

ORAL HISTORY – QUEENSLAND COMMUNIST PARTY

TRANSCRIBED RECORD OF INTERVIEW WITH WARREN KEATS

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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"]

WARREN: Well, a lot of the modern-day pundits dismiss Karl Marx as his philosophy not being correct in lots of ways, but I don't, because I look back on it and realise that Marx analysed Capitalism, which was in its early stage as well, for only one-third of the life of Capitalism, which has continually developed. It's a very resilient system *but* his summaries of most things turned out very accurate.

Now, for instance, he says that the Capitalists will be their own grave-diggers. Well, you see that happening every day, particularly in the leading industrialised Capitalist countries. We see how the pundits from the Right thought, oh, well, the market will dictate how everything goes, and they let them have a free rein. We saw how they went with the free rein; they ended up creating the greatest Recession since the Great Depression in the 1930s, all led by the banks in America and in Europe.

To resurrect themselves they had to nationalise the insurance companies in America. The Government had to take them over, the two big housing insurance companies, and the big Bank in England had to be taken over, and the other banks had to be supported, too, which shows you that the market system cannot regulate itself. It's like having a big highway and no road rules, just letting the biggest truck go down *it*, and we'd all know what would happen.

Marx's summation has taken time, and Capitalism has been very resilient, and they've spent, the Capitalists themselves have spent untold billions on the defeat of Marxism externally, and internally it was sabotaged mainly by bloody people such as Stalin and others that usurped power and got right away from what Marx and Lenin had laid down. Even Lenin in his dying days said, 'Don't put Stalin there, whatever you do,' you know.

Anyway, we could see now that the whole World system is running out of steam. The situation in Europe is very parlous. Countries like Greece, Spain and Portugal, Ireland, have got massive unemployment. In America the unemployment is much higher than they say it is. They've got 464 billionaires and the thousands of multi-millionaires, but on the other end of the spectrum they've got the millions of people living under the poverty line and sleeping under bridges and Christ knows *where*, and the working poor who are only paid subsistence wages.

The human beings are a generational thing. It takes us all our lives to come up with a philosophy that we expound at the end of our lives. Then we fall off the tree, and the next generation comes up. We're the product of our experiences and learning, and the people we meet in our lives, they start from tors again and they've got to be taught *all over again*.

See, it's what's acquired from the social aspect during your life that teaches you. I started off as a Roman Catholic believer, Mass every Sunday and Christ knows what, but when I went away to sea, when I was a young boy of 16, I started to mix with – it was during the Second World War, right at the end of the Second World War, 1944 – I was starting to hear the soldiers talking, and the soldiers were all of course in the '20s and that, but they'd suffered badly in the Depression, and they were much more politically aware.

I heard them talking many a time, and I used to listen to what they were saying, and I'd say, 'Yeah, that's right. That doesn't seem to add up,' and gradually I just gave it away. I never went back. Never went to Mass ever again.

Then of course later I got a job on the Sydney waterfront, and there I met Communist Party people who were very militant, leaders on the waterfront, and their policies always impressed me because they were always fair dinkum. They didn't seem to want to make money out of anything, and they seemed to do it, their whole efforts were to help others, and so that impinged on me very strongly. So eventually I joined the Communist Party and my brother had joined, and he asked me to join.

ROSS: So what year was that when you joined?

WARREN: It was 1950 – I'd been to England, got married, and I came back and joined in 1951, '50 or '51.

ROSS: Just getting back to the sort of influences that you had then, was the fact that you'd been a seaman working on ships and travelling around the world a bit, did that have some influence on you?

WARREN: I was only a young man. I was only 16 when I went to sea and I was 20 when I got married. I had to get permission to get married from my father, because 21 was the age in those days, but I'd been mixing with young adult men, very experienced in a war situation where their lives were on the line, and they didn't buggerise around and talk a lot of shit. I'd grown up very quickly and I was much more mature politically and every other way when I was 20 years of age than anybody else [*of that age*] would have been.

So in our trips away I joined – with the Dutch, I was a cadet officer with the Dutch during the War, and then after the War I joined a ship called "Straat Sunder", and the Dutch were opening up the new shipping line that ran from Shanghai in China through the East Indies to South Africa, and across the South Atlantic to Buenos Aires and up the South American coast to Rio, and then back again that way. So I'd done a couple of trips on that, and I'd see the – it was just after the War, 1946– and we went to Shanghai and the Civil War was raging about 100 miles away, north of Shanghai, but the people were absolutely destitute and were walking around in rags.

When we went ashore to have a look at what was going on, big crowds would start to follow you – quite unnerving. You'd get about from here to the fridge away from them, and we'd stop. I went with a few of the Indonesian Petty Officers and things, with the Dutch at the time, and I, being stupid and brash, turned around at them and yelled, 'Go away!' and they said, 'Oh, no, don't do that,' you know. The bloody crowd could have tore us to pieces.

Anyway, when I started to think about it, I thought, well, gee, those poor buggers had been through the War, and Singapore in those days was just a cesspot where the ship was

anchored off it. They'd had three years of Japanese occupation and of a night the stench that would come off the open drains, they were terrible. People were poor, and it started to impinge on me.

Then we went of course to South America and Peron, the dictator, was in power there, and I was getting quite politically aware of things. What's going on here? Then back to South Africa, which was on the verge of Apartheid in those days. In 1948 the law was voted in, and this was 1946/47, and even before that the prisoners used to do all the digging of the sewerage drains and all that. There would be blokes standing over them with a rifle and, then we went to that dance. I think I explained that in that book, and how those girls were terribly embarrassed by these Boers getting up and saying, 'Oh, there's some coloured people here, or black people. They cannot come to this dance, this white place.'

We're looking round to see who these coloured *were* – because our girls, they were blondes and brown-eyed, you know. Then the penny dropped. They had a little smidgen of colour in them, see? We started there [*to protest*], it was just after Hitler had been defeated, and the terrible racism that existed with the Nazis, so we started yelling out, 'Oh, you bastards,' we said, 'What are you carrying on?' and then all these bloody big Boers – none of them are small; they're the biggest blokes you could ever see – they started to gang up around us, and we thought, 'Oh, shit, we'd better make a strategic withdrawal here.' There was only three of us. They'd have kicked us to death. So we left with the girls.

But that made a big impression on me. Then when we got back to Tanjung Priock, which is the port of – Jakarta, it's called nowadays, but in our days it was called Batavia, it's the port –the Dutch were in control and had come back to claim it. A State of Emergency was in existence, there had been resistance, and some military action on both sides was taking place.

I know that when you drove from Tanjung Priock up to Batavia, about ten miles, and you went along a kind of a river canal, we used to have to lay down on the back of this Dutch truck because the Indonesian snipers would be across the canal at the front. Anyway, all these Indonesians were in bloody rags, working on the ship, and the Dutch were there with the rifles and everything, and when knock-off time came, they'd line all the poor buggers up and they'd have these Ambonese, which were quisling bastards, they sided with the Dutch soldiers, and they'd search these poor buggers as they went out the gate, and then they'd be put back on the trucks and taken back to a kampong where they were more or less prisoners, until the next day.

When they were searched, they [*sometimes*] found pocketfuls of spilt wheat and stuff, and they'd belt shit out of them with a big stick, the big, fat Dutchman [*overseer*]. So we'd be up on the boat deck of the ship looking down at this, and when this happened, we'd yell out, 'You bastard, bloody mongrels. Stop doing that,' and then the Dutch or the ship started to get very crooked, because they were the Indies Dutch, like, the Raj. They weren't the Holland Dutch, and a pack of bastards.

Anyway, they started to give us, 'Oh, you like the Indonesians, do you, you cadets?' and they used to give us all the most menial jobs, like chipping rust around the feet of the Indonesian winch-drivers to demean us. So anyway, I suppose I was always a bit of a militant. I was the youngest of the four of us [*the cadets*], so I said, 'We're not putting up with this bloody lot.' I said, 'There must be a British Consulate or something in this Batavia here,' and they said, 'Oh, there's an Australian representative here.' That was music to our ears.

So we knew a bloke that was working for the British Embassy, so he drove us there in his jeep. We made an appointment to see Mr Ballard – that was this bloke's name – and when we arrived he was very pleased to see other Australians. He hadn't seen them for over a year – 'Come in, boys, and sit down,' you know. So anyway, he got cool drinks for us and everything. 'Now, what's your trouble?' Oh, we broke out in terrible tales of woe to him. He didn't say anything, didn't say a word. 'All right'.

Anyway, we left and went back to the ship. Sailing time came and we packed our bags and walked to the gangway, and a big Dutch Chief Officer got in front of us, hoping that we'd push him aside, see. No, we just pulled out cigarettes out and waited there, and the ship was just about ready to sail on the top of the tide, so he said, "Gott fradomma" – That's their way of swearing, "God damn me," and he went off and we scurried down the gang plank and sat on the wharf. We didn't know what was going to happen.

Next thing, after the ship pulled out of the stream and started to go, and we actually had deserted, a Dutchman came over us and said, 'You boys come with me. I'll take you to a hotel.' We said, 'Oh, no, you're going drive us to the Police Station.' He said, 'No, no, we'll take you to a hotel.' So they did take us to a hotel where their ships officers were transferring between ships. It was a beautiful hotel, but it wasn't very good in those days, but of course what was happening in Australia with the Chifley Government was impinging upon the Dutch. They were frightened of bad publicity, and I thought afterwards, that Ballard, he'd got on the phone, you see, and told them, 'Treat our boys a bit better than you have been treating them'.

And they were lovely, the Dutch. Being a bit cunning in those days, I'd got onto a solicitor [*in Sydney*] and had a letter to say that the contract that we had with them, the written contract, was valid, and so this solicitor gave me a letter to say that in his opinion this was a legal document which would hold up in any Australian Court.

So while they were there being nice to us I pulled this letter out, and I said – and what's more, they'd stopped our pay, see, our War Risk pay, and ships were still being sunk by mines and everything and Australian [*seamen*] were still being paid for War Risk about 18 months after the War, see. Oh, he said, 'Can I take this letter?' I said, 'I don't know about that,' but there were no photocopiers in those days. 'Oh, no, we promise to give you the letter back,' so away he went, and bugger me dead, they decided to pay us all the back pay. In those days I got nearly 800 pounds, which was a lot of money, nearly a year's wages – or more than a year for us, as cadets.

They put us in a hotel and we were there for six weeks. We met the Indonesian Union people who came. As we went out the gate they got to know there were some Australians staying at this hotel and one young bloke waited for us at the gate and got to follow to step behind us and said, 'Are you Australians?' We said, 'Yes,' and he said, 'Don't look back. Do you want to meet some of the leaders of the Indonesians?' We were only kids, but we thought this was marvellous, and we said, 'Oh, yes, yes.'

He said, 'Well, you be on this corner tonight at 8.00 o'clock. A car will come.' So at 8.00 o'clock we were there, and a sedan did come down the road and the back door swung open, and we scurried in and away we went. It drove around and around a lot, and then finally arrived at this big house, and we went in and knocked on the door, went in, and there was a big room filled with I'd say 30 or so Indonesian fellows sitting around the walls, big

tables, and eating utensils in front of them and everything. An old bloke called me and said, 'You sit here'.

Anyway, I sat alongside him and then he started to ask me questions, just to test my knowledge, I suppose, which wasn't very good in those days, but enough to show that we were pro-independence for the Indonesians. I said, 'Oh, well, the Australian Trade Unions have black-banned the Dutch ships sailing,' and I told him all that. He knew it, but he wanted to hear it from me, see? We had a beautiful nasi goreng meal of fried rice and everything, and when we were leaving they all came and patted our back, "Australi bagoos" – means "good", or "Bunya bagoos," which is "much good."

We came away with a warm feeling. But then, years later when bloody Suharto took over, everyone in that room would have been shot, murdered. That's why I wanted to get that – it hasn't been released yet, that documentary, but I want to get that because there's footage in that.

So, anyway, naturally when I got back to Australia I was pretty politically aware for a young bloke, and I'd been through a bloody Depression where we nearly starved. We only survived – my Dad had a job, he was a school-teacher, but his wages were savagely cut, and he was a wonderful gardener. He came from pioneering people, and in those days the pioneers would always keep a garden. I was the youngest of 12, mind you, and he spaded up about half an acre of land with a hand spade, and we always had vegetables. Our meat was at a minimum. When he got his wages we had no refrigeration or anything, so fresh meat would only last a couple of days and then you'd have corned meat for the first week and tinned stuff for the second stuff [*ie the week between pay days*].

But we survived and got through it, but every day you could see the unemployed walking past and begging a match or a needle or something off my mother to mend their pants or something, or could they have a carrot out of the garden? All this impinged on us, and it wasn't just the uneducated working class. There were professional people that went past too, ex-dentists and solicitors and God knows who. The average person today doesn't realise what a real Depression is. There's no real security at all for anybody.

They used to ask my father could they sleep in the hat room of the school when it was pouring down with rain, and he'd let them do that.

Then the War came, so my political philosophy and outlook in the 1950s was ironed out with this background of the Great Depression and the War, so naturally I gravitated towards the Left because the Right – what did the Right do? The extreme Right with Adolf Hitler led us into a terrible fratricidal kind of a war, and millions lost their lives, and we were headed that way again, except there was a great upsurge when the soldiers came back from the War. A whole heap of them had a completely new outlook from what they had before they were politically educated to what they were then, and they just weren't going to cop this.

When they [*ie the soldiers*] went back into the Unions, when I joined the Waterside Workers Federation when I came back from England in 1950, eighty percent of them were ex-soldiers. All the old men that carried the union and the work through the War, they all got out and retired as soon as [*the war ended*], and they used to try to make out in the newspaper propaganda, about the terrible people these waterside workers were, but they were all ex-soldiers. My mate, Bluey Evans, fought at Milne Bay. So they weren't going to cop these terrible conditions that existed before the War, and that's why they elected the Communist people who were the militants, and so they elected them to the leadership.

Straightaway, Jim Healy became the National Secretary, and instead of having to go to the wharf gate every day and wait around all day to see whether they were picked up, they straightaway set up a proper roster system where they went to a central place, a pick-up centre, and they were rostered into jobs, and the others that didn't have a job that day got Attendance Money. It was only a pittance, but it was a certain amount to cover the expenses for that day. So as time went on, they brought in wonderful things like First Aid men on the wharves. The wharves had the second-highest injury record and fatalities in industry in Australia, after the miners. Every day you'd see some poor bugger hurt, something would fall on him or he'd get his hand caught or something.

So they [*the communist officials*] brought in that every wharf had to have a First Aid man that used to set up a place there, and that was only one of many, many things they brought in to give a bit of dignity to the workers.

ROSS: Just to that point where you joined the Communist Party, so you'd had a sort of background of experience in the Depression, and then of meeting with workers in the War, and so you saw all the inequities in the current society, but also the Communist Party had a sort of vision of a future that was better?

WARREN: Yes.

ROSS: Was that part of the sort of thing that induced you to actually become part of the Party?

WARREN: Yes, we were very imbued with the idea of building a new world of Socialism, and dispense with the exploitation. We were very well aware of that. Of course, it was our presence in the Trade unions that did make the employers take a much more softer role, because they could see that they were playing right into our hands by being ruthless. So they started to soften right up, and most of these conditions that the young people enjoy today were actually won by Communist Trade Unions.

They don't realise that because they weren't around. Like I said earlier, it's a generational thing and you've got to start again. I'm an old man now – I'm 85 at Christmas – and when I go all my experience will go with me, except that's why I wrote the books, to try and *record our struggles*.

ROSS: When you joined the Communist Party, you would have been in the Seaman's Union rather than the Waterside Workers?

WARREN: No, I was working as a tally clerk on the Sydney waterfront, and---

ROSS: So which Union would you have been---

WARREN: The Federated Clerks Union /Shipping Section. Jack Hughes was the Secretary, and there was a very strong Communist Party Branch. The Communist Party set up branches within Unions. You would either belong to the local Branch, but most trade unionists belonged to their industry branch, like, the coal miners belonged to the Coal Mining Branch but I belonged to the Waterfront [*Clerks Union Shipping*] Branch of the Communist Party.

ROSS: Okay, yes. Can you tell me a bit about how that operated?

WARREN: Yes, well, we used to have - of course the Union introduced periodic monthly meetings of their Union Members, who weren't communists, but they included the communists. Before these monthly meetings would take place, the branch of the Communist Party would have a faction meeting, and we would discuss all the outstanding issues that we thought were very pertinent at the time. When the main meeting came along, we were careful not to take the meeting over entirely, but we would make sure that these issues that we considered very important be pushed.

ROSS: So when you say you were careful not to take the meeting over entirely, did you discuss that sort of tactic---

WARREN: Oh, yes, we were very careful not to impinge upon the meeting so much that we dominated it. We had a lot of sympathisers. For every Communist there would be eight or ten sympathisers, and then there'd be a lot of Labor Party people, good Labor Party people, and we were very strong on keeping the united front going between the Labor Party and the Communists in the Unions, so we supported some of the more progressive Labor Party people to take over and become officials and that as well.

We didn't want to have a whole complete rubber *stamp* of Communists at the top, so the Party was always careful not to do that. Of course, the workers soon woke up that the [*communist*] people were merely trying to get them better conditions and sick pay and the other things that were non-existent pre-War, soon woke up that the fighters were the communists, and they looked to Mick Healy [*our leader*], and he was living in an old fibro house.

By the way, during the war Mick Healy was offered a Ministry in the Labor Government, in shipping, but he refused it because he thought he'd be selling the workers out. No, there were some very noble people, and very few of them ever died with much wealth, but they gave many, many hours to the betterment of the Trade Unions and fellow workers.

ROSS: So when you were in the Party meetings, would you have spent a fair bit of time talking about the sort of tactics of how you interact with people in meetings and so on?

WARREN: Yes, we would. We'd discuss different identities within our Union because we had to know where the opposition was ensconced, and it doesn't matter how good situations are, you often get opposition, for different reasons. So we'd have to know who were our friends and who were our [*opponents*], and then we'd delegate different people to get up and talk about different subjects, like I might have known a bit about what was happening overseas or something at the time that impinged on the waterfront, so I'd be asked to get up at the meeting and express that to the workers.

But they always went to a lot of trouble, the Communists, to explain to the workers what was happening in the wider world. They always introduced not just economics into Trade Unionism; they introduced a whole philosophy, political outlook as well, and showed the workers that the other side they were very united politically, to put the boot into them.

ROSS: And how would that have come about, because I know the Communist Party used to run cottage lectures and things where people could actually develop their ideas about the world?

WARREN: Yes, of course our *Tribune* newspaper was a great centre of current things happening, both in the national structure and local, and international; but we had some very brilliant

people in the Communist Party, the people that went afterwards and become judges and everything. They found that they were, not that they ever lost their views, but the way the World situation went, and the incessant attacks upon them and the ASIO all the time on your doorstep, cars sitting out the front on a Sunday and weekends, with two coppers in them.

We were treated like criminals, yet we were soldiers and went away and defended this country, and I've lost five close relatives in wars. Never been in a Court in my life. Even now, I've never been inside a Court. See, I'm a complete cleanskin, and yet we were treated as the worst criminals, and had to be watched. I'd say everybody in the Communist Party that I knew, anyway, was a cleanskin, and was a good citizen. They were good people.

As a matter of fact, they've been my lifelong friends, most of them, because they were so fair-dinkum. None of them ended up with much wealth. Of course, as we got older we went after security a bit, because we knew what was in store for us. Being politically aware, we could see things were going to get tough, so most of us own our own houses, but that's all, and furniture and stuff.

A lot of them had the ability – some of them were very clever people, [*who could have gone*] right to the top if they'd wanted to. So it was a very exciting milieu that we operated in, you know. We were rubbing shoulders with these intellectual working class blokes, but they weren't all working class, either. They were a lot in the middle class, and that's one thing I just want to dwell on a little bit now, that this business to get away from calling people working class. I heard a commentator even on Philip Adams' show yesterday say, 'There's not many working class left; they're all middle class.' Now, that's the line the Yank bosses push, that they are all middle-class. Anybody that works either physically or intellectually is a worker, if you get paid a wage or paid a salary, and the middle-class people are the petit bourgeoisie that own shops and that.

Of course, we as working class through the efforts of people in the Communist Party and other militants have built up a standard of living of our workers to such that it's comparable to the middle class of 50 years ago or more. As a matter of fact, that came home to me when I went up to Armidale there to Saumarez, the big home there that's kept by – what's their names – and I went in and the old girl is showing us around, 'Oh, this was the master's bedroom,' she said, and I looked at her, and it's a bloody old iron bed and a horsehair mattress, yet he was the master of all he could see, East, West, North and South. Because I had hot running water and I sleep on a soft orthopaedic mattress and I've got electricity with a switch and communication and everything else, my standard of living now - as an ex-worker - is far higher than his was.

ROSS: Yes. So you'd still see, using class analysis as the fundamental sort of way of looking at the world?

WARREN: Yes. This furphy that the Labor Party and the others bring out, class, as if it doesn't exist – it exists all right. It's there.

ROSS: Just getting back to when you were in that 1950s period, apart from how you as people in the Communist operated in the Union meetings, what about how you operated just with workers that you were working alongside of every day, like, did you have a sort of philosophy as a Communist as to how to operate, how to interact just with your regular everyday workers?

WARREN: Well, the Communist Party imposed on us an attitude to keep a very high standard of actions. They came in like a ton of bricks on anything that was a bit shifty or that. We had to set an example to the workers all the time. Now, to give you an instance, there's a ship called the *Carrodale* that was tied up in Brisbane, and there were several well-known Communists that were crew members there, and some bloke came aboard. He said to the Captain, 'You've got a lot of communists on the ship here,' and the old Captain said, 'I wish I had bloody a whole shipload of them. They're the only bastards that do any work.'

So we were given the option, the workers, too, we weren't to be just bludgers talking— we had to give a good example. Not to be so diligent that we'd break any rules or anything, but at the same time we had to be consistent and show the others that we were fair dinkum.

Also, we'd use every opportunity we could to talk about different situations with the workers and explain our side of things, which sometimes they didn't look at that side. They didn't even know it existed. And gradually listening to us, a lot of, I'd say many of them became *sympathetic*, a few joined the Communist Party, but a lot I would say were sympathisers. They used to vote, our officials used to get voted back in unopposed, Elliott and all those people. We used to have elections. We used to have a monthly stop-work meeting. It was only the Right Wing that tried to hide their meetings and things - they'd never tell people when they were on and everything.

The Seaman's Union used to impose penalties on seamen that didn't attend their meetings, and so did the Waterside Workers, so the people had to come and vote, to take a part in the union, so that it wasn't left to just officials.

ROSS: So what was the key part of the way the party operated that made it so influential, do you reckon?

WARREN: I think it was the day to day actions. The Party attracted a lot of very decent-minded people, who were idealists who were looking to a better world, a better place, and they thought they'd achieved this by educating the masses, that they were told and they believed it. We'd spend countless hours, I suppose, talking about situations for workers, our smokos and dinner times. We always seemed to attract a heap of workers around us.

We were never short of friends and people willing to join in the discussions, because we didn't [*talk nonsense*], although we didn't shun the humour of the working class, I'm not saying myself, but there were some very attractive people in the Communist Party. They were nice personalities, easy to approach, helpful. There was no underhanded *business* – that was looked down upon, any underhanded business to con people or anything. No, we had to be above board on every score, and if anybody infringed that, that would be brought up at the Communist Party meetings and would be criticised.

The Party, one of the strongest things is they didn't believe in destructive criticism, where it would spoil a person's persona, but they believed in constructive criticism, and if your actions weren't up to scratch, well, other members would tell you, in a decent way and try to guide you towards the solution.

When these things were discussed, they were usually ironed out, but very rarely was anybody dominant. Every member had his say, or could have his say. No, they were a very, very – I'll use the word – democratic organisation internally; but of course it was the Stalinists and others got into it and used it for their own personalities and misled the whole

thing, aided and abetted of course by the millions of dollars that was spent trying to smash them. It all came together.

But all those Communists, not all of them, but a big percentage of them remained my friends all their lives, that I met in the Communist Party, way back in the '50s, life-long friends. They haven't changed - like Len Webb, and all those blokes. Old Mick Healy, Connie's husband, he was a great one, too.

ROSS: What do you think about the future? Do you think that there's a need for a Communist Party to start up again, like, one that's based on the sort of principles that you had then?

WARREN: Well, I think the whole history didn't play them a good hand. I think Marx said that Capitalism will implode on itself eventually, and a new system will emerge, more sociable. Now, you've got to have the Capitalism system because the Capitalism system puts the infrastructure in. All these feudalistic systems like China and Russia and that, they had to start from scratch.

ROSS: So you see it as a necessary stage?

WARREN: Yes, a necessary stage. I don't doubt that at all, and that it was necessary, but that just sort of seems – and now there's another necessary stage which China's going through, and that's market Socialism. You can't jump from any of these stages of history. Marx pointed that out, but they jumped from feudalism to Communism, Socialism. You can't do it. We've got to go back and go through the market Socialism stage where all the big industries – banking, postal, transport, electricity – have got to go back to the public.

Small business will be tolerated, because it's pretty hard to get an efficient business to come and fix your tap, where you can ring up a little bloke that works up the road, but this eventually will work itself out, too, because the law of Capitalism is just to survive it's got to keep going, and expanding. We're going to get to the stage where we've got to stop it growing. Otherwise, there's no resources going to be left in the World and the World population explosion is ridiculous.

Just image – I'm 85, and when I was born there was 1.5 billion people in the World, and in my lifetime it's gone to 7 billion now, and 9 billion [by 2050]. Where from? From 200,000 years ago, to when I was born, 1.5 billion. Now in the last 70 or 80 years it's gone up to 7 billion – that can't last.

ROSS: During that process, so you're saying basically you see a process going towards Socialism?

WARREN: Yes.

ROSS: Do we need another Communist Party? I know that there are small Communist Parties now, but do we need a mass Communist Party of the sort that you were involved in?

WARREN: There's no doubt at all that the leadership's got to be given there by a mass party. That's why the Soviet Union was able to beat the Nazis during the War, because they were a mass party, that their directions were immediate. That's why China is able to react now. It confounds the Yanks how they can pull their economy together, with the Yanks trying to stumble along, and the Europeans.

We all made our lives the yardstick of history, but we're only puny lives. What does it matter if there's another two lifetimes or three lifetimes, as long as it's going in the right way?

ROSS: So you see Marxism as being useful or even essential in the future?

WARREN: Yes, it's an essential. It's philosophy is the only true explanation of life, economic life, when you get bloody stupid religions floating around on pink clouds – I've only got one child. That's her. She was born in 1961.

ROSS: She'd have seen you being persecuted by the Security Forces.

WARREN: Well, when I was employed at the CSIRO, I don't think the ASIO did this – I think this was Bjelke-Petersen's Special Branch, and when Goss won government, or whoever won then, there was a big fire in the Repository of the Special Branch, so they lost all their records, the bastards.

But they used to ring her up, or ring my wife up, but she never answered this day and my little daughter answered. She was only eight then, and they said, 'Is your Mummy there?' and she said, 'No.' They said, 'Well, you tell your Mummy when she comes home that your father is out with another woman.' Now, fancy saying that to a kid!

(End of Recording)

Warren later added another note on his thoughts for the future:

I believe it will be necessary for a left wing party to emerge to assume leadership to enable the transition to a socialist future. This party will be guided by the precepts of Marxist philosophy but will in all probability need to abandon some of the pertinent concepts the former communist parties used and found wanting. The concept of "democratic centralism" which allowed personality cult figures such as Stalin to get the leadership. The lack of an independent judiciary. More avenues for dissenting views to be aired. Genuine elections for government figures. All this must accompany the total abolition of a capitalist class etc., and the nationalisation of all major industry. I think there is room for a private tradesman - small business sector.