

ORAL HISTORY – QUEENSLAND COMMUNIST PARTY

TRANSCRIBED RECORD OF INTERVIEW WITH WALLY STUBBINGS

Date: 10th April & 18th December 2013

Interviewer: Ross Gwyther

[This transcript has been slightly modified by the interviewee to add explanatory notes when necessary. These notes or words are in "italics". Note also that the first part of this interview was conducted during a Brisbane thunderstorm, resulting in the background sound of heavy rain! Some unavoidable activity in the retirement village where Wally resided is also evident]

ROSS: Maybe if we just started off by talking about the sort of philosophy that you worked with when you'd become an active member in the Communist Party and you were working in the Union and so on, the sort of philosophy you had in your political work?

WALLY: Yes. Well, I first read a book by an Archbishop in England, *The Red Dean*. It raises the question of a complete answer to the capitalist system, and I accepted that wholly, and didn't question the rights or wrongs of it, and that continued for many years, I suppose. I made an error, and the Party did, seeing the solution to these problems as completely eliminated. *[That attitude was linked to the Soviet model based on an agrarian philosophy]*. I thought that was the driving force, and in later years I realised that philosophically it was an error to think that we could provide a solution overnight, you see.

It's a solution which would take millions of years, I suppose, and that was, I had to change my attitude and therefore my approach to problems, and I found that I was miles ahead, you know, expecting too much of the workers and at one time I looked like being expelled from the party by questioning the Party line that workers were the truly revolutionary force in a capitalist society. I suggested that the workers would change with the changed conditions, and they were no longer the driving force.

Instead of that, I suggested we take all those organisations and theories to a force that could be mobilised. *[But unfortunately the Party leadership failed to grasp the significance of this approach]*. Jack Mundy illustrated that *[approach]*. He was able to forge a unity between the diverse people and the Communist people, and their ability to *[work together]*. Their immediate aims were to save The Rocks in Sydney, and therefore they were able to achieve unity between that sort of diverse people and organisations, and that was in my opinion the way forward. But fortunately, *[I was not expelled]* and I continued to fight for the unity on diverse aims, and that in my opinion will achieve the desire that we want, but it'll take time – and I haven't got much time.

ROSS: So would it be right to say you came to the philosophy that you not only had to work in the working class organisations, but you had to build with other sections of society, too?

WALLY: Yes. It proved to me that the real leaders of the Communist Movement were the likes of Jimmy Healy, and he tried to build an organisation, the Waterside Workers, and tackle social questions, you know, outside. I don't know whether anyone fully appreciates the fact that the Waterside Workers under the leadership of Jimmy Healy participated in all sorts of activities. They had a Film Unit and they drew in the wives of the wharfies to the struggle, and you know, it wasn't fully appreciated for numbers of reasons, but finally it was going ahead in the thinking of most of the work.

ROSS: So how did that – did you experience that in your own work in the waterfront?

WALLY: Yes.

ROSS: You actually built activity around a broader range of issues?

WALLY: Yes.

ROSS: Can you tell me a bit about your own experience there?

WALLY: I was a foundation Member of the Aboriginal Movement, and this was in the time when the Aboriginal people weren't represented, and at the time when the Aboriginal Movement consisted of two rivers [*two streams - the government approach and the church & "do-gooder" approach*] and so much of the Government's declared policy was the elimination of the Aboriginal people by breeding them out and absorbing them into our our society. We had a [*another member, Aboriginal activist*] – Kath Walker was very active. I worked very early on the waterfront with her husband, Ray, [*also an activist. He worked in my gang*]. and therefore I used to pick him up from his home, you see, and I got talking with Kath and she was a bright, articulate person, and I took up the cause of the Aboriginal people, and without any Aboriginals, we had an Annual Meeting with the do-gooders, you know, the church people and so on. They had decided that there was no need for it, because we were, Kath and I, challenged, the Government, you see, and that wasn't done.

ROSS: So they wanted to disband the organisation (*FCAATSI - The Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders*)?

WALLY: Yes. So at the Annual meeting it rounded up all sorts of people, but mostly of Catholic schools, and they paid their affiliation, which was five dollars. Then they properly nominated the Secretary and Treasurer from their own ranks. Then they put it to the meeting that it be disbanded. We recognised that the meeting was officially legal, and I got up and said all those people who were genuinely interested in the Aboriginal people, the plight of the people, would stay behind and then we elected the people who were the officials – and Kath was of course the Secretary, we put her in as Secretary – and this was sort of passive resistance.

ROSS: Was that the Federal Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders?

WALLY: Yes.

ROSS: FCATSI?

WALLY: Yes. Well, now of course the situation has changed dramatically for the Aboriginal people, and there came a question of how to involve the people in the Australian society. You know, their could be a richness of the Aboriginal culture, and we could be all for----

ROSS: So we should be letting people in the broader community know how rich the Aboriginal culture is?

WALLY: Yes. I used to have a friend of mine, [*Joe McGinnis*], an Aboriginal friend who lived in Cairns, and he used to come down to meetings in Brisbane, and I learnt a lot from him, you know, little things. I was young and full of beans. I was cross-questioning him when I picked

him up at the airport, and obviously under further consideration it was just not the Aboriginal way. See, you talk about little things, and you move to the bigger things. On this occasion I picked him up and he stayed with me, and I picked him up and I didn't say a word.

Finally, he chuckled – you know, he was a great big man – he chuckled down in his throat, and he said you've learnt that the Aboriginal people do resent face to face, and he said he did know an Australian society – see, he was a wharfie, one would assume Aboriginals and he still seems to be influenced by the Aboriginal attitude towards dissemination of information. That in itself warned me that I've got to consider what the background of the person you're talking to is, and it's obvious to me that you begin talking about the things you agree upon, and then you build a platform for discussion, the main issue which you disagree on. That was a lesson I learned from an Aboriginal friend.

ROSS: So that's, you're seeing that as a lesson that has really much broader application in any of your political work?

WALLY: Yes, that's right. Well, that was the first – I think my parents, particularly my father, instilled in me the importance of, they laid the basis for free thinking, I think, and what good ideas I've had are attributable to my upbringing, and my brothers and sister. They have thought the same as me. They weren't as keen as I was.

ROSS: You were also very keen on reading, you said?

WALLY: Yes. I had an operation for appendicitis when I was 11 years old, and I had a burst appendix, and I had to wait on a train, you know, for eight hours, and all the poison was slowly flooding through my system. My cousin was a doctor at Queenstown, and I was living at Strahan, and the train had, I have told this before, and my condition was very low, and I defeated all the doctors cognisance, and I failed to die, but I had three operations – first of all to remove the appendix; and then I had an abscess on the wall of the stomach and I refused to die; and then I had an operation on my chest, and the only way at that time was to remove a portion of the lymph, and get at the lungs.

I used to have, I was always a reader, and I was six months in the hospital and three months home convalescing, and I read everything that, you know, I'd read cowboy books if they were available, and I think that love of books helped me quite a bit.

ROSS: You mentioned in your biography about your father's attitude to conscription. Was that a topic of discussion amongst people in that period when you were growing up?

WALLY: Yes, well, it culminated in our next-door neighbour. He was about my father's age. They argued about the conscription, whether it was a good thing or a bad thing, and they finished up fighting with their fists, you know. I don't know whether my father won the fight, but conscription was defeated on a referendum.

ROSS: You'd also mentioned, just talking about reading, that the headmaster of your school had quite a big influence on you? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

WALLY: Well, he was a small man, and he was the exact opposite to what my aims would be. You know, he was a spidery-built, and he didn't - and finally he picked up a football, and he looked at, you know, the football across-ways, and he kicked it about as far as the armchair, and we were, all the boys, giggling at his accuracy – but he was a very good

person, and he was also opposed to conscription. He taught us a lot about tolerance, see, and it's a bit hazy now, but in many ways he taught us about tolerance.

By the way, his wife was the exact opposite to him. She was a person who was uneducated and she at that time in the 1920s or earlier, but in the 1920s, see, women all had bobbed hair, see, and that was – when she would discuss things with her next-door neighbour, she would say, 'I have to get a hat to fit you when you've got your hair cut.' McPhial, his name was, and I thought he was choosing the wrong girl when he married her.

ROSS: Just also talking about influences on you in the early days, you talk about when you were first married, you came across a Methodist Minister, Colin Macrae? Can you tell me a little bit about his influence on you?

WALLY: Well, he was a breath of fresh air for me. He was a modern, and sense in the period, and an entirely nice man. We, my girlfriend and I, were in a spot of bother. She was pregnant, and we thought that he was the most likely person that could advise us. He married us secretly, and I was [*impressed with this*].

ROSS: Because had books about social issues and so on, and about Socialism?

WALLY: Yes, well, he was at Strahan for quite a while, a couple of years, and when we moved to Hobart I ran into him one day, and he was living not far from us. He expressed what the workers were thinking about the war and---

ROSS: This was – this was leading up to the Second World War?

WALLY: Yes; and he told me his wife was an expert and he gave me a book to read, *Socialist Sixth of the World*, then I preyed on his library, and he convinced me that Socialism was the answer. I don't know whether he carried on with that.

ROSS: And maybe we could talk about when you first got involved in the waterfront unions and working on the wharves – that was in Hobart, wasn't it?

WALLY: Yes. I lived at Strahan on the West Coast of Tasmania, and it was a little port, you know, they shipped the copper from mines in Queenstown, and everybody was a member of the Waterside Workers. You know, the ship would come, a small ship [*about 1200 tones*].---

ROSS: This is the Waterside Workers at Strahan who'd be unloading the ship?

WALLY: Yes. Well, there was a family orientated situation there when the union took over, rather, the family took over the Waterside Workers Federation, and it was the days of the "open pick". All the plum jobs would go over to the family, the Secretary and the President and so forth, and my father-in-law was a good thinker. He was a great, big man, and he wanted to run a ticket to oppose this family Union, and he wanted me as Secretary and my brother as President. We were full of youthful exuberance. We knocked it back - I always regretted that, you know, because I authority breeds contempt. We were more interested in football and so forth, you see, but I appreciate my father-in-law, because he could see the changes that were taking place in the waterfront, and they did in spite of the family domination, they did change.

ROSS: So he was a wharfie, too, in Strahan?

WALLY: Yes.

ROSS: And so did he have sort of influence on Ada in terms of her politics and her attitudes, too?

WALLY: Yes. Reluctantly, Ada was influenced by me, you see. She was involved, but mostly at my urging, see.

ROSS: So you're saying reluctantly, she----

WALLY: Yes. In the Waterside Workers, one of the things that they did develop was a Women's Committee, strikes and so forth, and I suggested that she go along.

ROSS: She didn't want to?

WALLY: Yes. In the end I persisted, and she went along. She finished up the Treasurer of the Women's Committee, and she was there ten years, I suppose.

ROSS: Would this have been in Hobart or in Strahan?

WALLY: In Brisbane.

ROSS: Okay. Can we go back a bit, maybe, to when you moved to Brisbane, because you moved from Hobart to Brisbane in 1943?

WALLY: Yes.

ROSS: That was during the War?

WALLY: Well, when I lived in Hobart, you know, (I got a bit ahead of myself), but when we worked out the Hobart road [*in 1935*] – what was it called? Stonehaven Creek. I worked, Jesus, I worked hard.

ROSS: This was on the wharves there?

WALLY: No, in timber. See, I was squaring timber for the mines, struts and so forth. I was making twelve and a half [*pounds*]. The basic wage was four pounds five, and I was then earning 12 pounds. Then my father committed suicide, and we decided we'd go back to Strahan [*from Mt Lyell*], and then we lived in Strahan for a couple of years, and my mother [*and sister Gladys*] opened a little tea-rooms, and they couldn't make a go of it, so we thought we'd take over the tea-rooms. We had saved 36 pounds, and we gave her that to see her through, and we worked for 12 months incredibly hard. I used to work in a saw-mill and wait on tables till midnight, and we decided that we would sell the tea-rooms and we, I think it was 250 pounds – I'm not sure of that – or 350. Well, [*the tea rooms could still*] be there.

ROSS: Yes.

WALLY: So---

ROSS: And you moved from there to Hobart, after you sold the tea-rooms?

WALLY: Yes. We moved to get away from her family, my wife's family, which was hard for her, but easy for me.

ROSS: And when you were in Hobart and you were working on the waterfront, can you tell me a bit about that bull system?

WALLY: Yes. Well, the right to transfer your membership was free, you know, you could join a port with 100 men, and you could transfer to Sydney, anywhere else, and I transferred from Strahan to Hobart. There I met Communists who appeared to me the most principled of all people, and I gladly accepted the ideas, but it was an open pick – the boss would stand up on the dais, and say you, and you, and you...---

ROSS: They'd point people out and pick them?

WALLY: Yes, and it was the same bull system as you had to work to give people the good bull.

ROSS: So he'd pick the biggest, strongest workers who could work fast?

WALLY: Yes, and then the situation was that you'd leave a pound note at the pub where the foreman drank. This was my first experience in that.

ROSS: And I think when you talked about that here, people would be given tags when they worked, and they'd throw some of those tags down on the ground?

WALLY: That's in Sydney. They'd throw the discs – see, you were given a disc which you presented to the time-keeper, and a hundred or so---

ROSS: So he'd pick the bull workers first, and when they'd picked some of them, then they'd throw the rest of the tags for people to scrabble after?

WALLY: Yes. Of course, you know, it was demeaning. I said to him, that book, that this was more than I could stand, you know, a form of merriment for the bosses, but it was demeaning.

ROSS: For your own dignity. How did the Communists who worked on the wharves, how did they deal with that sort of system?

WALLY: Well, in various ways. First of all, they introduced a roster system and when you went on the job you were called into the shed, you were placed in the hatches, the longest, hardest work, and they overcame that by a roster system, and then had a rotation of hatches, that is, the No. 1 would have No. 1 hatch. What they did was, the Union was determined to reach the ultimate in fairness, and you could see the boss's point of view, because he could get the hardest worker in the best hatches ----

ROSS: So the Communists would have been in some of the leadership of the union at some stage? How did they actually bring it to the point where the workers were willing – the workers must have gone on strike over this at some stage. How did they get to that point? Did you talk about it at lunch times and so on? I'm just interested in the actual----

WALLY: Yes, first of all they used the *Maritime Worker*, a paper, Union paper. Then they---

ROSS: So they would get some articles printed in the Union paper, talking about that system and how unfair it was?

WALLY: Yes, yes, and the reactions of the workers were diverse. You see, they wouldn't say openly that they preferred the bull system, but there was an undercurrent.

ROSS: So some of them preferred that, because if they were bigger and stronger, they always got work?

WALLY: Yes, or if they left a pound on the bar ----

ROSS: Yes, if they were willing to bribe them?

WALLY: Well, that was got rid of, and you know the Communists were outspoken and they set some fairness, but I parted company with an old member of the Communists in the leadership when containerisation came in. There was a movement which I instigated, and for the unity of the waterfront workers. You couldn't stop the containerisation, but the point is that we, the leadership split into each union, tried to get a number of jobs, an ever decreasing number of jobs, and I said that we should be calling on the farmers, the exporters, importers, and as a unified body. That was dismissed, and the result was the number of workers decreased and their earnings had gone up to buggery. So it was no longer a unified force.

ROSS: So you thought it would have been better for them to try to build unity amongst themselves, but also amongst the farmers and the people who were actually needing to use the wharves for their goods?

WALLY: Well, we intended to receive support from the farmers, and there was a movement with the Painters and Dockers and other people, Storeman and Packers, and there was a movement, again instigated by me, to present a united front, and this was at one period, we sent a team of wharfies out to various places to people. There was about ten pairs, and we talked about freight rates and so on.

ROSS: So you sent out pairs of wharfies – can you just explain that a bit more, what you did? You sent out a team of people to talk to other people in the community, is that what you mean?

WALLY: Yes. We took it very seriously in Brisbane, and other ports, too, and we were able to present a picture of a waterfront which would be in the interests of farmers and people like that, and people in country towns, and the wharfies were blamed for all of the ills of capitalism, and we set out to break down this hostility to the wharfies.

I went to the Ginger Factory at Maleny a while back, and there was a stoppage on the wharf 25 years ago, or longer than that, and they had, the Ginger Factory had the seeds of the ginger on a ship which we had black-balled. They came to us and they said, 'You know, it's life or death for us,' and we sent a gang down and unloaded the ginger seed, and they remembered us, yes.

ROSS: So they remembered when you went back to visit the factory years later?

WALLY: Yes. Well, I felt all along that the period in which the Waterside Workers and the Miners and the Seamen were active was the illustration of the power of the workers to realise that they are only pawns in a game.

ROSS: I think you came to Brisbane towards the end of the War – 1943 or so – and you joined the Communist Party about that time, and I'd just like to explore a bit what actually led you to making the decision to join the Party, and what were your sort of aims?

WALLY: At that time, it was a friendly atmosphere internationally. Uncle Joe [*Stalin*] was going and I found from my experience there were people in the industry as well as him, who were Communists, and they seemed to me to be way ahead of the normal worker in understanding. I think that was the main thing, and their organisation was good, and I heard rumours of their struggle, and I've never regretted [*being part of it*].

ROSS: Did their ideals for a better society, was that part of your motivation, too?

WALLY: Well, I read a book by Hewlett Johnson, the Dean, *The Red Dean*, and he outlined the top level of the social system, and it seemed to me it's pretty accurate, but it wasn't completely accurate, as I found that there were forces within the Socialist Movement which didn't meet with my approval, and I was a union official, and I became, well, I accepted the responsibilities of a Party member and its full, you know, and I imagined that it was a complete answer to the capitalist system. I've since in thinking about it, and I realised that it's not a perfect solution to the problems of capitalism, and there are various ways, you know, the Soviet Union and China [*and Cuba*] have illustrated that there's a difference in opinion.

ROSS: Just talking about books that you read, you read Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, and that had quite a big impact on you? Could you tell me a bit about what impact that had on you when you read it?

WALLY: It seemed to me that it was commonsense, the origin of man was linked with the origin of all species, and they just took a different road to survival. When man began to reason, he made reasons why the system changes, and I accepted the ideas of constant change, and that led me to investigate whether the time, the revolutionary time, was quite different to evolutionary time, see, and every revolutionary change required a new philosophy. That's where the industrial revolution took place and intensified the drive to make profit and power, and that's the [*issue*]. I think that I've read a lot about changes and scientists pin-pointed the changes taking place but – and some civilisations reached a point - that was the time that we should have introduced a new philosophy, but we didn't.

ROSS: Well, look, just getting back to that period when you joined the Party, when you were working on the wharves in Brisbane, you were also quite involved in the Progress Association in the neighbourhood at that time? Can you tell me a bit about what that involved and how you saw your work as a member of the Communist Party in that local Progress Association?

WALLY: It was a new experience for me. For all the residents there at Moorooka, they [*Commonwealth Department of the Interior*] built a number of temporary homes [*for residents involved in the war effort*], but they mis-calculated the [*end of the*] war, and the

Japanese were driven back and they made it, opened it up to people who had heaps of kids and living in tents. I was a member of the eligible group.

The second in charge was a Communist, Charlie Sero, and Charlie said to me, 'You could put your name down, but you've no hope of getting a house,' and he went on holidays. Then I got a letter to come in to the Adelaide Street office, and there was a stern faced, middle-aged woman in charge and she said, 'Name and address,' and so forth. I was living in the Commonwealth housing estate, and she said, 'How many children have you got?' I said, 'One,' and she said, 'Where does he go to school?' and I said, 'Nudgee Junior,' and I've told the story many times, that her face brightened up, and she said, 'Oh, Mr Stubbings, we'll hear from you,' and so on.

The next thing I knew, I got a letter from the Department, and I had been allocated No. 1 Gratwick Street, and Charlie came back from holidays, and he said, 'How the bloody hell did you get a place like that?' He said, 'You had no right to priority,' and I said I'd answered all her questions, and he said, 'Oh, the person in charge, the person who relieved me, was a Catholic and she's surrounded my No. 1 Gratwick Street with Catholics.'

But I made friends with all of them, and they disregarded the fact that I was a Communist.

ROSS: And how did that lead into the Progress Association, then?

WALLY: Well, that was an initiative of the Communists. It was felt that we could look after the interests of the group, and there were 200 homes, you know, families, and I became Secretary of the Progress Association. We conducted a simple strike. We withheld payments of the rents, in an endeavour to get cheaper rents, but I think from memory, I think it was 35 [*pounds per week. Actually we were successful in stopping a rise in rents*].

ROSS: Did you succeed? Did they actually reduce the rents?

WALLY: Yes, and we had a Government delegation from the meeting in my place, and it was so big we had to move into the yard.

ROSS: Just moving forward a little bit, in 1948 when the rail strike was on, I've read how you have talked about your involvement in that strike and how you saw that as a context for how the ruling class was trying to destroy all the Left unity that had been built up then. Can you tell me – and I think you were involved in the Communist Party work at the time – can you tell me how you saw that process happening and--

WALLY: Well, it was a learning curve for me, and of course I didn't realise the enormous power that the State held, and ruthless power – you know, when they set out to kill Fred Patterson, [*the Communist Member of Parliament*], there's no doubt in my mind that there was intention to kill him.

ROSS: So he wasn't just bashed as part of a bashing of a number of different unionists? You think they actually targeted him to try and kill him?

WALLY: Yes. He wasn't in the march itself. He was an on-looker and he was targeted. In fact, they remained - the bloke who hit him, a Superintendent of Police, and it was a terrible thing.

ROSS: Because of course you were bashed in that same time, weren't you? Can you tell me about that?

WALLY: [It was a Wednesday, St. Patrick's Day] and I went to a meeting in to the Trades Hall, and they decided that they would march down to the City Hall and of course I was in it, and I was carrying, along with three other blokes, I was carrying a coffin, "Death of Trade Unions." I finished up, they rushed out from the hotel and bashed the coffin to pieces. It was wood, inch by inch hardwood, and they bashed it, and I finished up with a bit of hardwood about as long---

ROSS: About a foot long, or so?

WALLY: Yes, and I was faced with a copper, and he was big – and he bashed my hands, see, with a truncheon, and I was, silly me, I did it, I hung onto the bloody thing, inch by inch, and he laboured my hands, bruised my hands, and so I let fly, and kicked him in the balls. I didn't say that to everybody, you know, the crowd leaving the do, but I was desperate, you know. Next thing I knew, I was truncheoned from behind and hit behind the head and shoulders, and I went down and they kicked me. I'll never forget that. That was a turning point in the strike which the wharfies supported.

That was on a Wednesday, and on the Friday it was decided that we would march down to the Wharfies. Jim Healy was present, and he led the group down, from the stopwork meeting to the Parliament House, and I'll never forget it. My Communist mates – Bob Miles, have you heard of him? [*Bob was a fitter and turner at the shipyards. He was bashed and jailed as well*]. Bob, he went in appreciation of the mass of ..– there were 2,000 wharfies, and they marched as one man. He cried with emotion, it was the turning point, in my opinion, of the strike.

ROSS: Moving on from that, I think in 1949, did you take on a role as an organiser with the Party?

WALLY: Yes.

ROSS: Can you tell me a little bit about that, in the sense of how did you work, how did you operate with the other Party members, and how did you operate with the workers that you were with?

WALLY: Well, I was an Organiser for the Communist Party in the 1949 election, and I was drafted to Rockhampton. I conducted a campaign there, and it was quite an experience we had. I felt the tide was against us, but of course the Catholic Church was organised, and they threw all sorts of vegetables at us. We had a street meeting and I wanted it to encompass the issuing of that permit to meet, to conduct the meeting.

I soon realised that it was a trap. You know, there were thousands there, and all organised by the Catholic Church, but we had a few loyal Communists there – very few, they were the dyed-in-the-wool Communists – and we had Bert Fields - he was the State Secretary of the Meatworkers Union. He was the candidate, and Max Julius [*the Communist barrister from Brisbane*], and Max was at the previous meeting when they threw all the vegetables at us as well..

We then applied for permission to address the meatworkers. That was refused, and we decided to go to the Fitzroy River. It was on the banks, the meatworks, and we cast around

and found that a Party member had a rowing boat, and I was the only one who could row a boat, and I took off. We were three of us in the boat, and with a loudspeaker. Bert was going to address the people, the meatworkers, and the meatworkers were all out on strike, they had downed tools, not to support us - but to throwing things at us.

We rowed in to the bank, and the people kept throwing stones at us, and I was very well aware of the frailty of our ship, and I rowed back into the middle of the river, where Bert took up his microphone and addressed the workers, but when I got back I was minus the skin off my nose.

ROSS: So there wasn't much support for the Communists amongst the meatworkers?

WALLY: No, there wasn't, and I feel that we'd over estimated the support we had

ROSS: Yes. You have talked about, well, particularly the wharfies and the seamen were seen as the conscience of the nation because they took up political causes and so on? That would have been partly because of the influence of the Communist Party members who were working with you. Can you tell me a little bit about how that came about? Like, in your experience, how did you interact with the ordinary wharfies that you worked with, who weren't in the Communist Party? You must have had some influence on their thinking?

WALLY: I've always had respect for the ordinary wharfie, as they always had respect for me – strong as, you know, when I felt uncertain I never revealed it.

ROSS: I'm just trying to explore how you, just in your experience, how you as a member of the Communist Party, how did you interact with your fellow workers on the wharves around all these political questions and so on?

WALLY: Yes. Well, they changed quite a bit, but they looked for an easy way to achieve what I thought was a great [*step forward*].

ROSS: The last thing I really wanted to talk to you about was the sort of philosophy that you developed over your life in terms of how you did political work with people. What sort of philosophy have you come to that you think is most important for someone who's got that sort of Communist perspective on changing the world and so on?

WALLY: Well, I think that the main thing is I'm more tolerant, better able to appreciate a different point of view, and that I never lock my door, and people who carefully lock their door [*indicating that they have little faith in their fellow man*] – I never lock mine, and I never over the years lost a thing. I think that you have to see that people are trustworthy, and that you find that you trust yourself. I've learnt a lot from the class program [*in a "life skills" course I have undertaken*]. When I first went to class to better myself, and solve my problems, I found that if you give confidence to the people, you will restore your confidence in yourself, and I think that's the best contribution that I've made to that class, that I have the ability to speak out on the events life has thrown up, you know.

I've developed a theory that no matter how trivial it might be, that if it's against the system of capitalism, you give them your support. I think Jack Mundy in Sydney had that. He was the State Secretary of the Builders' Labourers, and he joined with the classy Potts Point group, and there he found that opposition to a development of high-rise buildings---

ROSS: In The Rocks?

WALLY: Yes, it wasn't in the interests of the people. I have a bit of theory – I don't know whether I've spoken to you about it, but I think that mankind has lost the plot, and that time is measured by evolution (gradual), and revolution, and every revolutionary change in my opinion, after reading Darwin's book, every change, revolutionary change, requires a revolutionary aspect of philosophy [*that is a revolutionary change in philosophy as well*], and I think that is proved by the scientists on television and otherwise, they're proving that civilisations existed long before God and every civilisation is primal and has gone out of existence – and I think that we, mankind, have tried to change the method of production and so on, but didn't change the philosophy. I think my opinion is the effect of misunderstanding the difference in revolutionary change and evolutionary change.

ROSS: So you think we haven't yet caught up with the changes that we've seen in the methods of major production? We haven't changed our philosophy to take it into account?

WALLY: Yes.

ROSS: Well, I guess in a sense that's what people who were acting as part of the Communist Movement were attempting to do, weren't they? They were attempting to try and develop a different sort of philosophy that's based on people treating each other fairly and so on?

WALLY: Yes, but there's elements of getting hat you can out of the system, very strong. You see, the wharfies, I don't want to denigrate the role of wharfies but they're no longer a force to be reckoned with. They conduct their struggles in a different way, you see, and since the 1950s - 40s - '60s the miners, the wharfies, the seamen, they were determined that they would have an influence – it's a lesson we learned from Mandela. He was a far-sighted person. He could see that the capitalist system wasn't able to cope with problems of convolution, but he lived his life accordingly. That's too much to expect the present leaders to do.

ROSS: Beattie, did you say?

WALLY: Beattie, yes, he developed the idea of the Smart State, beginning with his activities, and rather than the Smart State, we should be looking to the Wise State.

(End of Recording)