

ORAL HISTORY – QUEENSLAND COMMUNIST PARTY

TRANSCRIBED RECORD OF INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN McELLIGOTT

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Interviewer: Ross Gwyther

KEVIN: I was born in 1929, of course, the start of the big Depression more or less. I was born in Maryborough, one of six sons in the family. My father was only a labourer, and of course they were pretty tough times, even though I was very young, obviously, but I can still remember the soup kitchens in Maryborough and going with the Dad with the billy to get a billy of soup. They had that organised – I'm not sure who were the ones that organised it, but they had that organised.

I served the apprenticeship as a blacksmith.

ROSS: So that was still in Maryborough?

KEVIN: That was still in Maryborough. That was in a small blacksmithing turn-out where I served my time, and after I finished my apprenticeship, I then got a job as a blacksmith in Rockhampton Railway Workshops.

ROSS: So you would have been about 19 or 20 or so when you finished your apprenticeship?

KEVIN: Yes. I would have been 21 at the time. I'd just married Rae at that time and got this job up there, as I say, in the Rockhampton Railway Workshops, but we didn't really take to Rockhampton. We found it hotter than Townsville, actually, Rockhampton, and finished up going back to Maryborough and got a job as a blacksmith in Walkers Limited, as it was then, the big engineering place in Maryborough, that provided a lot of work for Maryborough people.

I worked there for four years, but the work situation was they were running out of contracts and so forth. Steam engines were going out around that, and diesels were coming in, and Walkers Limited made a lot of steam engines. They were running out, so I then found they were advertising for blacksmiths for the Townsville Workshops up there, so I came up here and worked in the Townsville Railway Workshops.

It was two sort of main Railway Workshops at that time, the South Yard where Lyle worked – that was mainly in carriage building and wagon building – and North Yard Workshops, as it was called. That was more general repairs to the locos and making stuff for wagons and what have you, you know, that blacksmiths would be associated with.

I worked there for nine years, and then decided I'd have a change. Then in that period up here, that was more or less where I obviously got to know Fred Thompson. He was the organiser at that time, as you probably know, and finished up on the – at that time I then joined the AEU, the Amalgamated Engineering Union as it was called at that time, and of course got on the District Committee of the Union and worked a lot of the time with Fred. I was also in the period there, became the Union Delegate on the job.

After nine years there I decided I'd have a change and went and got this job as a blacksmith at Plane Creek Sugar mill at Mackay. Of course, naturally, we moved there, worked there for four years, and then it was in that period when I was working in the Railway up here that I'd say I was pretty closely associated with Fred in Roma and I joined the Communist Party, because I could see how active and that they were, sincere people in what they were trying to achieve, and the father was a member of the Communist Party for many years.

After four years working with Plane Creek Sugar mill, I got a job, come back to Townsville here, and finally got a job – well, round about that time blacksmithing was sort of going out and a lot of blacksmiths sort of went over to boiler-making, which was somewhat of a kindred trade - which I did, and got a job as a boiler-maker in the Townsville City Council Workshops here. I worked there for 21 years before I took a redundancy and just been retired ever since then.

Of course, in that period the Soviet Union folded up and the Communist Party folded up and it's pretty much inactive, although concerned about the Labor Movement generally and so forth, but there's no Communist Party any more. I've never been really taken in with the Labor Party, and so as I say, still interested, still active, still follow the political situation and what have you, but certainly not as active as I was over the period when I was working in active in the Communist Party, and served on many organisations connected with the Union Movement.

I was delegate while working in the Railways of the CRU, which was the Combined Railways Union that was going at that time. I don't think it's still going now; Union Delegate on the local Trades & Labour Council, and they were really active at that time, too. You know, they were all different times to what it is now, because we had a lot of blue collar workers organisations then, the Waterside Workers – of course, they were really active, and Jim Healy and so forth, he was the National Secretary and was a Communist. Ted Roach, I think his name was, in Brisbane, at the Branch there.

So generally speaking, as I say, those years it was more conducive to being active because the working people, Townsville in particular, it was more a working-class and union town than it is today. Of course, most of the unions and Communists in the leadership of them, they had a goal of wanting to bring about Socialism and what have you, but of course that all went out the window as times changed, and now you've got a lot of individuals that just use it as a stepping-stone to sit in Parliament more or less. Of course my brother, Ken, he was a member of the Labor Party, and Member of the State Parliament, and of course we had discussions about it. I sort of got that disgusted with the Labor Party and how they operated and I now vote for the Greens. I find that a more aggressive party than the Labor Party. It turned out more or less to be just another Conservative Party, the way I see it.

It's not that I think the Greens are going to be the answer to all problems for the workers and the ordinary people, but they're the best of what's operating today or who are likely to more or less, well, at this stage they're never going to be able to form a Government, but they're the best of what's offering.

Of course, as long as you've got the preferential voting and you vote for the Greens, you put the Labor Party in for your first preference – well, it's not going to be a wasted vote

because you realise the Greens are not going to win enough seats, but you think, well, maybe if the ALP see that more and more people are starting to work to vote for the Greens, well, they're going to have a look at how they're operating and so forth and maybe go a bit more Socialistic-minded.

Yeah, that's about briefly the story of my life, but certainly you when I was young, with the Dad only being a labourer, there were plenty of hard times going through that Depression years.

ROSS: Can you talk a bit more about the sort of political influences on you when you were young? Was it – what sort of brought you to the point where you sort of joined the Communist Party eventually?

KEVIN: Well, the fact that, as I say, there were six boys in the family. Dad was only a labourer. He was out of work a lot of the time in the Depression years, and as I said, about him and this Gerry Hennessey, they were organising the unemployed in Maryborough at the time and the Government brought in that Act where they couldn't hold mass meetings and so forth, and they changed themselves to these two cannons that were outside the Town Hall, and they were consequently arrested and spent a month on Boggo Road Jail.

I suppose a big influence, I saw in Maryborough and every other town around that period, you had the affluent parts of town with their brick houses and so forth, and I can remember on the outskirts of Maryborough there was still a lot of bush, and pensioners had built their own sort of tin humpies within that bushland, and something didn't seem right to me that they had all these lovely brick houses and that for some people to live in, and here they are living in bush humpies out in the bush.

Of course, Dad, he wrote a lot – well, obviously he was a big influence on me. I could see what my parents were going through, particularly my mother, and that wasn't right. I sort of saw how he was persecuted jobwise and what have you, due to the fact that he was a communist, and he wrote as a communist in the *Maryborough Chronicle* (as it was then) regularly, and all that struck me as, you know, how can that be? Society has got to be a better society than this.

ROSS: Can you remember some of the experiences he had in terms of being persecuted on his job?

KEVIN: I suppose I could remember one thing, too, that from time to time he'd get a job as a navvy on the railway line, you know, and he'd be away. We were living in rented houses all the time, and one period we were living in a rented house that was on the outskirts of Maryborough, and of course he'd be away all the week working up the railway line.

The mother gave me a letter – she decided she was going to try to get a house closer to town – to take a particular house that was advertised to let. Of course, we had no motor cars or anything in those days. She had young kids to look after, so she gave me this application to take in to the solicitor who was in charge of the renting of this house, and I took it in to him, as young as I was.

I don't know how old I would have been – 10 or something, probably – and he said to me, he read the letter, and he said, 'Is that your father that's the Communist?' Of course, I didn't

know anything about politics and that at that time, and I said, 'Oh, I don't know,' but anyhow, we didn't get the house.

As I say, even I was persecuted because when I decided to come back from Mackay, we decided to come back – well, I left Plane Creek Mill, and then I was working at North Eton Mill, that since went into receivership and doesn't exist any more. Anyhow, I got a job, though. They asked for a blacksmith and I got a job there as a blacksmith. It was going to be closer to where we lived. Well, the family didn't really like living in Sarina. I had a mill house in Sarina. For a period there we were living in Mackay and I was travelling back and forwards every day to the Mill at Sarina.

I got this job there, and of course working conditions were pretty crook at that time. There were no lunch rooms or things like that. You sat and ate your lunch amongst the dirt and that where you worked, because the blacksmiths' shops were just dirt floors. They finished me up after awhile. They could see that I was starting to sort of organise the place a bit, and they finished me up, said that they were going to close the blacksmith's shop there, and of course that finished me up.

Then we decided, we had our Housing Commission home and we'd left that, were renting that, and we went and lived in Mackay to work in Sarina, to work there as a blacksmith in the mill there. At that period, I was in touch with Fred and so forth, and he found out that as far as the Railway was concerned, I was never to be employed again in the Railway, so that's one particular time that – oh, and some of the other mills when they closed me up, some of the other mills around Mackay, another mill, the Farley Mill there, another mill on the outskirts of Mackay, they wanted a blacksmith at one time and I applied for that, but even though I have no evidence to say it was because of what I was, as I said yesterday, there was this write-up in the *Mackay Mercury*.

When I went to take up work at the mill at Plane Creek and reported to the office, the Manager called me in and said that certain people had been ringing him up and telling him he shouldn't employ me, that---

ROSS: What was the write-up in the *Mercury*? What was that about?

KEVIN: Well, the Labor Minister – there was a Liberal Government in power at the time – and this didn't name me, but obviously it was me a Communist got a job in one of the mills, and he was a Communist, and information they'd received was that I was to go down there and create problems in the sugar industry, which was a lie. I just decided I'd have a change and just went down there on my own accord, but there was this write-up, and of course it was obviously all the mills would have known, it was obvious that it pointed to me.

My Dad would have come up. Of course, I was only pretty young at that time, but he would have been ostracised the same way.

ROSS: Yes. Can we go back to when you were doing your apprenticeship, because that would have been during the War?

KEVIN: Yes.

ROSS: Can you remember the sort of involvement of the Communists in the area where you were working?

KEVIN: No, not really. When I served the apprenticeship, as I said, it was more or less a small blacksmithing turnout, doing general blacksmithing, car springs and all that sort of thing that blacksmiths did at that particular time, and of course I was an apprentice. I wasn't in the union at that time, just being an apprentice.

ROSS: And then when you got a job in the Railway Workshops at Rockhampton, can you remember any of the involvement of the Party people in the workshops then?

KEVIN: Yes, there was a party worked there for a number of months. It was actually when I took up the job in the Railway Workshop at Rockhampton that I joined the Union. At those times you had to be in a union.

ROSS: So you joined the AEU?

KEVIN: The AEU, yes. There was the – the AEU covered blacksmiths as they did with fitters and so forth, but then the Blacksmiths Society, they covered blacksmiths. They had the Moulders Union that covered moulders at that time, the Blacksmith Society, and of course the AEU of course covered blacksmiths as well. Well, I could see that the AEU was the more active of those three unions, so I joined the AEU.

I was also at that time in the Eureka Youth League. That was in operation, and I joined that in Rockhampton. They had a branch in Rockhampton and it was pretty active, and I joined that. I didn't join, as I say, I didn't join the Communist Party until we moved up here to Townsville. I met up with the Eureka Youth League, it was all this tied in with the Communist Party, and I met up with various Communists or they came and saw me. I suppose the word got around.

Eric Brown was another one who was an active member, Branch official of the AEU, and he contacted me. There were quite a few in Rockhampton and the area.

ROSS: What sort of things did you do in the Eureka Youth League?

KEVIN: Well, at that time there was a big campaign going on to Ban the Bomb and so on. We took around petitions to the houses and so forth to get signatures, and these Ban the Bomb petitions were going round at that time. Probably that was one of the main things that I would have been associated with, the Eureka Youth League.

ROSS: Would that have been before the Government's banning of the Communist Party and the Communist Referendum, because that was 1951 when that happened?

KEVIN: Yes, that would have been – well, I came out of my apprenticeship in about 1950, I think it would have been.

ROSS: Okay. So that Ban the Bomb Campaign was around 1950.

KEVIN: Yes, would have been around '51 or '52, I suppose – '51, I'd say, because I worked at Walkers Limited, then Rockhampton, worked at Walkers Limited, I went back to

Maryborough after the period in Rockhampton working at the Rockhampton Railway Workshop, and worked in Walkers Limited in '52 and came up here in 1955 to work in the Railway Workshop up here.

ROSS: So you came up here in 1955?

KEVIN: Yes.

ROSS: And of course Fred Matzkow, he was Secretary of the Trades & Labour Council up here round about that time, and he was an engine driver in the Railway, and he also came from Maryborough at some period before that. He was in the Communist Party, the same as my Dad was. They knew each other, and of course when I came up here, well, word sort of got around that I was the son of Howard McElligott, he was probably the main Communist in Maryborough at the time. We used to often have the likes of George Bordijenko and other Communist Organisers when they'd come to Maryborough. Well, they'd come to our place.

When I arrived in Townsville, Fred got in touch, contacted me, with other Communists. Word got around that I was there, and meeting up with Fred, he influenced me a lot, you know. I eventually joined the Communist Party.

ROSS: What was it about Fred that impressed you?

KEVIN: Well, I'd read about him. In Maryborough I used to get the *Guardian* and so forth, of course voted for the Communist Party, and the *Tribune* – mainly the *Guardian* because it was the State. The *Tribune* was the national Party of the Communist Party; the *Guardian* was the State. There'd be write-ups in there about the struggles, union struggles and so forth, campaigns. Of course, he'd be mentioned, and I just got to know him and both him and Loma contacted us. They were a big help to us, to get us settled in, in Townsville and what have you.

Of course, being in the Railway there and they were having stoppages and that, pretty frequent then, of course Fred would be the main speaker in both of them. I think he was the main organiser in the North at that time. As I say, he seemed so sincere. He was so helpful for us, him and Loma, so I just got a part from, as a young person, how I saw that there was something wrong with society, the haves and the have-nots.

My Dad, he was never really taken up with the ALP. He clashed with them a lot with his Letters to the Editor and so forth, critical of the Labor Party, and that sort of started me off, being very politically minded. I could how the struggle that my mother had to go through rearing six boys and no work and that, how people were suffering in the Depression years, experience in the soup kitchens and what have you.

They had a lady who organised it at that time. In Maryborough they had a Ladies Auxiliary set up and they used to provide teas and that at different times of the week, for the unemployed to go to and get a meal and so forth. So all that had a big influence on me even, as I say, at an early age.

So it was a natural progression, I suppose, that I'd finish up in the Communist Party.

ROSS: So now once you'd joined the Communist Party, can you tell me a bit about how you worked as a Party member, like?

KEVIN: Oh, well, I suppose mainly on the job as a Delegate/Shop Steward, in the AEU.

ROSS: The Party had regular meetings?

KEVIN: Yes.

ROSS: And were you in the Railways Branch?

KEVIN: Yes, I was in the Rail Branch.

ROSS: So how many members would have been in the Railways Branch, roughly?

KEVIN: Probably 40 or something.

ROSS: And how often did you meet?

KEVIN: They'd meet monthly. The party had their own little office. Frank Bishop was the local organiser of the Communist Party here at that time. They had a little office that was right next-door, pretty much right next-door to the Meatworkers Office, and that's where I sort of got to know Paddy Beacher. They also had a bookshop operating here at the time. Fred Matzkow, he was Secretary of the Trades & Labour Council, and he was a member of the Communist Party. So Fred, Communist Party, he was Organiser for the AEU.

Hughey Fahey was the organiser of the Meatworkers. He was also a Communist, so most of the, all those northern unions, it was mainly Party leadership that made them so active.

ROSS: So what would you have done in those Party meetings that you had once a month or so? What would they have consisted of?

KEVIN: Well, other than that while that, just organising different campaigns and so forth, whatever, and discussions on which was the best way to go, and Union campaigns. Well, campaigns were going pretty much all the time there in one industry or another, on the Rail Branch, what we should be getting to get the CRU to take a particular line on the campaign, whatever the demands were around the time – mainly wages and working conditions, because in the Railway Workshops up there, there wasn't too much in the way of amenities and that, so there was struggle going on all the time.

I think I said one of the campaigns we had was wanting just hourly stoppages for each section, the way the blacksmiths would go out, and of course the strikers couldn't work. They'd be idle while the blacksmiths were out on hour. The blacksmiths would come back and the strikers would go out. Even though the strikers in the main would be members of the ARU (the Australian Railways Union), but the CRU overall was a pretty militant organisation, there'd be discussions and Fred would come up for re-election every three years, on how we should organise it and make sure that Fred was re-elected, because he was such a good Organiser.

ROSS: Was that a bit of a battle to get him re-elected, like, was there was a bit of opposition to him?

KEVIN: It was, because the NCC was very active at that time, and they were standing, at one particular election they were standing one against him, and of course, as you know, the media comes into it and they actually decided that they'd be the one to be elected. It was round about that time, too, that that big strike at Mt Isa Mines was on, with Pat Mackie. Well, of course, naturally the Communist Party and that was in support of the strike at Mt Isa, and the Organiser – we did what we could do in that regard. I know I was working at the Plane Creek Sugar mill at the time when that was on, and the AWU Delegate there, there were lists, financial lists, going down, the Delegate there would take a list round that you could contribute to.

I used to deliver the *Guardian*. There were so many, four of us, some working in the mill, some in other little industries around Sarina, and I contacted them and I went to work there, and I used to deliver the *Guardian* to them every week. Brisbane sent up the *Guardians* to the Railway Station at Sarina, I'd collect it for them from the Railway Station, and then I'd deliver them to the fellows. One fellow had the local tyre place there, sold tyres and so forth. There was another fellow that worked in the Post Office at Sarina, and a couple worked in the sugar mill.

We used to have Lawrie Crofton, who was the engine-driver who lived in Mackay. He worked in the Railway, of course, being an engine-driver. Him and his wife, they were very strong stalwarts of the party. It wasn't, numerically, it wasn't real strong in Mackay, not to the same extent that Townsville was, and also the Party, particularly in Townsville, used to have classes. We'd meet in classes, and discuss material, Communists, Economics and so forth, and all things to do with, how the politics of the day and so forth operated, and financially and so forth, the difference between Capitalism and Socialism. Well, Socialism was the step towards Communism, and that was the aim, anyhow.

ROSS: And did most members go along to those classes, or was it only some of them – was it stipulated that if you were in the Party you had to go to some of those classes?

KEVIN: Well, like, classes, they'd be held within the branch, in areas within that branch, some were living in the suburb of Wulguru in Townsville, in a Housing Commission place there. It wasn't strictly to Party members, but those who were more or less close to the Party. In Wulguru we'd meet at different persons' places – might only be half a dozen of us – on, value, price and profit, and how the system worked, how Capitalism worked and so forth.

ROSS: So even within that Railways Branch of the Party, you would have people in that Branch in different suburbs around Townsville who'd be running their own Party Branch.

KEVIN: Yes, classes and so forth.

ROSS: And you'd ask some of the workers who might not be in the Party but who were sympathetic, you'd ask them along to those classes?

KEVIN: That's right, for various reasons they didn't join the Party.

ROSS: And how often would you have those classes?

KEVIN: Once a month, something. So that's the big difference, as I said, times were different then. You had all these militant unions and of course the situation changed over the years. The wharf's not the strong place it used to be, not numerically or otherwise; the Railway, it's all different.

ROSS: And what about working in the workplace with ALP Members and DLP Groups, like, what was the sort of way you used to work with them in the work places?

KEVIN: Well, I suppose to a big extent to sort of counter the leaflets and that that they used to put out and so forth, well, we used to print *The Red Express*, and I'd deliver them through the work day. I'd be running round the blacksmiths' shop, and the fitting shop, the other shops that made up the Railway Workshops, making sure I didn't get caught, because once you got caught delivering Communist literature, or any political literature which wasn't supposed to be distributed – this was in working hours, delivering *The Red Express* and the *Express*.

I might contribute an article to it and others an article.

ROSS: So did anyone get caught distributing?

KEVIN: Well before my time, George Portagedcap did. He was working the Railway Workshops and he got caught.

ROSS: What happened to him?

KEVIN: They sacked him.

ROSS: So *The Red Express* was mainly countering the DLP line, or would it also be countering what the ALP was saying, because that would have been when the Gair Government was in?

KEVIN: Yes, if it was necessary to have an article countering the ALP, well, that could be in there, but the NCC, which was the arm of the DLP, that was the main, I suppose you could say at the time – you used to try and work as closely as you could with the ALP or the militant ones in the ALP to get common cause, really, in the campaigns and so forth.

ROSS: Was it complicated working with the NCC, because some of them would have been very militant as workers, even though they were very anti-Communist?

KEVIN: Well, not really as far as – oh, well, you'd work alongside them, like you had to, but at the same time there was always that friction there between the two organisations, of course – totally opposed to the politics of the two.

ROSS: And what about activities, like, political activity outside of work, like, the Peace Movement or the other sort of activities? Were you involved in any of that?

KEVIN: Probably about three years after we come up there. The Labor Government had this Housing Commission development at Wulguru. Well, then, a lot of Railway workers took up homes out there in this housing development. We organised and got a Progress

Association going, and it was mainly, once again, mainly made up of *myself, as a member of the Communist Party, Les Lewis (who couldn't make it on Sunday)*. He was there.

We were the ones that held these meetings, but we also more or less got this Progress Association going, and Tom Aitkens was the local Member here at that particular time – Independent, he was – well, we more or less through our work and so forth, we got a school established at Wulguru, as well as organised to get street lighting. It was a new suburb. The roads were only dirt, gravel and so forth. We got them bituminised and so forth, things that the new suburb needed.

Well, Communists were encouraged to participate in those sorts of things that were going to lead to the benefit of people generally, to the working people, and that happened. The Communist Party, all the combined branches, there was a fair that they used to run every year and so forth. We'd all help make things and so forth, for sale at this (?)Tribune Fair, which was quite a big money-spinner for the Party. All those things were going on all the time.

ROSS: So can you tell me a bit more about that Progress Association? How did you build that up?

KEVIN: Well, we'd go around all the houses and that, and find out, talk to people, what their needs were, so forth and so on, things like that. As I say, we'd be organising.

ROSS: So you'd find out from people what the issues were that they thought were important?

KEVIN: Yes.

ROSS: And you must have needed to actually attract people to be involved in the Progress Association, too?

KEVIN: Yes, but it wasn't a thing that, it was mainly probably only about eight of us that really met regularly, that made up the Association. Of course, word got around, and as I say, we had these days when we'd go around talking to the people to find out, talk to them, let them know that we were from the Progress Association and---

ROSS: Yes, okay. That's probably pretty good. Maybe, can you talk a little bit about your overall philosophy that you would have had as a member of the Party, in terms of working with the people? What did you see as the way to work with people?

KEVIN: Well, I suppose, at all times you had the, on the job and that obviously it was known that you were a member of the Communist Party. You didn't shy away from that, and they could see that you were in there fighting to improve the work conditions, the rates of pay and so forth. Mass meetings were held. We'd march from the workshop down to the hall where the mass meeting was going to be held, and it would be known members of the Communist Party had been doing all of the organising on the job, and they might not have agree with you being a Communist, but they could see who the workers were, who were the ones who were prepared to go out and do the organising battle and, in lots of cases, put their jobs on the line to make life better for workers.

Of course, I suppose to some extent it was after the War years, and the part the Soviet Union played in the War was still in the minds of a lot of people, and so in some ways it was

probably a little bit easier to be a Communist operating in society in those times than it probably would be today. Just being yourself, be honest with them, and be prepared to do the work.

ROSS: What about the future of Communism?

KEVIN: Well, I don't know what the future is there for Communism, I'm afraid. Like, you can look at China, I have a lot of respect for China but, even though you've got a Communist Government there, it's still only a form of Socialism and their idea, their form of Socialism worries me a bit, too, because they've encouraged a lot of, like Coca-Cola and all those sorts of industries into their Society. I don't altogether agree with that. Probably the Communism or Socialism that exists today, it's probably totally different to what Marx and Lenin and that wrote about how it was going to be.

ROSS: What do you think all the future of these movements, like the Occupy Movement and, the Anti-Globalisation Process and so on, do you think that's going to lead to something positive in the future?

KEVIN: I don't know, and I suppose at my age – 5th May, I'll be 84 – you try and you're probably not prepared, or the situation wouldn't be that you could, anyhow, get involved too much. You just see that, well, you did what you could, and as I said, that was a big thing when the Soviet Union that you looked up to – my Dad did, he used to write to all those countries, get literature and that from them, and distribute it on his pushbike around Maryborough and that, and that all happened. That was pretty devastating. I suppose to some extent you sort of thought, well, you couldn't see a light at the end of the tunnel more or less.

Well, a lot was expected of you from the Party generally, of Party members, and to some big extent, Communists sacrificed their families to a lot, too. That's what I had discussions with the brother about the ALP, that all the divisions that happened within the ALP, which sort of defeats them as a Party and gives the media so much ammunition to use against it.

Communists had a goal to try and overturn Capitalism, which we considered, still consider, at least Socialism – and there is a difference between Socialism and Communism. They don't have that goal in the Labor Party. They started off, when the Labor Party was first formed, that was to be one of their goals, to overturn Capitalism and replace it with a Socialist system but, it hasn't happened. They've watered it down, and you get so many opportunists who just see it as a stepping stone to get into Parliament and feather their own nests and all that.

ROSS: Yes. Just going back to when you joined the Party, it was a big decision to join then because of what was expected of you as a Party Member?

KEVIN: Yes.

ROSS: You knew that you'd be putting your work at risk because----

KEVIN: Yes, which I did. When I wanted to come, when they got rid of me at North Eton Sugar mill under the excuse that they were going to shut the blacksmiths' shop down, there was nothing much. I might apply for other jobs around the mills in Mackay, I wouldn't get the job though I thought I had the experience and so forth. Well, even though they didn't say it, you

thought, well, that was because of what I was. They thought I would be stirring up trouble and so forth.

We'd rented our house. The only alternative was to come back to Townsville where we had a house, and that's when it came out that I wouldn't get re-employed in the Railway.

ROSS: And that's when you came back and got the job in the City Council, did you?

KEVIN: Yes, and I mainly got that job because the brother, who was also a blacksmith, he'd changed over to boiler-making, and he was working at boiler-making in the Council workshops at the time, and the foreman in the boiler-makers shop, he was a particularly good sort of a fellow, pretty militant minded, and that's what got me the job, more or less.

ROSS: During that period when you were in the Council, were you sort of involved in political activity amongst your workmates there, or was that more difficult?

KEVIN: Yes, I was the Delegate there, one period, and sort of as a Delegate, a Union Delegate or Organiser, I run some of the campaigns about getting the workplace----

ROSS: Were there many Party Members who were working in the Council?

KEVIN: I would have been the only one, and they knew I was a member of the Communist Party.

ROSS: So did it make it difficult for you to organise things because of that?

KEVIN: No, I clashed with the engineer and that at the time, you know, over things, but a funny thing, though, when he retired – he has since died – he retired and I'm retired, and we'd meet up, and he'd be really friendly, you know. It's a lot up to how you conducted yourself, you know.

(End of Recording)