-up bits for the election. I thought 'How am I going to handle three more years with Ted or three more years with Brian Chatterton? I don't think I can hack anymore of this!'. I get very frustrated. I said, 'I think I'll look around and see if there's any part-time jobs around'. I didn't want to retire completely but at 55 you could access your superannuation. So I looked in the paper and lo and behold there was a job in local government: executive officer for a local government regional association based in Unley – Metropolitan Central Region which comprised the City of Adelaide, Enfield, Walkerville, Prospect, Unley, Mitcham and Stirling as they were in those days. I did a lot of work with local government in latter years, which we haven't come to yet. The Department's relationship with local government. I had a look at this and I thought that doesn't sound too bad. I made some inquiries. It was three days a week, quite handy work so I rang the inquiry number and spoke to the fellow who was the chairman of this group of councillors to find out about the job; met the lass who was the incumbent and found out the bits and bobs of the job. So I decided to apply for it. I checked out what my super. would be. At a reduced level, I could live with that. I decided to apply for it and I got the job. I left at the end of January '83. I didn't really experience much of Brian Chatterton's reincarnation.

It was only a short time too.

It was only a short time. Actually he was away for some of that and Gavin Kenneally was the Acting Minister for a while. [You will recall he was the MP for the Port Augusta area and chairman of the ALP Fisheries Committee. He was the chap that Mick Olsen upset with his untoward remark about the B class licenses. I got on OK with Kenneally. He was quite like Des Corcoran in his approach, without the obscenities. He seemed to think I was OK too and when I told him I was retiring he said, 'Why do all the good blokes go?'.] Anyway, I was Acting Director too for most of that last month while Jim took his holidays: or he might have gone overseas with Chat.

He [Chatterton] would have come in in November '82.

Yes, I think so. I'm not really sure about that. Anyway, let's say I stuck that out [the local government job] for two years. It was a nothing job.

[32:52] **End of Tape 5, Side B**
Tape 6, Side A

Peter, we got the story in a sense up to the time of your resignation/retirement. Perhaps we can pursue a few more aspects of post-departmental stuff and then come back.

Just very briefly, I did retain some association with the Department for a period where matters of agricultural interest are concerned. At about the time I finished with the Department, the Minister established an Agricultural Equipment Liaison Committee in association with the United Farmers and Stockowners and the farm machinery industry. This was a sort of tribunal which would hear complaints by farmers who felt they had a raw deal from the farm machinery manufacturers or importers or from dealers. I became the first chairman of that body, with representatives of farmers (the UFS that is), the farm machinery importers and manufacturers' association and the farm machinery dealers' association, with a secretary provided by the Department of Agriculture. I was the independent, now-retired, chairman. We used to meet about twice a year. We didn't have a great many cases to hear because we worked by insisting that any farmer who wanted to make a complaint would go back with the aid of a checklist and talk to the manufacturer or the dealer to see whether they couldn't resolve it. It was only those that couldn't be resolved [that came to us]. In most instances, once that they did that the matter was resolved. Most of the problems came because people won't talk to each other.

It seems an odd sort of committee to have in that sense.

There were [some] real difficulties that became irreconcilable with people digging their toes in. Because of the representation, we were able to use those to talk to the dealers or to talk to the manufacturer or to get a better understanding with the farmer about exactly what a warranty meant, things of that kind. We only met for about half a day, twice a year. The existence of the committee really was the lynchpin that kept the really effective system of consultation and talk going. The fact that everybody knew we were there to deal with it if they didn't sort it out kind of thing. So we were more of a threat than a promise! That worked quite well. Some issues were a bit intractable. I found after about seven years that I was getting so out of touch with what was happening in the industry both technically and economically ... Stop there.

[3:25] Well Peter after that short pause, we were just talking about the committee before we stopped. Yes. I was saying that after a few years of this I found it more and more difficult to keep up with changes in technology and the structure of the industry and events and happenings. The pace of change was ever increasing. I found it was taking me a couple of days to study up the files and the background material for a meeting which was going to take half a day or less and even then I was, with the passage of time, less and less sure that I was really understanding it in a way that I wanted to. As chairman you have to be on top of the issues. I reached the

conclusion that it was not worth the effort any more so I resigned about that time. I'm not quite sure who took it over. I did that for a while.

[4:30] I was asked by the Minister for the Environment, to join with about five or six others to be a conciliator for the Native Vegetation Control Authority. This was to work with farmers, who requested a conciliator, who had been told that they weren't going to get permission to clear their native scrub, to help them work through the issues and perhaps see what opportunities would arise because of the refusal and the possibility of heritage agreements on this scrub and some finance [as] compensation for the loss of the use of it. That was very interesting work. I really enjoyed that.

About that time, I started to get some high blood pressure problems. I had some very stressful cases that knocked me around considerably. I opted out of that. I did that for about three years and really enjoyed most of that. I found it very rewarding.

As a committee member?

No, a conciliator.

As a conciliator.

I wasn't a member of the Native Vegetation Authority. What would happen is, if you wanted to clear scrub or native vegetation you had to apply to the NVA for permission to do so. Mostly, they would say 'We're not going to recommend that you be given approval because there is so little native vegetation left and for these reasons (it's habitat for native birds or whatever). So we're not going to. Now, you have the option of placing that under a heritage agreement with the Minister of Environment, which will provide for the fencing off of that scrub area. You will still own the land, but you won't ever be able to clear it. The government will compensate you on an agreed basis for the loss of that potential'.

A lot of Australian farmers still haven't perceived this, in Queensland particularly: 'Got to clear more land, we've to clear more land. Got to do better. We've got to have more land'. That's the land hunger: it's still very, very strong, particularly if times get tougher. You've got to spread your overheads over a productive area or if there's another son who needs to be provided for (not so much these days because there's just not enough land left to contemplate that sort of thing). That's a deeply ingrained attitude amongst Australian farmers. It's a reflection of the pioneering days very much, which is not many generations ago. Really so much land was cleared in the '40s, which was only 60 years ago as far as South Australia's concerned. The thing that we wanted to do was to make sure they understood (a) the reasons

for the proposed refusal; secondly the nature of the arrangement that was being offered to them; and then to really have a look at what you could do with the amount of money that a compensation would be and the basis for determining that compensation. They would say, 'I can't buy any more ... I can't buy any land with that amount of money anywhere near what I own!'. That's the thing. I said, 'But there are other things that you could use that money for in terms of diversifying, better irrigation of whatever you do (which is the other thing they think of straight away). There are other ways, better subdivision of your paddocks, improvement by taking on different crops, improvement of the pastures or a whole range of different things. Not that I would have necessarily the expertise to take them through that but to say talk through this, this and this [with the right experts]. I found that quite interesting.

You were coming in after a decision had been made and ...

No. I was coming in after a decision had been signalled.

OK.

It was before ... The Department, the technical staff of the Department of Environment, would say, 'This is our conclusion and this is what we're going to recommend. Now here's a chance, if you want to, to talk about what that might mean to you by somebody who is independent of the Authority'.

So you might go and talk to them and ...

We would go out on to the property with them and with their family and talk it over. Sometimes I would recommend some changes to the decision, where I felt that was warranted. I was free to say anything I wanted. Sometimes they agreed and sometimes they didn't: 'c'est la vie'.

If they agreed with your suggestions ...

To modify the recommendation, yes.

Yes to modify the recommendation or for the farmer to take up the offer ...

Well that wasn't a problem for the farmers. Mostly, my task was to help the farmer work through in a meaningful way what his options were and form a rational decision about it. Sometimes I felt that the officers had been a bit heavy handed in some situations. One case I remember they said, 'We're recommending against clearing this particular bit of scrub (it was not a big piece) because there's only some very tiny percentage of uncleared land left in the Hundred of this particular area. I said, 'Hang on. This property is right on the Hundred boundary. Why don't we look at a wider area? Let's look at this in proportion to the uncleared land in the general area as far as the ambience of a wider area' because nature doesn't take any notice of Hundred lines, birds don't and so on. When they looked at that it wasn't really as bad

so they said, 'Fair enough'. What he wanted was a clearing to make his rabbit control program more feasible and economical. He didn't want to clear a lot of land but he wanted to tidy up basically some areas that were difficult because they were not cleared to the extent he wanted. It made his rabbit control program virtually impossible. I was able to steer the path along those lines, that kind of thing. But I gave it up. As I say, I started to suffer from some rather troublesome levels of blood pressure. One case in particular was very distressing and I really felt off side. I opted out of it after a couple of years.

[11:57] And you were still doing the local government work?

No, no. That only lasted two years because that was just a make-weight job. It was pathetic. There wasn't really a job there for me to do. In some of the regions, particularly the western region of councils, they had a lot more problems in common – drainage, Adelaide Airport etc., etc., etc. Some of the southern ones had similar sorts of things like huge developments and lack of infrastructure etc. But when you look at the group of councils that I was den mother to – the City of Adelaide (which is, of course, in another league altogether); Walkerville – one of the tiniest little councils, very old, fully developed you might say trying to hang on to its identity; Enfield – big, broad and brash and since amalgamated with Port Adelaide; Prospect – a bit like Unley only on the northern suburbs; Unley – a bit like Prospect only on the southern suburbs; Mitcham – split personality: half of it's like Unley, the other half's like Stirling; Stirling – raw, developing, semi-rural. Quite different problems. They really had nothing in common to do except just as a talkfest. The Local Government Association, which overrides the whole local government business, ... The issues that my group of councillors could sensibly talk about were really the general local government issues. I said, 'Why don't you use our meetings to pre-discuss the local government meetings, agendas and then in the smaller forum you might get some ideas'. They didn't like that at all. We parted amicably because there wasn't anything for me to do. It was boring.

[14:15] Needed a bit of the agriculture training coming through – take over efforts, that sort of thing.

Anyway it served a purpose personally because it phased me out of full-time work. That's that. Ever since then I've done a lot of voluntary work. My biggest problem is deciding what I haven't got time to do today. It's been very difficult to fit you in!

You've been pretty good. You've gradually phased away from ...

... over 20 years now. The last thing that I was involved in was the conciliation and the [Ag. Equipment Liaison thing]. They finished up at] about the same time.

What about professional associations, things like that?

I've opted out of that really. At the time that you retired, most of us qualified to be an emeritus member which entitles one to receive an association journal. That ceased to have relevance for me, particularly as I hadn't been in a specialist technical field since the year dot. So I lost interest in that.

[15:35] The Roseworthy College?

Well that's an interesting example of things. Roseworthy ...

It brings you back in a sense?

Yes, indeed. Roseworthy College is established under an Act of South Australian Parliament. It started off as a government department but with the development of the tertiary education system ... it became a [CAE] college but it was still operating under its Act. The key clause in that Act is that the finances of the college are guaranteed by the South Australian government. When it became a [CAE], the last head of the Agricultural College Department and principal of Roseworthy was Bob Herriot, I've mentioned him before. He was the bloke who was the first chief of the Extension Division. He had been the Soil Conservator before that. When he retired, the college became a [CAE] and a new [director] was appointed: Don Williams, Dr D.B. Williams. I knew him quite well. He taught me agricultural economics at Roseworthy (or tried to). I knew him as a colleague. He was in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Department of Primary Industries in Canberra. He became the head of the CSIRO Agriculture and Research Liaison Section, which we've also talked about. I've known Don Williams for many years. He was a very nice man, very broadly based, very affable.

He became the first Director of Roseworthy [CAE]. Don was a man full of very good ideas. He was able to persuade his council to undertake a number of highly worthwhile developments at the college, for which funds were not immediately available. I think Don believed if you had a really good idea and you got the thing cracking then you could attract people to support it. He tended to think a little bit beyond his means! There are people like that. The college started to get into debt. It was running up quite a sizeable overdraft, up to about half a million dollars at the time, which was a lot more money then than it is now. We're talking about '79 when this happened. The college had asked the State government to support some of these developments, which was if you like a tactical error because it brought under notice of the State Treasury that there was this problem and what it was. When I got back from my overseas trip in '79 for which I'd taken long service leave, there was a request through the Minister (who was Chapman) to call on the Minister for Education. He wanted to make me an offer I wouldn't be able to refuse and that was to take a secondment from the Department of Ag. (back to being that, Fisheries had been hived off instantly) to be financial controller of Roseworthy College

and to work with the Tertiary Education Commission and the State Treasury in helping the college to get back on to an even financial keel.

I didn't enjoy that job very much. They gave me a car, they lent me a car from the Education Department so I could get up and down. The College offered me a small sort of flat, a bed-sitting type flat with full facilities which I used a few times but I found it very lonely. I didn't want to get too close to staff [on a social basis] because of a need to be a bit distant and separate from that, particularly from the Director. I decided I would commute back and forth which was my option to do. I did that. I didn't have to go up there every day of the week. Sometimes there were significant things for me to do down in Adelaide, like talking with the Treasury or the Tertiary Education Commission. It was quite a yike. Fortunately the time that I took on this job the council was due for reappointment and an opportunity was seized to bring in a number of strong personalities, more level-headed people, perhaps less easily swayed and more hard-headed. The tragedy of it was that all of Don's ideas were terrific ideas, they really were very great and good for the College and so on but where was the money coming from.

Not the right time?

Yes. As I say, he'd had this philosophy. It wasn't too long out of the Whitlam era when there was lots of money in Canberra and if you had good ideas you could get practically anything funded in those days. Don had worked in Canberra at that time. He, I guess, had some of that philosophy about him and he was able to persuade his council. So, we had a new chairman, a new deputy chairman and a number of additional other appointees, with two or three from the old council for continuity and so on. Don Williams pointed out to the government, to the council and the government, that under the College Act the Director was responsible for the running of the College. The system envisaged by the government was that he was kind of sidelined. I knew that and it didn't make my task any easier. We came to an accommodation: the government agreed that (they got legal advice) that was right so Don had to be sort of reinstated. He was over 60 by then and was gently being encouraged to retire because while ever he was there, there wasn't much hope. He was always very nice. We never came to bitter blows or arguments or anything of that kind of thing, but the atmosphere – you could cut it with a knife.

Was it a viable concern still?

Well, of course, what's happened is it's become amalgamated with the University of Adelaide. It's now the Roseworthy Campus there, which was recommended by a working party of the South Australian Branch of the Australian Institute of Agriculture about 30 years ago, of which Tom Miller was a member ... It should have been done then.

To cut a long story short, the first year we just nailed everything down. I had to find out what was essential expenditure and what was desirable expenditure and what was the phasing. It was a real nightmare really. Fortunately, there was a good accountant who worked very hard and worked with me and a lot of support I had from senior staff. Some of them had been quite worried about Don's profligacy because they were worried about where the place was going. Others, on the other hand, were quite strongly supportive of him and felt that the ideas were so good why worry about the money. So [there were] those ranges [of views]. Anyway, we managed to nail it down. In the first year we stopped the overdrafts from growing. In the second year we turned it around and reduced it so from that point of view it was successful. Don did retire after a year or so. A new director, Barry Thistlethwaite, was appointed. After about 18 months that I spent up there, more or less full time – occasionally I'd come back into departmental consultations, particularly I was still trying to work with Jim on some of the reorganisation proposals but 95% of the time I was at Roseworthy ...

From '79 till ...?

From December '79 to June '81 then I became the Department of Agriculture member of the council following that to maintain the continuity. We stopped it, we turned it around and stopped it from going down the gurgler. It was a rewarding experience in some ways but not a very enjoyable one. I was glad when it was over. (laughs)

Did you remain on the council for some time?

Until I resigned.

And you were more or less full-time on that?

Being on the council?

No, on secondment.

Yes, it was very interesting. Of course I had studied at Roseworthy [as part of the ag.] science course, a chunk of three years up there so I had a soft spot for it and knew a lot of the staff.

Well the last 20 years or so have been a bit of a chequered career for Roseworthy, even now.

I'm not quite sure how it's working out.

They're talking of a disposal of the College now, which is interesting given the 19th century need for a college and the 21st century is we don't need one anymore.

That's right. Of course Roseworthy itself has changed in the time that it was founded in what, 1883 I think was its foundation. It was very much seen as a training college for farmers, good farmers. Now it's turned into training agricultural technologists and extension workers and people of that ilk, to now being part of the university. A whole lot of changes!

Things keep changing!

God fulfils himself in many often strange ways! (both laugh) That's adapted. OK, let's keep moving. Is there anything more you wanted to draw out about that?

[28:00] Not on Roseworthy itself, but you did mention maintaining liaison with Jim McColl to work on reorganisation plans and so on. The first starting point Peter is really what sort of plans did Jim have when he came in as Director? Obviously finding his feet to start with in those first few months.

The concept of regionalisation had been initiated by Marshall Irving. He, in fact, out of general context, established a regional headquarters for the Department in the South East down at Struan, Struan House which is a lovely old family mansion I suppose you'd call it. Struan is a few kilometres south of Naracoorte (where there is a district office of the Department) and at Struan itself there is a research centre mainly focused on beef cattle work (pastures and beef cattle work) and some cropping. Not too far away in the northeasterly direction from Naracoorte was another research station called Kybybolite, which is one of the oldest ones and where some of the original superphosphate work was done by Len Cook back in the early 1900s. Marshall decided that there ought to be a regional headquarters for the Department's activities in the South East. It was his decision to develop the Struan homestead as that. He was very keen about that. There was some criticism because it wasn't in a town, it was out in the bush. Some felt that if you were going to have a regional headquarters it needed to be physically in an urban type community with all the things that go with that. Marshall didn't see it that way. It depends on what your regional centre is for. Is it just a super duper research and extension advisory centre, the place on which you base staff? Or is it really a management thing? That was the difference, although I never really discussed it with him. By observation that he saw it more of a super duper, bigger, better focus of people with a wider range of skills and so on whereas Jim's concept and the one that I gradually developed even before Jim appeared was that what you were talking about was devolving the management of the services to farmers out into the particular places wherever they were. By implication the management was better attuned to hearing and assessing their needs, not necessarily doing what they wanted but being close enough (but also professional enough) to devise policies and plans and programs which were best suited to the needs of the zone, the region. This required a degree of homogeneity, I won't say uniformity but a sense of togetherness, to make all that sensible.

I took great interest in this myself when I first joined the Department. Marshall was talking about it. Callaghan talked about it in his report. The trip I did in '75, one of the main thrusts of that was to look at the development and management of regionally based services in other countries, particularly Canada and the UK. The thing that horrified me or made me most concerned from that trip was the allocation of resources that they had available, compared with

what the Department had. They were much more densely populated, had bigger farmer populations and farm-based political influence was stronger than maybe it was in South Australia. I always felt some concern as to how we are going to justify the cost of a regional management structure, in relation to the total resources that the Department had. While things were on the move that was a possibility but once they started to contract that became quite difficult. I'm pleased to say I didn't have to wrestle with that problem. I don't really know what's happened since. I also personally gave quite a bit of my time to try to think through some [issues].

**[33:15] End of Tape 6, Side A
Side B, Tape 6**

[When I became 'permanent' Acting Director there was not much opportunity to] do much in the way of substantive development of ideas. I kept trying to keep the idea moving. We talked about it conceptually within the conclaves of the Department. But it really wasn't until Jim was appointed and sitting firmly in the saddle that we really started to get into it. It was obvious as soon as we started having our talks after dinner and at other times [during his transition period] that he was very keen about that. And certainly Chatterton was. He was dead keen about that so we started then to move into defining what we meant by that. We had some working parties and I worked with Jim on that all the time. We defined the regions. At that time regionalisation was also happening in other departments in the State government. There was a working party set up under a member of the Public Service Board called the Working Party on Uniform Regional Boundaries. I was the departmental representative on that. We had some great yikes there because the boundaries of regions for agricultural purposes are not necessarily the same as those which might be on [purely demographic grounds or for] other sorts of services. In fact, we had to fight quite hard to retain our regional centre at Struan because Mt Gambier was seen as the regional centre for the South East because that's the biggest population centre. It had a lot of government facilities, the biggest government facilities like big hospitals and so on. That was no good to us because it wasn't central enough to the farming aspects of the region and Naracoorte would have been OK but we had already established one at Struan. Similarly for the Riverland or the Murraylands as we called it. We didn't think we could justify a region for the Mallee and a separate region for the Riverland, the irrigation zones. We wanted to have one that served both and they did interact to a degree. Loxton was the ideal centre for that because it subtended both very well whereas Berri or Murray Bridge was seen as the centre by other departments.. Neither of those were appropriate to our needs so that was quite interesting. We weren't lent on to the point where we had to change our plans.

I suppose the idea there Peter is to have larger regions rather than smaller regions?

We didn't think we could justify for a Department of our size and nature more than five. We had South East, Murraylands, Central and West, and then a Far North, what we called Far North, which wasn't really a region.

More pastoral than agricultural?

It was the livestock industries and that sort of thing with Port Augusta as the focus. It was too big to call a district because it was three-quarters of the State, a huge area itself! You make those sorts of compromises and these things as long as it works, that's the main thing. What's in a name, as long as you don't confuse people in the process. I was really working with Jim on that: he was the architect and I was the assistant architect and decided a lot of the nuts and bolts of that.

The biggest difficulty that we had in implementation of that, apart from any questions of resources, was with two specialist areas – horticulture and animal health – because they are seen by the practitioners as different for either farming system reasons like horticulture. Because you're dealing with largely perennial plants, they are vegetables of course, but the cycle of production is quite different, the people are different, you're dealing with small areas of land compared with broad acres, you've got largely monocultural systems rather than multicultural systems, which you've got in the kind of farming that exists mostly in South Australia, southern Australia – mixed grazing, cereal crops and other crops. Vets are not an industry base but are a professional discipline base. Ultimately they're concerned with controlling outbreaks of disease, so they tend to have a rather military approach, which is fair enough. You need that. You've got to be able to deal with that. When the problem arose they said, 'In order for that to be effective, the control must clearly be from the centre. Strict lines of command'. Most of us that believed in regionalisation agreed that you had to have proper control. We didn't say that you couldn't have an effective management of animal health services from a regional focus as long as there was that clear understanding that in certain issues the lines were a bit more complex. It was more of an organic kind of concept that we had and they wanted it kept simple. (laughs) There are arguments both ways. I remember chairing a meeting in Keith I think it was between the regional people and senior veterinary people trying to thrash out what we all meant by this. I don't think we came to any really firm, solid conclusions but a lot of ventilation took place!

There must have been a fair bit of angst amongst certain people?

Some people, yes. You'll probably find that Tom Miller would not speak very favourably about the regional management concept. He and the horticulture people, particularly the senior

people, felt that this was an unwarranted obstruction to their control and their specialist people who needed to be out on the spot. Jim's view, my view, the regional concept people's view was that you managed all those services no matter what they were at the front line. First line management was local because they knew the problems, they knew the people. That doesn't mean that they've got blinkers on and they don't take account of other factors but as managers they have to be aware of all these other things and take account of them. That's their job to do that, their brief to do that. People who have a strong disciplinary specialist thrust do have a lot of difficulty in grasping those sorts of concepts and don't believe that they really are capable of happening. So that was pretty interesting.

Once we'd nussed out the broad-brush approach to how we thought the regions should be staffed and what their structures should be – we had a chief of the region, we had a competent clerical person to look after the troops that were out there on the spot, particularly in terms of material and ordering and rations and that kind of stuff, and then he would normally have a research leader and an extension leader as his two lieutenants. That was the basic management team that was set up. We would often have team specialists – people like farm management economists would often be attached to regional headquarters rather than out in district offices, although it wasn't an absolute requirement.

Then we had to look at the rest of the Department, the part that wasn't going to be regionally managed. This then led to the restructuring of what we called the divisions. This brought us into things like the animal health function, the soil conservation function and land use. By this time we had the weeds people and the invertebrate pest people come over from Lands so we made up a division – Land Use and Resource Management we called it. With that we put the soil conservation, the vermin and the weeds people and based that at head office because all of those functions, while they're quite different in their technical requirements, relate to the preservation of the value of the land. If you let it blow away and become eroded, then the value of the land is eroded. If you allow weeds to become established and infested, the value of the land [falls]. The same with rabbits in particular, they're the principle vermin; the goats, if you like, up in the Far North country. These, of course, often had research functions associated with them. That Land Use and Resources Division became that group because of that commonality. Then you had Plant Industries Division, which is your cropping people, your horticulture and your agriculture in particular (agriculture meaning like agronomy, field crops and pastures). Certainly on the animal side you had your various animal husbandry, dairy husbandry and technology and the veterinary people under divisional management. Jim also introduced a policy secretariat, which was initially appointed under John Potter and then [John]

Radcliffe succeeded to that position. There was also an Economics Division and the Overseas Projects, plus [Admin. and] Finance (which included the general what you might call straight admin. or clerical services and procurement and all that stuff) and accountancy and you might have called them in those days management services personnel, staff development stuff and, of course, I left out temporarily the Extension Division, the Extension and Information Division. It was quite a complex of people who centrally operated across the whole State and whose job it was to interact with the primary service deliverers who were under regional management. That was the structure we worked out. I suspect, of course, that that's all changed now because you've got PISA and PIRSA and you've got SARDI and a lot of other changes as well.

Well you could say it's not dismantling the previous, but building on the previous.

Yes, it's rearranged it. I'm not familiar with what's happened to the regional structure now ...

More of that story will unfold.

Others will tell you about that because I'm really talking about up to the stage when I retired.

How far down the track was regionalisation by the time you ...

We had staffed all the regions and appointed people to them as chiefs and they were starting to come to grips with it, some more quickly than others, some with more difficulties than others, or problems. The Eyre region got away to a flying start because it was simple: it was much more homogeneous, further from head office! That in a way was the easiest one. They thought that way anyway. The Eyre Peninsula people see themselves as almost a state in between South Australia and Western Australia.

Some people were attuned to the concept. Did you find others (and you mentioned before about some of the angst), did you find people in the main organisation ...?

All of the regional chiefs were committed. They wouldn't have been recommended for appointment if they weren't. They were good people. We were able to get good people in every case. There were some better than others but, by and large, they were good people and good leaders. As I said a moment ago, some had a bit of an easier task than others. It was beginning to work quite well. There was still this residual problem with what we called the divisions (the head office based people, particularly in those two areas that I mentioned). The problem with vets is universal wherever this kind of concept is applied ... I'm not knocking the vets. I understand them: some of my best friends are vets! They do have a particular professional view that they find hard to subjugate to these other concepts, some more than others – personalities come into it.

[15:50] Personalities and politics are always involved with anything to do with reorganisation.

Yes. The trouble is with reorganisation (my impression is) that it's become a substitute for activity or achievement. Everybody says we're in trouble, we're not doing what we should be doing, we better reorganise. I'm parodying it to a degree but there's a fair bit of that still around. Must be a better way.

We certainly looking at this for the past 50 years, the post World War II period, you've got a fairly substantial growth of the Department, a structure is put in place then you've got to go through the reorganisation and then it becomes, as you're implying there, almost inevitable there's going to be another reorganisation. That's the evolution of an organisation.

There are so many additional statutory and quasi-statutory requirements on people in relation to occupational health and safety and a lot of things which were sort of taken for granted. They happened or they didn't happen: if they did, it was good management; if they didn't, well perhaps they weren't really noticed.

Bad luck!

A bad luck kind of thing yes. Compliance sort of stuff these days. Now the writing of many reports and justifications and what not which must burn up an awful lot of the resources of large organisations.

[17:30] You mentioned one report earlier today Peter and I wanted to ask you about the Corbett Report. What impact, if any, did that have on the Department?

It didn't affect the Department in any negative way. It affected us in a positive way because Corbett set out a government brief to reduce the number of departments which were somewhere between 50 and 60 as I recall (some of them with only half-a-dozen people in them) to something which was more sensible. His recommendations brought it down to something like 18, under 20 anyway. As a result of his recommendations, the Department of Ag. acquired the Rural Assistance Branch from Lands. That had been traditionally drought relief and economic relief in hard times when farm returns were pretty rock bottom. For reasons which related to land tenure and the attachment of encumbrances on property, the Lands Department became involved in that historically. They built up quite a small and quite effective unit but it was always our view that the encumbrance side of it was really an incidental and that the assessment and judgement about levels of assistance or whatever (to grant or not to grant, and at what level) in terms of whatever the policy considerations were, were better made in a farm management context having an understanding of farm management and related issues. That was something that we felt we would be better equipped to handle. So we welcomed that move. The Lands Department hated it. The staff came over holus bolus into the Reconstruction Branch in the Department of Ag. They used to consult with our technical people from time to time under Lands Department management but it was not integrated in any way. The chap who was in charge of the branch, a fellow called Forrest, I think he was very

happy to make the move but quite a few of his staff felt very threatened by it and pissed off (to not put too fine a point upon it) and very uncertain as to how they would be treated in this foreign environment because the culture of the two departments was quite different. Jim McColl and John Potter put a huge amount of effort into trying to make the people feel more comfortable and to come to understand that we were not threatening, we're constructive. To a substantial extent that did happen over time. I wasn't ever close to the operations at that period. In time that worked out quite well and I assume that's still continuing. I assume that's still part of PIRSA.

[21:20] The other one, and I had a lot more to do with this, was the vertebrate pest control people. Vertebrate pest control was under John Bromell, an ag. science graduate. He had a little team of research people mainly on rabbit research but also on goats. There were also number of field officers who worked with local government. Local government had a responsibility for the control of vermin on properties, as it did for weeds or proclaimed species in both cases. Vermin were animal pests [which] were proclaimed to be animal pests: might be foxes, rabbits, goats (feral goats); and noxious weeds or pest plants are those that are proclaimed under the *Pest Plants Act* to be a [pest plant]. It's said to be a pest plant so it is. It's the legal way of doing these things. Local government was involved under the technical guidance of these State government departments in the programs at the coalface, at the farm. They were required to have inspectors etc., etc. Anyway, the vertebrate pest people came over. At that time the new *Pest Plants Act* came into force on the first of July 1976. I was appointed the first chairman of that Pest Plants Commission which was to implement a new Act which provided for a much more structured way of getting local government involved in effectiveness of these controls. Because I was in charge of that, I was also given charge of the Vertebrate Pest Branch because of the common ground that existed between them. Farmers who have weeds also have rabbits, generally speaking. It's a management issue basically. I worked very closely with John Bromell. They were much more comfortable when coming in because they were much more scientific based, technically oriented type of people and they felt more at home.

Underlying the work they're doing, they've got this motivation to improve the quality of the land, which fits in with the agricultural ethos.

There was a lot of common ground in their attitude and training. They were easier led by far. That was that. I remember when that was mooted or, in fact, the decision was made to bring the vertebrate pest over. Again I was on my long-service leave in the Agent-General's Office in London. Who should also be visiting the same day but Jack Dunsford who was the then Director of Lands. He gave me an absolute serve. He said, 'What is the government doing!

Fancy that. Transferring the vertebrate pest people into Agriculture. How ridiculous. It will never work ...'. Again it's this feeling because Lands were, if you like, the custodians in the legal sense of the land, they saw getting farmers to do something about rabbits or something could cause them to do something with the title of the land. I don't pretend to really understand it. Often in the other States the Lands Department had been involved with this issue. Anyway, that worked out OK. I certainly was not conscious of any more than momentary tensions, usually could be cleared up by discussing what the apparent cause of concern was.

[25:45] I need to go now to the *Pest Plants Act*. The *Pest Plants Act* [and the policy underlying it] required that all councils should establish local Pest Plant Control Boards and that if a council on its own and from its own resources could not pay for and support at least one full-time weeds control officer in the area [it would join with an adjoining council or councils to form a board]. In other words it's rate based, it's revenue based and if the size of its weed problems were not such that it could justify full time employment of a weeds officer [it could be a single council board]. What used to happen in the smaller councils, particularly little ones like out in the Mallee where all they've got really is a clerk and a half-time girl in the office and a bloke that runs the grader who is also the roads overseer in his spare time or they might be a bit bigger than that and they might have one inspector who is health, building, weeds and vermin. Health and building obviously take priority because somebody wants to build a house, you've got to inspect or if there was a public health problem they had to have action and there was only one man. What time he's got left he has to divide between these other responsibilities. What we were finding was that weed control and rabbit control are highly seasonal. The seasonal impact will vary from area to area over quite short distances with mountains, hills, close to the seas, further away from the sea, the nature of the soil and all that kind of thing. We developed a concept, and Arthur [Tideman] was very much involved in this, of saying if councils can't afford to do that on their own then they should join together with adjoining compatible councils and form a joint board, Pest Control Board, so that between them they've got a good pattern of seasonality and they can justify a full-time weeds officer to work on that because he needs to be a specialist, he needs to have training, he needs to have retraining, he's got to keep up with the latest developments in pesticides, herbicides and machinery changes etc., you name it. He's got to be able to get out and survey and find, follow-up reports of maybe a new weed coming into the district instead of watching what's happening as he drives past on his grader. That was the concept behind this Act. We had to do a lot of hard selling of it. Unfortunately, it came not more than a couple of years after there had been a Royal Commission on local government boundaries, which local government fought tooth and nail. A lot of it's happened since, of course, but back in these times, early '70s, a lot of the

councils saw this as a back door method for the government to force amalgamations. We, of course, said that's nothing to do with us. We were able to sell it quite easily in some cases. The Eyre Peninsula and the South East were the hardest of the lot, they really were. Of course, the big problem was an area around Pinnaroo. A lot of country towns, you would have seen if you go up to through Mid North, were staged about 20 miles apart a lot of these towns, which is a day's journey with a horse team with a load of wheat on it. You had to have a pub and a store and that kind of thing. With the improvements of transport, that need disappeared and a lot of these towns faded away to nothing. That didn't happen [in the Pinnaroo area] where [Lameroo was] about 30 km [away]. They both developed, for some strange reason, a hatred of each other. They're great rivals. They had to become, conceptually, basically a joint board. You'd think you'd asked them to shoot their children! Anyway, we got there in the end through a lot of hard work and Arthur, as I say, was very much the brains behind much of this. But I enjoyed it. That's how I got interested in local government because I went around the country with the Executive Officer of the Pest Plants Commission talking to councillors, meeting with councils and making them offers they couldn't refuse. The thing was if they agreed to go in, to form a board, (once they agreed they became a sub-legal entity), we agreed to subsidise them. They weren't required to put in more than 3% of their general rate revenue into this system. We'd give them a setting up grant, which was enough to buy a vehicle and some spraying equipment and so on. We would subsidise them for an amount above whatever 3% of their combined rate revenue was, which was pegged as an arbitrary but satisfactory figure. So that was the bit of the carrot if you like and some of them saw that and others said they weren't going to be bribed.

When you say 'we' there, are you talking about Ag. Department?

I'm talking about the Pest Plants Commission.

The Commission itself, not the Ag. Department?

The Pest Plants Commission with myself as chairman, a position appointed as the Deputy Director of the Department. Arthur was the departmental representative on it, plus a number of landowners. The Vertebrate Pest Control Authority, which was under the Minister of Lands, was a comparable body but it didn't have the broad structure thing. When they came over, one of the last things I did in the Department was to work with the Vertebrate Pest Control Authority to get them to agree to an amalgamation between the two, so we had an Animal and Pest Plant Control Commission which we now have. I suppose I laid the foundation for that to happen. It didn't happen in my time but that was the obvious thing to happen because in terms of the use of resources as I said before it's going to be the same farms basically that have the big problems. The guys could work together or even one man can maybe do it or it could be

joint weed and vermin officers. The skill requirements are not incompatible at all. That has now come about I'm happy to say.

Just to clarify that, the Commission is standing alone from the Department?

It interacted with the Department. It had officers, special officers related to weeds work, were officers of the Weeds Branch if you like of the Department of Ag. It provided the ...

[33:05] **End of Tape 6, Side B**
Tape 7, Side A

AN INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY BERNARD O'NEIL WITH MR PETER TRUMBLE ON THE 12TH OF DECEMBER 2005 AT THE OFFICES OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES DEPARTMENT IN ADELAIDE IN REGARDS TO THE HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE PROJECT, AND IT CONTINUES INTERVIEWS THAT WERE CONDUCTED WITH PETER IN 2003 JUST TO ADD A LITTLE BIT MORE TO A PARTICULAR EPISODE IN THE DEPARTMENTAL HISTORY.

[0:35] Peter, thanks very much for volunteering to contribute a bit more. I'll throw it open to you because you want to talk a little bit about the IMVS coming to Ag. Department.

The veterinary part of it – the Veterinary Science Division. The Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science [IMVS] was set up in the late 1930s, I think under the Playford Government. I mentioned that it was, as I understand it, part of a ploy of Playford as Premier to include the veterinary science element in it because a lot of the Liberal Party people and Members of Parliament were not all that interested in human health issues but they were very interested in animal health issues. I understand that this was a bit of a sweetener to secure the support of the party. Be that as it may, the IMVS became established, as I say, late 1930s and forged a very good reputation for the work in its various fields. There were about six Divisions, of which one was Veterinary Science and the others were medical-type things like Haematology and Microbiology and so on and so forth.

Coming into much more recent times – and we're talking about the 1970s – with the burgeoning of the pathology industry in medicine and the payment for pathology tests under Medicare [originally Medibank]. A lot of the work that was done by the medical divisions of the IMVS was of that kind. They got paid very large amounts of money which were not in any way related to the State Treasury or the budgetary situation of South Australia. The way the Act under which the IMVS was set up ... Although the Minister of Health had a responsibility for the IMVS, he didn't have powers of any great significance. That wasn't thought of, I guess, when the Act was drawn up before the Second World War. With this independence, if you like, financial independence that was arising, the government of the day became, quite rightly, very concerned. It decided to introduce an amendment to the *IMVS Act*, which would clearly spell out the responsibility [of the Minister] and the relationship between the Institute and the

Minister. When they came to actually get down to the nuts and bolts of that, they had a problem, a constitutional-type problem, because the Minister of Health was only concerned with human health and had nothing to do with veterinary matters except perhaps where animal diseases sometimes interacted with human diseases. There was a real drafting problem: how could you make the Minister for Health responsible for things which were the purview of the Minister of Agriculture? They tried to dream up a form of words which would provide for separate responsibilities in respect of the two kinds of issues. They found that was unworkable.

When this was being mooted – and here's where the root of the problem arose – the people in the Veterinary Science Division had formed, for a number of reasons that I'm not really the full bottle on, but very suspicious about the veterinary science people in the Department of Agriculture. They were fearful of some kind of a takeover. The Department had a nominee on the Council of the IMVS, who was usually the Chief Veterinary Officer, and that was a proper kind of input. But when this was first mooted some of the staff got a bit restive and they were given an unequivocal assurance by the government that they would not be transferred to the Department of Agriculture, nor would the Department of Agriculture have any undue influence over what they did. This was before they'd found this constitutional and drafting problem of 'how do we handle the ministerial responsibility?' issue.

How much involvement had there been with the Department of Agriculture?

They were ... Shall we say the relationships were cordial but distant, I suppose I'd describe them as. There was obviously a lot of interaction: all the veterinary pathology testing that our field vets needed to have done, or the stock inspectors, to confirm whether this was in fact a particular disease that was suspected; and there were colleague-like relationships which varied with the personalities involved, I think that's the best way I can put it.

Anyway, the staff had been assured that this wasn't going to happen. When it came to the bit they found it had to happen. The government made the decision before the Bill was introduced that they were going to have to excise the Veterinary Science Division from the Institute and transfer it to the Department of Agriculture, where properly the responsibility would be to the Minister of Agriculture. The medical divisions would – I don't think they changed the name, it's still called the 'IMVS' – but the medical divisions would clearly have the responsibility, through the Director, to the Minister of Health.

[6:35] I'd just finished my stint at Roseworthy about this time. This was all brewing. I wasn't aware of it even happening because I had enough to do concentrating on getting Roseworthy back on the straight and narrow. I came back into the Department and Jim McColl briefed me

on what was happening. He said, 'I want you to be the responsible person because we're going to have some problems. The staff are going to be very, very upset, they feel they've been sold down the river, and there'll be a lot of staff unrest, to say the very least. So I want you to be the person who will put as much time into it as is needed, it's got to happen, it's got to happen as constructively as it possibly can. But you're not to say anything to anybody till the Bill's been introduced to the House, when the shit will hit the fan'. The head of the Veterinary Science Division was a fellow called Earle Gardner – not Earle Stanley Gardner, the detective story writer. He was, I think, a New Zealander. A very pleasant chap. Not a strong administrator, I would say. There were a few very difficult people on his staff in various different ways, I'll come to that in a minute. Before I became involved Pat Harvey, who was the – what was he by then? He must have been Director, Industry. Yes, he was the Assistant Director or Director, Industry. He'd been the Chief Veterinary Officer and had a strong veterinary background. Pat has quite a strong personality and has very definite ideas – always has – about things that should happen. I suspect – I wouldn't know – that he did cause some aggro amongst some of the staff, even in his departmental role. Some of them probably were saying, 'There's no way I want to work under Pat Harvey'. (laughter) I never actually ever heard those words said but I suspect they were. I could believe that: Pat calls a spade 'a bloody shovel' and there it is.

Anyway, he and a fellow from the Public Service Board whose name was Bob Smith – I'd never heard of him or met him before – but he had a lot to do with the drafting of this legislation and working out the administrative framework. He left soon after this and went to quite a senior job with the Victorian Public Service Board. I found him a very able chap. He and I became sort of the two prongs of this exercise. It had also been decided before I became involved – before I was able to escape from Roseworthy – that the Department would hire Lois Grant – do you know of Lois Grant? She's a human relations consultant-type person, a lecturer at what was the South Australian Institute of Technology. A very able consultant and had a wonderful way of running workshops in which people who are feeling that the world hates them and the organisation hates them and that they wonder what it's all about, people who are not coping with the institutional framework – we had used her in the Department in extension-type training and reorganisation arrangements – and it was agreed that she would put on two 2-day workshops over weekends to which all the staff of the Veterinary Science Division would be invited and, indeed urged but not compelled, to come. That had already been set up to happen soon after the event.

This is like a counsellor or mediator-type ...?

Kind of thing. But she ran actual participatory workshops with these people. There were about nearly 100 staff in the Division. We had to break them up into two lots. [Also,] a number of

departmental people took part in it. One of the management services officers (human resources people) was allocated full-time to this job, a fellow called Wheatland, I think his name was, and a couple of other people [who] had skills in this kind of area also attended those workshops. We put a lot of resources into it because we knew we had to get it right, or it was going to be a festering sore.

[11:50] Just to go back a little bit before then. When finally the Bill was introduced into Parliament, it was arranged that Jim McColl and I and a few other people called a meeting of the Veterinary Science Division staff on their premises down in Frome Road, late afternoon of the eve of the introduction of the Bill, and told them what was to happen. There were some pretty stunned silences. Jim made a very good speech explaining why and that the government was apologetic for having given them a bum steer, but hopefully they could see that because these arrangements had to be made that there was no alternative. We understood their concerns and would do everything that we possibly could to allay their fears and to try to work with them in as constructive and positive manner as was possible, and we would have regard to any particular problems that individuals might have to the extent that we possibly could. It went over like a lead balloon really. The shock; the gasps; and there were some quite angry questions asked by some of the people who felt most strongly about it – senior people, I mean.

Had you been able to keep it quiet to that stage?

As far as I know: I don't think they had any idea.

Even with calling a meeting, there was no ...?

They knew something was on then, of course, yes. I became appointed by the Minister of Agriculture as the departmental representative on the Council of the IMVS because that was necessary for him to be knowing what was going on. The medical and the veterinary people had built up a very effective interaction in terms of sharing the use of expensive [equipment] and that kind of thing. With all this money pouring in from Medicare, the medical people had been able to afford some very good stuff. The veterinary pathology and other sort of people were very, very happy because the same sort of equipment can be used for animal material as well as for human. They were fearful they might be going to lose the access to that. That was another big issue, a professional issue I'm sure. You just have to accept that as being valid. I took the seat and used to attend the monthly meetings of the Council of the IMVS and was able to report on how progress was being made and so on, because it didn't happen overnight. The next thing I did was to spend a lot of time going round the labs and the animal house ([where they] raised animals for experimental purposes) and getting to know the section heads and the

senior staff and the supporting staff, and really showing a human face and one that was an understanding human face. And ear.

Rather than the department –
Draconian ...

– taking them over.

Exactly. They gradually came to see that there we were reasonable people, or at least some of us were, and most – indeed most, if not all.

The IMVS, Peter, is located down on Frome Road.

On Frome Road, yes.

So all the labs and everything was down there.

Yes. [Apart from] the animal breeding facilities were out at Gilles Plains, quite separate. Not suitable for the central business district of Adelaide. Quite a large establishment there and a bit of a noxious trade. Anyway, I spent, as I say, a lot of time just going round.

[16:15] There was one particular case that interested me greatly that I would like just to mention. There was a fellow called Duncan Sheriff, who was one of the most bitter opponents of this concept, one of the most vocal. He was kind of the spokesman of the disaffected people. A very senior man, who was probably the number two in seniority in that Division. But he was a very bitter man and he couldn't stand Pat Harvey. I don't think Pat had much time for him either. He was a bit unusual. When I got round to him I said ... as I say, haematology was his field – a very small section, actually, in the Division: there was just he and a senior technician and maybe a wash-up person, or they might have shared that with another group. I said to Duncan, 'I suppose you've got lots of time for research?'. He was explaining there's not a lot of demand for haematological observations and tests in veterinary pathology, not too many blood diseases. I said, 'I suppose this means you've got lots of time for research?'. He said, 'No. I just sit here and do crossword puzzles and read the *Women's Weekly*'. That's what he said. I said, 'Oh? That's a bit of a waste. Now that you're coming into a bigger department with wider avenues and so on, as an officer of the Department, we would have the facility to transfer you – at least partly, if you wanted it – into something else. What are you interested in, other than haematology?'. He started to warm. He said, 'I've always been interested in scientific writing. The correct presentation of scientific papers to journals. I find a lot of the young scientists haven't got the faintest idea how to do that'. I said, 'Would you be interested in providing some training for young research officers?'. He said, 'Yes, I would'. I said, 'Let me have a think about it, but I think – I have to just make sure the Public Service Board's happy about it but ...'. Because they were no longer employed under the *IMVS Act*, they were

employed under the *Public Service Act* at the stroke of a pen, which didn't really affect anything in real terms because superannuation and conditions generally [were the same], and they had their own salary scale basically, and where appropriate they matched comparable jobs in other scientific departments, like the technicians and people of that kind. But I said, 'I'll have to square that, but I don't see any reason why [not], provided we can be assured that haematology work is being properly carried out'. He said, 'My technician is excellent and she can ring me up if [need be]. She knows when she's got a problem. I really wouldn't need to be here much more than an hour a week or something like that'. I talked with Jim and with our chief management services officer, Peter Crossley, and they thought it was a good idea. I [floated it] with John Radcliffe, who was the head honcho in terms of research management overall, and his offsider, Wickes – what's his Christian name?

Is it Roger?

Roger, that's right: Roger Wickes, with an 'e'. They were happy to give it a try. I spoke then to Pat Harvey. He said, 'As long as I don't have to talk to him'. Duncan had already said, 'As long as I don't have to talk to Pat Harvey, it'll be all right'. I said, 'You might have to have an office on the same floor as Pat because that's where the space would be and where Roger Wickes has his office, but Pat'll be up the other end'. Anyway, that's what worked out. It was marvellous: it transformed this guy. He felt that somebody cared about him and that he was doing something that was useful. He retired not long after I did, actually – because I retired early, 55½ – but he was a lot older than I: he must have been close to 65 by this time. But for two or three years he performed and ran really good training workshops and counselled young staff about how to present a scientific paper and all that kind of thing. That was good. It had the effect, of course, of bringing onside somebody who might have been a very bitter and difficult piece of grit in the machine. There were two or three others. I was happy: I thought that up myself. (laughs)

What had happened when the staff ...?

I had a lovely letter from him when I retired, in which he thanked me for it, [most] warmly. He said, 'Why do people have to wait till they're dead before people say nice things about them?'. Anyway, I'm starting to blush. It was a very happy outcome of what could have been quite difficult.

It's better than getting a postcard full of ill wishes.

Indeed. Have you had some of those?

I know of them. (laughs)

Indeed. In fact, it must have been noticed because [Jennifer] Adamson, who was the Minister of Health, gave a Christmas function and she said, 'What have you done to Duncan Sheriff?'. Because she was aware of the problem that he might be going to cause. I said, 'I just treated him like a human being'. She said, 'Good on you'. So it was noted, I'm sure.

What had happened to the staff in coming over? Like in his case, had he gone off to another section of the Department or ...?

Duncan, yes: he came into Head Office because that's where the Research Management secretariat was. That was the appropriate place to lodge him for this because it was the outcome of researchers successfully publishing good research papers. That's how he came to be, as it were, 'supervised' by Roger Wickes, who went on to greater things, as we know.

But there were one or two others. There was another chap who was a parasitologist working with worms of sheep and cattle. He was quite a difficult character. I never quite knew what he was talking about ... He was a bit of a conspiracy theorist and liked to stir the pot. Not an up-front kind of guy. He took a bit of keeping in rein. Really, Duncan was not an issue. This fellow, whose name was Ford I think, it never really came to anything but he made a certain amount of noise for a while. But the rest of them ... The workshops run by Lois Grant were absolutely the key, because she ran some of these management-type games, but we ...

Role plays and that sort of thing?

Yes. The groups – what is it, the 'triangles', the 'squares' and the 'circles' – do you know that one? – where they're three different sub-groups within a group, with different aspirations. The pecking order [is demonstrated]. That worked very well. They really learnt that people are people and by and large if you give them a chance that's the way they'll behave. [Learn] to look behind ... don't be carried away by the surface appearance of things. If you've got a problem, go and talk to somebody about it; don't beef about it back in the tearoom. Be open. If you've got a supervisor [and] part of his or her responsibility is to look after you as well as to give you orders, and if approached in an appropriate and objective and not-too-steamed-up a way, will almost always listen to you and your problems. As she said, and one of my aphorisms has always been: 'If somebody thinks there's a problem, there is a problem. It mightn't be the problem that they think it is, but it's their perception that there's a problem. And you've got to do something about it'. That all worked out pretty well.

[26:00] We were not, as a department, terribly happy with Earle Gardner's leadership of the group, as I say. He wasn't really trained and skilled in the arts of [management] – not his fault, he was a good veterinary whatever-he-was, I can't remember what his professional field, what his scientific field was. We decided after a while, when things had started to settle down, that

we needed to inject a bit of leadership. Jim McColl and I decided that it would be a good opportunity for John Radcliffe to have a go at this. Although he wasn't a veterinary scientist or a veterinary pathologist, he was a very well-trained scientist with a very broad base, and very skilled in the management of scientists, knowing what was involved in that. We also thought it would be good for John to have a line management role. (laughs)

Train him up a bit.

He was obviously a person who was going to have very senior leadership responsibilities in the Department. As you know, he got the top job for a while. Then other issues started to get in the way, didn't they? That's in the future from the time I'm talking about. But I remember I called a meeting of the management services people and the people who'd been supporting this transfer of the Veterinary Science Division, and talked about how the executive was coming to the view that we needed to make at least a temporary change in the leadership and we'd have to find a way to do that, but the thing was to identify the right person. I can remember young Barry Windle, as he was then, saying, 'Who did you have in mind?'. I said, 'John Radcliffe'. Barry's face, chin hit the table because Barry was such a gentle, constructive person, the co-operative approach always with Barry; whereas John, although he can do that, that's not always his preferred style. He thought that might be throwing petrol on the fire. But we talked about it and we felt that John had all the skills. We briefed John about the expectation that we weren't looking to him to turn it into the SS or some elite Army-type thing but to help them find their feet and find themselves and to be encouraged and, where necessary, made aware of any deficiencies they might have as well as recognising their strengths. Anyway, that happened, but the implementation of that really was after I left. I retired from the Department at the end of January 1982. There it was. I understand it's worked well. I was happy about having the task and felt reasonably satisfied about the way I did it. The vibes I got were generally very positive, and it was a nice note to finish on.

So it was the finish, in a sense.

It was the last project I did, yes.

[29:55] Just a couple of things, Peter. Did you get involved in the drafting of the Bill?

No. That'd all been done.

So when you turned up, not even revision or ...?

No, not the time that I was there, no. Bob Smith and I got ministerial approval to go over to Melbourne just for a day to visit the comparable veterinary science division of the Victorian Department of Agriculture. In that case it was well established and was the flagship of this kind of veterinary pathology operation. We went over and just [had a good look at them] because

neither of us had had direct experience of just how the interface between this kind of operation and a generally, widely-based agricultural department, including stock diseases in the field type work: what were the pitfalls?, what were the issues that you had to address?, what were some of the provisions or techniques or structures that helped it work well, when it did work well? That was a very worthwhile day in Melbourne that we spent.

I suspect you might have another couple of things.

On the Bill again. The Bill becoming an Act: did it go through Parliament easily?

I don't know about easily, but it went through without undue problems. It was in the days of the Tonkin Government. [Jennifer] Adamson was the Minister of Health and Ted Chapman was the Minister of Agriculture. He didn't like working with [her] if he could possibly help it. I've told you the story about the car? Yes. That epitomised (laughs) his view about women politicians, especially if they had a lower number plate than he did. But I don't think the Opposition made too much of it. We thought that they might have: some of the staff might have gone down that track. But, as I recall, it was [not a big deal]; there was debate and so on, but I don't recall it being seriously upsetting or turmoil-inducing issues.

No. It's a sort of issue at that political level, the government said one thing and then had to change their minds again ...

No. I don't think that really came up too much. I don't recall it doing so. I may be wrong in that, but ...

[32:40] The last one, perhaps, then is: could the situation have remained by appointing a second minister, in the way of having a Minister of Health and a Minister of Agriculture, with responsibility? Could they have left the vet people with the IMVS and just had two ministers supervising the *Act*?

That was, as I understand it, the constitutional problem. That was thought about and looked at but rejected ...

[33:15] **End of Tape 7, Side A**

Tape 7, Side B

[0:18] Peter, I was just asking there about whether you could have had two Ministers, dual responsibilities, supervising the IMVS and you were just outlining a couple of reasons.

Yes. The IMVS, of course, was a statutory body in its own right. I guess that a statutory body has to have one Minister. You're perhaps adverting to the fact that PIRSA now has a number of fields of operation, which impinge on several ministers – two, three, four, I don't know. Fisheries, of course, there's a Minister there, right. But each of those avenues that are either a policy issue, which I don't think is a problem ... When there's a statute involved ... But if PIRSA's got an outreach into say stock diseases – I don't know whether it still has, but presumably it does – there's a *Stock Diseases Act* and the officers that are concerned with that

kind of operation in the field relate to that Act and that Act relates to the Minister of Agriculture. So that's ... because they're separate elements. I presume all the officers of PIRSA are employed under the *Public Service Act*, or whatever it's now called (probably got a different name; everything changes, especially the names). Whereas the IMVS was a monolithic, statutory body set up under its own Act and the employment of staff was under that Act. It was that fact that you couldn't have two Ministers administering one Act: that was really the issue as I recall it.

I just wondered whether they could have resolved it ...

They did try to, because they really didn't want to have to go back on the rock solid assurances they'd given, (laughs) but in the end they had to bite that bullet.

You've touched on personalities and there you've touched on the politics: some of these things you have to deal with all the time.

Yes, indeed. There's no escaping that. Yes. Probably that's about the end of me. I retired after that at the end of January 1982. Jim McColl was away for most of the last month, so I was the Acting Director-General for that time. Brian Chatterton was away, too. They might have been away overseas together. Not sure about that. But certainly Brian was away. Gavin Kenneally was the Acting Minister. We didn't talk about B-Class fishing licences in the Port Augusta area (laughter) but I found him a pleasant enough chap to work with. An able politician, but didn't know a huge amount about agriculture. Then it wasn't too long after that that Brian Chatterton and Premier Bannon parted company and Frank Blevins became the Minister.

We've got some of that down from ...

I'm sure, yes. Anyway, I'm waffling now.

No, it rounds out just ...

I retired and, as I've said earlier in the interviews, kept a few relatively minor agricultural associations going until I felt I was getting too out of touch. That really does become an issue: if you're not part of the mainstream where you can absorb the changes and the subtleties and the new this, that and the others, as it were by 'osmosis', by your day-to-day activities, then you risk getting right out of touch. If you've got a responsibility going with the activity, then that's a slippery slope.

Certainly in our previous sets of interviews we covered some of your post-retirement career –

Yes, yes.

– and indeed we may even come back to the Animal and Pest Plant Control Commission aspects subsequently.

Yes. I'll leave you to come back to me if you feel there's any gaps I can help with.

But the IMVS is the swansong of your career and, perhaps for the moment, it's almost a swansong of the interviews, but it was worthwhile to record that, Peter.

Yes. I felt it was such a significant step really, and quite interesting from a political and public administration-type point of view. I'm not sure that there's anybody else around who would really have ... You'd get a different angle on it from Pat Harvey, but as I understand you haven't yet been able to interview him and that may not happen.

No. That's good that you've been able to provide those thoughts and reminiscences and, as before, we'll follow up with a transcript and try and get a good transcript for you.

Well, if it's not good I'll straighten it out.

We'll hire you in again!

[5:45] **End of interview**