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OPEN FOUNDATION COURSE

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*D Lithgow*

Date .....

*8/6/89*

Interviewer .....

*Vicki Neech*

**Open Foundation Australian History.**

Regional History Research Paper

Topic- Conservation and the Northern Parks and Playgrounds  
Movement.

Vicki Neech.

Tues. 1-3 p.m.

Due date Aug. 25.

Since the earliest days of European settlement in Australia, pollution and environmental damage have been causes for concern. The first white settlers brought not only disease, pollution and introduced animals, but also a vastly different culture and attitude to the environment from that of Aboriginal people. Though there is growing evidence to indicate that Aboriginal use of fire may have had a profound effect on the ecology,<sup>1</sup> Aboriginal people nevertheless, managed available resources with care for the future and identified with the land and its natural features. They had no concept of the land as private property. Europeans, with their Christian tradition, saw themselves as superior, with the right and duty to exploit nature. Property, particularly land, was highly regarded. Because of the rapid rate at which the country was settled, Europeans learnt (and are still learning) only gradually about the climate and their effects on the environment. In developing Australia, the importance of economic growth and the efficient exploitation of resources have usually taken precedence. Conservation has been ignored or seen as a means of organizing resources for future use.<sup>2</sup>

Newcastle began as a harsh convict settlement. Its growth was largely unplanned as the suburbs, which were initially mining towns, came under the sphere of influence of the central city, as coal resources dwindled and transport improved. As these towns followed the coal seams, the suburban pattern produced was random, sprawling and marked by large areas of land held by mining companies for possible future exploitation. Because huge areas were taken up by mining companies out of crown lands, this meant future land for open space must be bought back. This early alienation of most of the regions' land means parks such as the National Parks near Sydney, will not be possible near the population centres in the Lower Hunter.

One of the earliest environmental issues in Newcastle was the proposed removal of Nobbys or Coal Island. Half of the Island was removed before public opposition saved what remains as a unique landmark. With more recent developments in technology, industrialization, increasing population, motor vehicles and the proliferation of chemicals, pressure on the environment has drastically increased.

1. Bolton, G. Spoils and Spoilers. Australians Make Their Own Environment 1788-1980. Sydney 1981. P8.  
2. ibid. P.172.

Conservation in the Newcastle region is synonymous with the Northern Parks and Playgrounds Movement, which is one of the oldest environmental organizations in the region. It was established in 1952 as an offshoot of the now disbanded Parks and Playgrounds Movement of New South Wales in the same year the Northumberland County Plan was first exhibited. The Northumberland District Planning Scheme, like the Cumberland County Scheme set up in Sydney in 1947, was designed to plan land use and development. In the Lower Hunter and urban Newcastle there was seen to be an "urgent need for planning to correct, where practicable, unsatisfactory conditions of the past and to adequately provide for the future."<sup>3</sup>The long delay in the implementation of the Scheme meant many of its proposals were modified and some key proposals were eliminated. The open space proposals have only been partly implemented and the Northern Parks and Playgrounds Movement has worked hard for the implementation of these provisions. The estimated funding then was \$2 million for the acquisition of all land for open space and roads (other than country roads). It was to be arranged through long term loans over 25 years with matching funds from the State Government. Unfortunately, funding was not agreed upon at the time and costs are now prohibitive to acquisition. Both the Northumberland and Cumberland County Councils were incorporated into the State Planning Authority in 1963.

Tom Farrell is the longest<sup>servings</sup> active member of the Northern Parks and Playgrounds Movement. In an address to the 32nd Annual General Meeting (1984) of the Movement, he recalls how he brought the Movement to Newcastle. Mr Hume, the secretary of the New South Wales Parks and Playgrounds Movement in Sydney attended a public meeting in City Hall to form a Newcastle branch. About 40 people attended and though successful, no officers were elected. Some months later, the Newcastle Businessmen's Club formed the Northern Parks and Playgrounds Movement with Stan D'Shea as chairman and Joe Richley as secretary. Joe was highly respected and gave the Movement an excellent reputation which it still retains today.

The organization is a citizens group made up of volunteers from all walks of life. It has been continuous in its activities

3. Wilmott, E.C. 25 Years of Planning in the Hunter Valley.  
History of the Northumberland County Planning Scheme 1983.

over the years and has been instrumental or influential in most local environmental issues since it was formed. The Movement has worked hard for Blackbutt Reserve. From the Blackbutt Action Committee, which brought together all the Newcastle conservation groups to fight the proposed expressway through the Reserve, came the push to get the National Trust started in Newcastle. This was launched with the Hunter 2000 Project, which became a very influential document for the whole of the Hunter. Representatives from all the conservation groups became the Landscape Committee for the National Trust. The Northern Parks and Playgrounds Movement was involved with the formation of the Hunter-Manning National Parks Association which combined with a group in Sydney to form the New South Wales National Parks Association. Some of the other issues that the Movement has been involved with are Glenrock State Recreation Area, the Harbour Foreshore Development, the Heritage Centre, Kooragang Nature Reserve, Shortlands Wetlands Centre, the Awabakal Centre, Botanic Gardens, the release of Fort Scratchley to the city, establishing the Fauna and Flora Protection Society, Civic Square, city parks, the protection of Lake Macquarie and more.

The challenges of the future are to secure large National Park type reserves within a 20-30 km radius of the City of Newcastle, the protection of historic places reflecting Aboriginal, colonial and coal mining history, the provision of open spaces, children's playgrounds and playing fields and the healthy maintenance of the wetland and estuary systems of Port Stephens, the Hunter River and Lake Macquarie.<sup>4</sup> The Northern Parks and Playgrounds Movement values its independence. It represents the public interest on conservation issues and one of its major roles is to keep the public informed, because it is the community- individual people who band together to form conservation groups- that keep conservation issues alive.

4. Lithgow, Doug Annual Report 1984-5.  
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- State Pollution Control Commission The State of the Environment. A report. Sydney. 1987.
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- Strike, Terry M. Public environmental awareness and adult environmental education in the Lower Hunter. A thesis 1986.

Summary of Transcript of Interview With Doug Lithgow.  
on June 8, 1989.

Interview begins with Doug's background-

- where and when he was born.
- where he grew up.
- attitudes to conservation then.
- family influence on his attitudes to conservation.
- when and why he moved to Newcastle.
- the jobs he has had.
- the influence he has had on his own children.

Interview moves on to the Northern Parks and Playgrounds Movement, the organization Doug has mainly been involved with-

- when the Movement was formed in Australia.
- when and why it began in Newcastle.
- explanation of the Northumberland County Planning Scheme and the problem of acquiring public land for the Scheme.
- the need to conserve Newcastle's distinctive history, particularly Newcastle East.
- the value of public protest in conservation.
- Blackbutt Reserve and how it came to be.
- Glenrock State Recreation Area, how it came about and problems encountered.
- a function of the Parks and Playgrounds Movement is to keep people informed and motivated.
- membership of the Movement over the years and some of the people involved.
- lack of funds for legal and technical advice a problem for conservation groups.
- the Harbour Foreshore Development history and problems.
- Joy Cummings Patron of Movement.
- idea for bicentennial Harbour Foreshore competition.
- lack of co-operation from the Railways and Housing Commission.
- government legislation facilitating conservation such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- Parks and Playgrounds influential in setting up Blackbutt Action Committee.
- also setting up National Trust in Newcastle which was launched with the Hunter 2000 Project.
- Doug received the Environmental Achievement Award in 1987 from Newcastle University.
- he tells when and how he became involved with the Parks and Playgrounds Movement.
- what went into saving the Heritage Centre.
- interest in Kooragang and the estuary and their conservation.
- need for independent organizations like the Parks and Playgrounds.
- involvement with establishing Shortlands Wetlands Centre.
- general lack of government financial assistance to conservation groups.
- Parks and Playgrounds participation in Commonwealth Employment Scheme (C.E.P.)

- funding under Northumberland County Scheme not agreed to in the 50's
- Cumberland County Scheme operated effectively in Sydney.
- parkland not set aside in Newcastle as in Sydney.
- early Botanic Garden set aside, now in grounds of B.H.P.
- a Botanic Garden in Newcastle is a current big issue.
- comparison with Sydney.
- Don Barnett organizing Botanic Garden.
- other projects involving the Parks and Playgrounds Movement include the release of Fort Scratchley, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Association, the Fauna and Flora Protection Society, Greenpoint Action Committee, U.R.G.E.(United Residents Group) to save Lake Macquarie, Belmont Lake Project, Shortlands Wetlands Centre, Awabakal, Hunter Town Planning Association, Blackbutt Action Committee, Glenrock Community Advisory Committee, Citizens' Foreshore Committee, Caves Beach Group to monitor planned Gordon-Pacific tourist resort.
- background of Gordon-Pacific Company and proposed development.
- problems with planning and changes to government organization and legislation.
- how companies operate.
- councils could take better care of the public and bonafide business interests.
- problem of the moment is speculation.
- conservationists not liked by speculators.
- over population is the real problem underlying all economic and environmental problems in the world.
- Doug concludes with an analogy about the swarms of insects which defoliated all the trees around Newcastle and how they built up in numbers and just disappeared overnight due to a virus or something similar. He feels there is a lesson there for human beings.



Transcript of interview with Doug Lithgow conducted by Vicki Neech on June 8, 1989, at the Heritage Centre, Newcastle.

Well, World Environment Week seems an ideal time to talk about conservation.

Q. To begin with, where and when were you born Doug?

A. I was born in a place called Gladesville, which is a suburb of Sydney in 1933.

Q. Did you grow up in Gladesville?

A. Oh, yes Gladesville was an outer suburb when I was a boy. There was plenty of bush along the river, the Parramatta River. Yes, a lot of fun there. I think that's where I probably took up the feel for, even if it just was cowboys and Indians in those days, of the bush.

Q. What were attitudes to conservation then?

A. I don't think anyone thought about it, but they thought there was lots and lots of bush. Gladesville was an outer suburb, but if you go back today there's hardly any, in fact there's nothing it's just completely an inner suburb now, and the bush is miles and miles.

Q. Did your family have much to do with shaping your attitude to the environment as you grew up?

A. Well, you know we're from the country really. My home, I suppose, in a sense, is a place called Gilgandra, in western New South Wales, in the central west. I suppose there, even though it was a farm and a good deal of it was cleared there were still lots of interesting places to roam along the Castlereagh River and so on. I suppose holidays out there were influential too. When you think back, places like the Warrumbungle Mountains which were always visible from where I (was?). I spent a fair bit of time there as a kid. During the war we were all evacuated (laughs). I lived on the farm out there, now I come to mention it.

Q. Was that with your grandparents?

A. With uncles, grandparents and so on. We were shifted around a fair bit.

Q. What about your parents. Did they give you any positive sort of thing?

A. Well, I think my Dad was very interested in plants and birds but his interest didn't really come to the fore until he retired. You know he was doing a study of all the plants of the Port Stephens Peninsula, for instance. I think he got it from me actually. (we laugh)

Q. Can you remember any early environmental issues that you were aware of when you were young?

A. No, not really. Bushfires and things like that. I remember those as a kid.

Q. When did you come to Newcastle?

A. 1951.

Q. And what brought you up here?

A. My Dad was a policeman and he took over here. In fact his office was in this building. Actually, in '51 he was here as Prosecutor. He later on came back as Superintendent.

Q. Were you still attending school when you moved up here?

A. No, I was working at Goninans actually. That's where I started work. I had started work earlier than that though in Wagga, working in automotive engineering, reconditioning motor cars. Just after the war, you couldn't get a new motor car so you had to recondition them, so there was plenty of work for rebuilding motor cars.

Q. And what other jobs have you had?

A. Before I took up teaching, it was just general engineering in the Newcastle area. I suppose Goninans, I worked with a firm called Tufft Bryant (?) which is Alice Chalmers now, building earth moving equipment. The best job I had, the one I liked most was working at the State Dockyard on building diesel engines. Really interesting place to work.

Q. When did you go into teaching?

A. I went <sup>to</sup> Hamilton Evening College actually, like a lot of people who didn't really finish their formal education. I did my leaving there and then went on to teacher's college here in Newcastle. I started teaching in '59.

Q. And how old were you then?

A. I can't remember. (we laugh)

Q. What do you teach?

A. Industrial arts. I followed along the industrial.

Q. Are you married?

A. Yes, I've been married twice actually. My first wife died in 1970. I married again. I've got two children from both families.

Q. And what sort of activities have you done with your children?

A. They don't see enough of me actually these days. I like bush-walking and taking them camping and things like that. However, there's not enough of it I must admit that. Being an activist, I suppose, takes you to lots of places that kids don't necessarily like being. They don't like you going and talking to other people or spending their time standing on one foot. And most of your holidays are spent around visiting places that should be National Parks and things like that. They love it. We've been to Fraser Island, Kakadu. Everybody has these days (laughs). No, don't see enough of the bush really. I miss it a lot

cont...

I suppose my work with organisations like the Northern Parks and Playgrounds Movement is trying to make urban places a little bit more livable or maintain them to see that they're attractive and that they are good places to live in, in the future.

Q. We'll get on to the Parks and Playgrounds Movement now. When was the Movement actually first formed in Australia?

A. The New South Wales Parks and Playgrounds Movement starts about 1930. The Parks and Playgrounds Movement in Newcastle, which is called the Northern Parks and Playgrounds Movement, just to differentiate it from the New South Wales Parks and Playgrounds Movement was established in '52, 1952 in Newcastle. It's been one of the most active, probably the most active community organisations in Newcastle. It's been continuous in it's activities since that time.

Q. And why was it established here?

A. Well, Newcastle was pretty well regarded as a pretty dreadful place and after World War 2, there was a good deal of interest in trying to improve cities, not only in Australia, but all over the world. There was a movement, the town planning movement took up. Parks and Playgrounds Movement, one of it's most important jobs has been trying to support town planning in this area, and particularly, open space provisions in the Northumberland County Planning Scheme, which is the scheme in this area.

Q. Can you explain that?

A. The Northumberland County Council was set up in 1948 in Newcastle, which included representatives from all the local government areas like Lake Macquarie, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Cessnock and Maitland. The Parks and Playgrounds Movement, the year of it's formation, was the year that the Northumberland County Council exhibited their first scheme in 1952. There were quite a few very imaginative and forward thinking ideas for parkland, for instance on Lake Macquarie and on the ocean front, parkland at Newcastle east, Civic Park and parkland in Port Stephens too. But most of those provisions were watered down and removed from the scheme unfortunately over the years and it's been a real battle to keep the thing together. However, that's not to say that alot of those things have not come to fruition. For instance the ideas of major parks on Lake Macquarie are only coming to fruition now, you see we've got the big push for Green Point. Green Point, it was Cardiff Point in those days, Cardiff Point was the major promontory. Unfortunately, Cardiff Point's been demolished by a huge quarry right on the point. But now, it was a lovely bushland bluff coming right out into the Lake in the '50's. But that'll come to fruition, we'll get that in time. There's tremendous support for that now developing.

Q. Am I right in thinking that the problem was the acquisition of public land for the scheme: the Northumberland County Scheme?

A. Well, the problem was acquisition. In Newcastle and the Lower Hunter it was a coal mining province and coal mining is the reason for our European settlement here and big overseas companies took up huge areas for mining so that they were all taken out of crown lands. So around Newcastle you don't have crown lands; you don't have large areas of crown lands, it was all taken up basically with mining leases in those very early days. So by 1850 most of your land area was taken up by people like Brown and the English and Scottish Coal Company and so on. And we've had to buy back the land. Where say an area like Sydney for instance has huge areas of crown land around it, that's why they've been able to establish huge National Parks around Sydney and you don't have anything around Newcastle the same distance from the centre. For instance the centre of Newcastle to, say, Belmont is just how far you'd have to travel from the centre of Sydney to the Royal National Park which has got 15,000 hectares of parkland in it. We just don't have anything like that. It's interesting also to recall that it was over 100 years ago that the Royal National Park was set aside, one of the very first National Parks in the world, and Sydney was only the size of Newcastle when that was set aside. So we've got a lot of work before us. The Northumberland County Council when they started wanted to set up some large parks in the southern area, probably a little bit further away than Belmont, say, in the Swansea Peninsula, they wanted to set up a national park there but <sup>there</sup> was never the possibilities. All that land, even then in the '50's, was all taken by coal companies.

Q. Has the way Newcastle developed from a series of small mining villages posed any particular problems too?

A. Well, it just gives you your pattern of settlement. Newcastle is very interesting as the pattern of settlement is very obvious so it has a lovely sense of history about it, which is something we should build on too. Newcastle East is the focus of the history, the European history of the area. It's very significant to Aboriginal people too. However it was a distinctive place and when Shortland discovered the Hunter River he also discovered coal and Newcastle East, right under Fort Scratchley is where coal was first mined in Australia. It wasn't carefully managed or anything like that. Ship's captains could just come in and just send the convicts ashore and dig coal out of the hill, from under the hill. There's two coal seams actually that were quite visible. You can't see them now because everything's been shaped into quite different shapes. Even our most distinctive landmark, Nobby's, has been cut down half its original size and completely altered in shape.

Q. Wasn't it supposed to be removed altogether?

A. Oh, yes there were attempts to remove it altogether but there was even in those days, the 1850's, there were a lot of people who were very concerned about it and they stopped it from being removed completely and that's why we've got a bit of Nobby's left (comment: yes, luckily) Well, we've got a bit of bush left because people stopped Council from removing it. For instance Blackbutt Reserve.

Q. Is Blackbutt one of the Movements' successes?

A. IN conservation it's an ongoing thing. You can never say, look that's a success, it's something that must go on. Conservation is something that goes on, and when conservation stops, I'm afraid it's life stops. It relies on a lot of people being involved. The Parks and Playgrounds Movement has been very influential in working for Blackbutt. The start of Blackbutt goes right back to the 1920's. The first area of Blackbutt, the first 40 acres of Blackbutt was acquired by all the constituent councils of Newcastle, that used to be Newcastle. You had the Wickham Council, Hamilton Council, Newcastle Council, New Lambton Council and so on, Wallsend Council. They all put in very small amounts of money and they were matched with their funds by the State Government to buy that first parcel of land which became Blackbutt Reserve. All around it, I think it's the English and Scottish Coal Company. After about 1959, after many, many years, during all those 50's you had tremendous pressure to try and sub-divide all that land around Blackbutt Reserve, which is priceless bushland actually. And you think now what a dreadful thing for Newcastle had that all been sub-divided. But 1959 was the corner stone year, Newcastle Council resolved to set up the Blackbutt Reserve. But even though they resolved it, they were still behind the scenes trying to chop it all up. They wanted to sell it off for a school at one stage, a high school. Then the roads, expressways and so on. So it was a fight even though the Council had resolved to set it aside. And then of course it's not only just getting it set aside, it's a matter of seeing it's managed effectively so that you don't destroy it's natural features. That's been another big conservation issue which is coming up again now. We're looking at an actual formal plan being prepared for Blackbutt. A very well known landscape architect, Bruce Mackenzie, is developing a plan for the Council now. It was written up in the paper this morning.

Q. We may as well go on to some of the other things the Movement has either initiated or been involved with- Glenrock?

A. Glenrock has been another one of those parks that's been a problem. The major area of Glenrock is a reserve called The Flaggy Creek Reserve, which runs down and takes in the two waterfalls and Little Flaggy Creek and Flaggy Creek and back up to Kahibah and Highfield. Now that reserve was set aside in 1952. That was crown land reserve and attached to that have been the various

lands that have been acquired since to make the Glenrock State Recreation Area. Again that's been battles you see, to get that going. It took so many years it was just put into the hands of the Council, Lake Macquarie Council, that reserve and there was a trust set up, but the trust never met. All sorts of things you have, it's just a continual sort of fight to see that the public interest is served. Because there hasn't been a lot of help from Council, particularly Lake Macquarie Council, in that interest. You see it's all Lake Macquarie. There was a major study initiated by the Newcastle Council for the ocean front, we're talking about 1970., it might have been '69, somewhere around '69 or '70 to look at the ocean front for the possibility of setting up a large reserve, public reserve. That then turned into the Newcastle/Lake Macquarie Study (interruption). The Newcastle/Lake Macquarie Study it was really. It took all the uncommitted foreshore lands from Blacksmiths right through to Mereweather. It studied all those areas and one of its findings was for a major recreation area based on Glenrock, you see. What did we do? Well, whilst these things are being done officially, there's all sorts of things going on in the community. People are being taken down there and looking at it and writing letters to the papers and politicians and so on. We all thought everything was going fine, these are the sorts of things that happen. The Study was published and you would of thought that there'd be a State Recreation Area gazetted but what happened was when we contacted the Parks and Wildlife Service which looks after State Recreation Areas you found that they didn't know anything about it. The State Government Planning Authority, which is the Planning and Environment Department, I think it was, it might have been Commission (planning and environment has had quite a strange run over the years, I should tell you about that next). But you know, they all just forget about these studies, they all just sit unless the community picks them up and really run with them. Any way, we prepared a document and put forward a proposal for a State Recreation Area, which we made sure was lodged in the right places and the Fauna and Flora Society in Newcastle prepared a very detailed analysis of all the plants and animals that live in the area. From that developed the State Recreation Area, after a number of trips to Sydney to see politicians and so on. But Richard Face, the local member has got right behind us and he's been a great help in the formation of that State Recreation Area, which has still got a long way to go. Richard Face has been really good on the general thing, but he wasn't very good on trying to get rid of the quarry and so on. We've had to force the issue on the quarry. The potential of the quarry was to destroy a very important part of the State Recreation Area. And there's been other things happen, like the sewage outfall, that made a hell of a mess there. But the new government for instance, says that they're going to close the quarry in a

few years time, and their putting it, if they haven't already done so, in the hands of the Parks and Wildlife Service. So things happen in the public arena in fits and starts. It's terribly important for the community to realize that there's nobody up there looking after you. Absolutely, the community has to really tune in themselves and get cracking. And that's what the Parks and Playgrounds Movement has been doing all this time I suppose. Keeping the community informed. That's been our job, keeping people informed, because if you wait for the powers that be to inform you, well, they'll always misinform you, because it's not in their interests to keep us informed. Because let's face it, politics is a matter of keeping yourself there. The less people know about what's really going on the better (laughs), from their point of view. I'm being cynical there. Generally speaking it's better if the community is well informed and keeps their representatives aware of what they really want, because their representatives are tuned in quite often to interests., vested interests only and not public interests perhaps.

Q. Do you think the general attitude has changed now to conservation?

A. Oh, yes, I think there's been up and down you know. Issues make the difference, when issues come up. At the moment there's an issue developing around, say the greenhouse and ozone, well that mobilizes people. People say, Oh, something to do. Just the same as if Blackbutt Reserve, they think it's always there. They look out and see all the bush and they think it's always going to be there and it's not unless they support it and protect it. And then suddenly the Department of Mainroads wants to put an expressway through the middle of it, people come forward. As long as there's public groups, public spirited people around to draw things together and mobilize people. That's the only way to keep conservation going, because, you know, there's no money in it. There's no money involved for those people that are conservationists, it's just headaches.

Q. What sort of membership has the Movement had over the years?

A. It goes up and down according to issues actually. The Parks and Playgrounds Movement's had a pretty constant between 100 and 150 people.

Q. How many active people?

A. Oh well, the active people. We have an executive committee, I'd say there'd be about 10 people that have really come right through. I think of names like Joe Richley, he's dead now, but he was the linch-pin, if you like, for many, many years. But the longest active serving member, the two longest serving members are fellows by the names of *Wilf Dews* and Tom Farrell. Tom's a marvellous old chap. I'd say that he's been, he is actually the person that brought The Parks and Playgrounds Movement to

Q. Is there anyone else you can mention?

A. Oh yes, in the organization at the moment we've got Rod Jackson whose at the T.A.F.E., he's a teacher at the T.A.F.E. and in landscape architecture and Jack Shield. Jack Shield has been another one of those members that goes right back a long way and has been very active. Jack was for some years a commissioner with the N.S.W. Education Commission.

Q. I was reading in one of the annual reports, about the need to establish an environmental fund for legal action, which resulted from the National Park issue.

A. That really is one of the fatal flaws that conservation groups have is that they don't have the fund that they can quickly mobilize action, so that you can get the best professional advice on legal matters and also on other technical matters.

Q. Was the fund established?

A. No there hasn't been a fund established. It takes along while <sup>for</sup> ideas take along while to develop before there's action takes place, and when it comes to money, you know, that's one of the problems that you really have.

Q. The Parks and Playgrounds Movement had a bit of a disappointment over the Newcastle Foreshore Development?

A. Oh yes, well the Foreshore Development let's face it, is one of the, it is a most important development, THE most important development that's taken place as far as the environment is concerned in the past 20 years or more. But it had a long gestation period. You know, I've got a whole filing cabinet there full of Newcastle East and foreshore files. But the Foreshore there've been efforts to try and get something done down there along the foreshore really since the end of World War 2. But it really comes to a head in 1974, I think it was. The important turning point on the Foreshore was about 1974, we put forward there a proposal for a harbour front park and a promenade that would extend from Nobbys right down to the Merewether St wharf. Now of course, everyone poohoed the idea, but that's really when we set the stage and we followed along that all the way and tried to develop in with that Foreshore Park our previous ideas for a historic site because of the importance of this area as far as the history of European settlement and coal mining is concerned. We married the idea of the park and history. At that stage in the early '70's there were tremendous efforts to destroy Newcastle history. There were proposals, I mean, the Council really wanted to flatten the whole thing. Bulldoze it all out of the road and set it all to modern, high-rise development, which would have been catastrophic as far as the area's concerned. It would have destroyed the whole character of the place. But they never got away with it. You know, the residents groups, since those '70's, the residents groups started to form and there's a tremendous amount of community involvement now about



trying to protect Newcastle East and protect the Foreshores. When Joy Cummings became mayor of Newcastle there was a whole new political awareness and a new political framework in which to work. Because Joy really cared about the environment and cared about people.

Q. She was the patron of the Movement?

A. She is the Patron of the Northern Parks and Playgrounds Movement, she wasn't at that stage, she has since become. So the Council developed the idea of a, they may have done it independently or they picked that up from our proposal, I don't know, but they picked up the idea of a competition, a Harbour Foreshore competition. With the hope that by the time of the Bicentenary the whole thing would be in place. And Joy became, I think she was Chairman of the State Bicentenary Authority or something too. She was very much involved with the Bicentenary. Unfortunately, she became ill and she had to retire sick. And what happened then? The Council was sacked, and all sorts of things happened you know.

Q. Consequently the competition winner...?

A. Yes, so the winning competition design was having lots of troubles because it wasn't being implemented. The actual design, what you see down there now is not the design that won the competition, unfortunately. The over-building at Queen's Wharf was disappointing, the fact that the Railways wouldn't come to the party and reduce their lines to two lines instead of four or five that they've got there at that point. The fact that the Housing Commission demanded that they come in on to the Shortland lawn. So that you lose some central features of the plan. I suppose, let's think of it starting from the east first. You lost the opportunity to have a sweep of lawn running right up to Fort Scratchley giving a physical connection and a landscape connection to Fort Scratchley. You lost the opportunity for a really effective amphitheatre, right tucked way in there, instead they've pushed a little amphitheatre stuck out in the middle, which is a pretty sad thing. Then you had the Housing Commission come down, you know and cut off the Fort from the Foreshore, which was disappointing. Then if you go back further to the Railways. The Railway unions demanded that they have closed-in carparks along the Foreshore, against the station where you should have had some public standing space and a little bit of a park where people could wait for trains and things. You've got now a closed off car park, you know, which is ugly. So that's a great disappointment. And then you've got along the railway line itself, instead of having a narrow rail easement in the city, you've still got the original easement, and when they electrified the place they didn't try to make the electric stansions fit in with the Foreshore Scheme, they just used the same old stansions as if they were out in the

countyside somewhere. You know they could have done so many marvellous things. But any rate, maybe that's in next 50 year plan. After all Newcastle's been going, it hasn't been going quite 200 years yet. Now the Queen's Wharf, well that was supposed to be much smaller than it is and it was to be with a lot more space around it, which isn't there now. So that you've got along Wharf Rd, you've got just the backs of these buildings where there should have been some landscaping. And we're supposed to have a concourse, a pedestrian concourse coming down from the Hunter St Mall just going right down nearly right to the foreshore which is on the old axis, that was one of the important axial lines of the city. In the first town plan for Newcastle you had the Cathedral then under the Cathedral you had the Cathedral park and then you had a big open market square which flowed right down to the waterfront, you see. Well, that's all been built out over the years. Still, you've got Market St, which is the bit that's left you see. And the idea was to hold that access right through to the Cathedral, which would have been magnificent. So we've still got it there, the potential's still there, perhaps in another 100 years they might develop it. There was a park there, but they went and built the carpark, the carparking area, Newcastle's ugliest carpark built on a park. There's a magnificent old tree there, a candlenut tree. I can remember the mayor at the time, he said that they'd taken a couple of seeds from the tree and instead of losing a tree, we'd have two trees (impersonation of mayor) You know and he's planted these two trees somewhere, god only knows where they are. And that's when he was opening the carpark. He was a delightful old fellow, *Pardue*, but the thing is he wasn't a conservationist. Although, he was a member of the Parks and Playgrounds Movement (laughs). Same with John MacNaughton's a good member of Parks and Playgrounds Movement (comment: good politician) Oh yes, they all belong to the Parks and Playgrounds Movement.

Q. Actually, I wanted to ask you has there been much government legislation to facilitate conservation. You know is public opinion having an effect where it counts?

A. Oh yes, there's been legislation come forward. You know some of the most important legislation was the setting up of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, for instance. You know Parks and Playgrounds Movement played a very important part there setting up the National Parks and Wildlife Service, lobbying politicians and pushing for it. One of our old, one of our most influential early members, Rod Earp was very active there. And Rod as the Parks and Playgrounds Movement first developed the plans for the Barrington Tops National Park. People don't realize 1954 it was. 1954 we brought forward the Barrington Tops Project, I think it was called. In those early '50's there was a tremendous push from

a number of business men and councils in the Hunter to set up a holiday village on Barrington Tops. It would have destroyed the Tops, you know, a sort of miniature Gordon-Pacific on the scenic rim of the Barrington Tops. We developed this idea for a National Park. There was no New South Wales National Parks Association or anything in those days, 1954 we're talking about. And from the Parks and Playgrounds Movement developed the organization called the Hunter-Manning National Parks Association, which then combined with a group in Sydney, that set up in Sydney, to form the New South Wales National Parks Association, which has been a very influential body in setting up parks in New South Wales. We also were instrumental in getting, in setting up a body called the Blackbutt Action Committee. Blackbutt Action Committee was the adhoc committee which brought together all the conservation groups in Newcastle to fight the proposed expressway through Blackbutt Reserve. That was August 1966. They said they had to have that expressway through Blackbutt Reserve in one year. It's not there now (laughs) and never will be if we have our way. So, from that Blackbutt Reserve Committee and from all that action around Blackbutt Reserve from 1966 to 1972 came the push to get the National Trust in Newcastle. See, there was no National Trust either. So, we brought forward a project for the National Trust. In fact, I suppose I was instrumental in that because Blackbutt had brought us in close contact with the National Trust in Sydney. So we developed a project for Newcastle to launch the National Trust. It was the Hunter 2,000 Project, which we got under way. It was duely launched and became a very influential document, Hunter 2,000. We brought together things like Newcastle East. We brought forward a supplement for Newcastle East and for Kooragang Island as well as this major document for the whole of the Hunter. All those groups, representatives from all those groups, became the Landscape Committee of the National Trust. Well, the National Trust has gone to the pack since then. It's been taken over by the Chamber of Commerce and I don't know that people trust the National Trust much anymore. But any rate, that's unfortunate. You know the wheel goes round. But it might pick up again soon when a few more conservationists get involved with the Trust. But the Parks and Playgrounds Movement has kept it's independence all the way through and we really do value our independence and we're prepared to speak out in the public interest on all those conservation issues over the years.

Q. Now in 1987 you received the Environmental Achievement Award from Newcastle University Board of Environmental Studies. What did you do or was it just your...?

A. I, don't know what I did. It was a shock to me as a matter of fact. However, I think alot of people must have written to the Board. When they set up, they had only recently set up that award.

I think there would be only one other person, you know it had only been going one year. So they gave it to me. Well, I suppose I have been pretty active over the past 20 or 30 years. So I felt that I'd achieved for the Parks and Playgrounds Movement. That's where I've put my major activity. I've been spokesperson for some years now.

Q. How long, do you know?

A. Since 1972 or something like that. I've been the President. But before that I'd been working as a committee member with other committee members on lots of projects.

Q. So how far back does your actual involvement go?

A. Oh, with the Parks and Playgrounds Movement it only goes back to 1962. I can remember coming here, old Joe Richley was the President at the time. He was a delightful man. They soon snaffled me up. I became assistant secretary at that stage very quickly. They start to get you involved and things like that, and then later on secretary of the Parks and Playgrounds Movement. But I really had to drop it in 1970 when my wife died. I was so involved looking after the family and so on. Things sort of went down abit as far as I was concerned. Did I say 1970, I meant I was president since 1982 not '72. I think I said "72 there (comment: not to worry)

Q. So, you've been involved with Blackbutt, Glenrock, the Heritage Centre here?

A. Oh yes, I've been very active in setting up the Heritage Centre here and fighting to stop...well, it starts along, long time before the Heritage Centre was ever thought of. They wanted to demolish this building and there's no National Trust in Newcastle. Stangely enough it fell To the Parks and Playgrounds Movement to fight to save this building and get, luckily, a few of the architecture students at the university took up the issue. But old Joe Richley, I remember had to really initiate that, you know. Terrible wasn't it when you think about it. We were lucky the building stayed. And then of course with John Paynter, Kevin MacDonald, Brian Suters, John Dorman and some others I've forgotten, we took the idea of a Heritage Centre to Joy Cummings. Joy Cummings was the mayor at the time, and got things going with Wran. There was lots of fights. They wouldn't give the centre outright. They wanted to sell it off and then we would lease it back from a developer. But the developer went broke and luckily, out of all this has come this Heritage Centre. Marvellous, A marvellous facility for Newcastle and for the community.

Q. And what about Kooragang Island and the estuary?

A. Things happen in conservation in a Strange way. Alot of people like to think that they initiated things themselves. I suppose we all do, we all do our little bit. But you know I always feel

that we owe a whole lot to a couple of little old ladies over at Stockton who just happened to complain about the mess that was coming over and dirtying their washing (laughs). They took it up with the member here, Arthur Wade, and the government at the time initiated the Kooragang Enquiry. And from that has come forward the interest in the estuary and the proposal for a Kooragang Nature Reserve was developed and so on. And now that's where the National Trust, we worked through the National Trust Landscape Committee, we developed that Kooragang supplement, which was based very heavily on the Coffey Report of Kooragang. They found that the way industry was developing on Kooragang was just not really well planned at all and we knew that for along time.

Q. Was it planned at all?

A. Oh well, it was just one off, you know, as things came up they allotted a little bit of land and filling went on regardless. The Public Works Department were just really making a mess out there. The rot started in 1952, or it might have been 1954, with the passing in parliament of the Hunter Port Act, or something, which started the Kooragang development. You know the Public Works Department was empowered to buy up all that land, which was all little farms and things and start filling the whole lot, all that area. They would have made the most, there would have been petrochemical industries and everything over there if they had their way. But, you know, that Kooragang enquiry is very, very important, even though it hasn't yet, the findings of that enquiry haven't yet been put in place.

(Comment: Oh, really.)

No, oh, no, see this is the thing as I was saying there's spin-offs from all these things, But conservation is a matter that the community, well who else is there, there's only the community-individual people that band together to form conservation groups that keep the issues alive. There's still the Hexham Nature Reserve to be set up and the Kooragang Nature Reserve needs to be extended and it's got to be brought under management. It's all very well to have a line on a map, but if nobody manages it to see that it's looked after and properly conserved, it can still deteriorate. It's like I was talking to you about Flagggy Creek Reserve. That was set up and they set up a trust, the thing is the trust never meet. You see that's a classic method of diffusing the public push. You know, you push for something and they bring you in onto a committee. They set up a committee that never meets and minutes are never kept or anything. You know there's all sorts of ways of shunting you off onto a side track. That's why you need organizations like the Parks and Playgrounds Movement. They're completely independent, you know, they won't be sucked-in. Just to keep things on the straight and narrow.

Q. Did you have any input into the Shortlands Wetland Centre?

A. Oh yes, we were involved with that too. But we don't say that we're responsible for it. I'm not suggesting. oh yes we've been

involved in it, you know, as a group, along with all those other conservation groups- Fauna and Flora Protection Society very important, the National Trust Landscape Committee until quite recently has been very important. The Shortlands Wetlands Centre is just a ... you see, a lot of these issues you have to keep them alive over a long period of time and then the political situation comes right for all things to come together. For instance, fighting for the Glenrock State Recreation Area, we never called it the Glenrock State Recreation Area, we didn't know it as the Glenrock State Recreation Area until quite late. We were then fighting for the Foreshore for years and years and years. Well we've been fighting for a couple of things on the Foreshore like the historic site under the National Parks and Wildlife Act. It's time has not yet come, but it's still there in the wings. If we get our historic park underway, historic park and open-air museum, then the next step is to see that it's declared a historic site, so that you get state and government funding. That's the importance of having a historic site. Out at Glen...Kooragang for years and years we were just trying to get some sort of park in the industrial area you know, we fought and fought, we never dreamed we'd be able to make this breakthrough. You see, then the climate became right. The Coffey Report set the things in climate and then we were able to bring forward the idea of looking after the whole estuary. Of course, there's been things happening not only in Newcastle, there's been things happening all round the world. (comment: that's right) Change, dynamic change takes place and you've just got to have plans ready to take up the challenge when ever it comes.

Q. Actually, I had a question here about what government funding or other assistance can you call upon?

A. Conservation groups can't generally call upon any assistance, I suppose. The Parks and Playgrounds Movement doesn't get any assistance, but we did run for the Commonwealth government, an employment scheme...what do you call it?..C.E.P. scheme for them, which was pretty hard work for me, as a matter of fact, as I was the person who had to actually come here everyday to see that they were working etc, etc. Because I had to sign the cheques and things like that for their wages. So, it put a lot of responsibility on to my little band of workers. There were about three of us really, who serviced that scheme. So we had three people work for us for six months. That was good, it was good for the Movement. However, I couldn't possibly do it again, it's too much hard work for me individually.

Q. And how about funding actual proposals?

A. Like park proposals? (yes). In Newcastle we've been very unfortunate in that the funding, say for the Northumberland County Scheme which was set up as I say in 1952, the funding arrangements were to take out long-term loans over a period of 25 years and to

fund the Scheme, to see that it was implemented. Buy the land that was necessary for roads, market squares, parks and so on, all those public facilities that had to be provided. The Newcastle Council objected very strongly to the Scheme and objected very strongly to any of the park proposals. They wouldn't have any parks on the foreshore. They wouldn't have any parks at Civic, they didn't want Civic Park, they didn't want Pacific Park and so on. So they tried to knock them all out of the Scheme and that's where Parks and Playgrounds Movement was very influential in seeing that they stayed in the Scheme. All the foreshore parks were knocked out incidentally, of the Scheme in 1956 due to the city council. And the city council wouldn't come into the funding, because the city council at that time said that the funding would be too onerous. Over 25 years the interest rate could climb to  $4\frac{1}{8}\%$ , they thought it might even get to that. So that all these parks, even Greenpoint would have been all paid for. You would have had it all there if the funding arrangements could have been agreed to in the '50's. (comment:now it's so difficult.) Now the expense, one million dollars, one million pounds, sorry, two million dollars, it would have cost for all of the parks in the whole of the Northumberland County. Now, I mean, they talk about spending a million dollars just to landscape an area. Really politicians can be very negative when they don't look ahead, because they're so interested in holding on to their seats. Had the right things been done to set in motion, that acquisition fund and now they call it the...the fund is still there. The fund that was set up finally, is still there, but it's never had any money in it since all those years. The only thing they ever bought with it was the, there's a building in Auckland St. the corner of Auckland and King St. That was the only thing that was ever bought with that fund, the acquisition fund, basically because the councils wouldn't come to the party. Now in Sydney you have a different set of circumstances, because you have a lot of local government areas.

Q. Is that the Cumberland County Council?

A. Yes, the Cumberland County Scheme was set up and you had the Cumberland Fund set up. And that Cumberland fund has contributions from all the councils and the state government matches all the funds, you see, which we lost. We missed out on that. The idea was the councils would do their own acquisitions etc, etc. But any rate we're bumbling along. There's some people trying to get that fund operational now, as a matter of fact. There's a big move to get the fund operational even after all these years, really going. Even if it was only to get that matching funding from the government. In Sydney you have also in the last 10 years you've had greenspace funds and so on. You have quite a lot of direct government funding to acquire some important parks. Mind you, Sydney, I'm not suggesting Sydney's got all the parks it needs. But in those early days in Sydney they set aside magnificent areas like

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Botanic Gardens, which is 65 hectares right on the harbour front. Right against the city, you know, it's amazing. Sydney was only a village when that was set aside. We never had any of those opportunities. When Newcastle was set up, all the land was taken up by a company called the A.A. company, and they owned everything west of Brown St, so the city of Newcastle could only develop from Brown St towards the east, you see. The Civic St was the other end of the city. So all from Pacific St to Nobbys was all reserved for public purposes in parks and things like that. So you had this funny little village stuck there, so Newcastle was really hemmed in by the A.A. company. Now that's the Australian Agricultural Company.

Q. Was it then the land was dedicated for a botanic park here in 1868, was it?

A. Oh, I can't remember off hand the date, but yes there was a Botanic Gardens set aside in Newcastle.

Comment: It never eventuated.

A. Oh, there was abit of activity there. I mean they planted all those trees and you'll see it in the grounds of B.H.P. It was given over to B.H.P. by the Newcastle Steelworks Act of 1913. The Newcastle Steelworks Act, you know the Premier of New South Wales big noting himself, talking to the B.H.P. (end of tape 1.)

You under way now? Yep!

The Botanic Gardens is another great issue. To get the Botanic Gardens going for Newcastle. Parks and Playgrounds Movement's been on this push for a Botanic Gardens for a long while because, see in Sydney, there's 7 million dollars per annum goes into the Botanic Gardens. That's alot of money, isn't it? Now that's more, well, we just don't get any funds for any parks really. Certainly not in that sort of league. But, of course that just doesn't go.. that's not just at Sydney Cove, right on Port Jackson, that's the Mount Annan Botanic Gardens and Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens. There're all annex<sup>s</sup> of the Sydney Botanic Gardens. The Botanic Gardens is more than just a place where it's a nice park, although we use it as a park and a setting for Sydney city, it's a place where there's study. There's a herbarium that's funded there, so there's quite alot of things go on at the Botanic Gardens, not just gardening. Now, we the Parks and Playgrounds Movement, got a group together to form a Botanic Gardens Committee here in Newcastle and Don Barnett, who was our president of the Parks and Playgrounds Movement at the time took up the activities of organizing the Botanic Gardens, and he now puts all his efforts into that Botanic Gardens project, so we don't see him helping us as much as he used to on the general front, but he's doing a magnificent job. Of course, there's so many people come in on the Botanic Gardens now. But those Botanic Gardens, the actual kernel of the idea, is one of those things that's grown out of the Parks and Playgrounds Movement. So many things have come out of Parks



and Playgrounds Movement over the years. You know, getting the release of Fort Scratchley and so on. But there are other groups, you know you start a project and other groups come in and take it up, then you can let them run with it, it's good.

Q. Can you mention any other projects like that, that we may not have covered so far?

A. I mentioned Fort Scratchley, the release of Fort Scratchley, getting that going we've been very much involved there. Well, I think the setting up of the National Parks Association through the Hunter-Manning National Parks Association, the Fauna and Flora Protection Society, the Parks and Playgrounds Movement was influential in getting that started. And that's been one of our jobs, getting people going on things like that- the Greenpoint Action Committee and the U.R.G.E. In recent years we've started campaigning particularly to save Lake Macquarie. Lake Macquarie is Australia's largest lake and it hasn't got a decent bloody park on the whole of Lake Macquarie. It's unbelievable, isn't it? So we've called a series of public meetings, that's how these things usually start and people come forward. We've started a project on...Belmont Lagoon Project, there's a committee operating out there now on that. So Parks and Playgrounds Movement's been a bit of a catalyst in many ways. But of course, as I said to you, nothing is done by one person or another. It's just a matter of a number of people coming together at the right time. Shortlands Wetlands Centre is that kind of project. The Awabakal Centre. We've supported environmental education over the years too...We did get a group going called the Hunter Town Planning Association, unfortunately, it's gone by the board. However, some of these organizations, you know you're involved in establishing like the Blackbutt Action Committee or we've had the Glenrock Community Advisory Committee. Well, you see they're important organizations and they do their work on a particular issue and then they might disperse. I suppose I should mention the Foreshore Committee. We have, together with a number of other groups organized the Citizens Foreshore Committee. That was organized before the Landscape Competition. The idea was to get....well, there was an issue we had an issue. The issue was that they wanted to build a carparking station on the Foreshore, the City Council. We set up a group by gathering together a number of groups and I think the Parks and Playgrounds Movement was instrumental in actually doing that. But we never tried to take the kudos or anything for those things because we're just a part of the community. That Foreshore Committee has been reactivated presently, because of another issue that's going on. That's the issue of subdividing the Parkland. There's this potential problem with subdividing this railway land given to the city for parkland. So we've had to bring the organization together and we've developed a whole new concept for this park. In fact it's been a very important time. That's all happened in a matter of months recently. In fact those new plans are on

display now and we're looking for public support. Now that's initiated lots of new people going out and they'll be getting people working and so on. So it's a matter of throwing a stone in the pond and the waves go out you know, and perhaps meet with others and they either go together or work against one another, I don't know. Generally speaking, we always like to take a positive view. So that when the Council wanted to build a carparking station at Nobbys, for instance, we objected very strongly, because it would have meant that the convict built breakwater would have become the major throughfare. We didn't just object to the carparking area there, we turned the whole thing over and made it into a Historic..we looked for a historic site, you see we developed the Historic Site idea, which is the thing which finally ended up getting the military out of the area and seeing that Fort Scratchley was given over to the city. Now admittedly we didn't win the Historic Site because if it had have been an Historic Site, the government would have been paying, you see. The government is very hard to catch, and they don't like paying. And the same down there on the Lake now, we've got groups together to form U.R.G.E., which is the United Residents Groups <sup>of the ENVIRONMENT</sup> of Lake Macquarie and they're fighting to save the Lake. There've been a number of issues come up that they've been very..it's been very important that they've been operating. Various issues, such as the West Lakes Sewage Scheme, to see things are done properly there. Initiating this concept of a National Park for Lake Macquarie Pushing for Greenpoint, the establishment of a park for Greenpoint. Getting another group going at Caves Beach to look at what's happened with the Gordon Pacific thing. The Gordon Pacific plan was one of the terrible failures, although Gordon Pacific haven't built anything yet. There's still alot of activity, I don't know whether we've got the energy to do alot there, but there's got to be things done there. It's just absolutely outrageous what the council has allowed to happen. But one of the troubles there is you've got a new mayor, and also member for Swansea, ... Welsh, who came forward more or less on an environmental ticket. People threw out the member there and they got rid of the mayor. I mean mayors loose their seats. So <sup>WELSH IS</sup> there now and he's really not representing the people. He's sort of pushing all sorts of barrows. I don't know, it's hard to know what his game is. He's only been there for a short time, but what he did with Gordon Pacific, pushing Gordon Pacific instead of seeing the proper planning procedures were adopted and seeing that everybody had a fair say you know, so that you get a reasonable outcome. They just gave it all away, the whole thing, dreadful. Really is dreadful. But the thing is the company, the Gordon Pacific is really an old mining company, the Gordon Pacific is really a company called Wallermain ? Now Wallermain was the mining company which was previously called

Silver Valley Minerals and before that it was called Silver Valley Uranium Mines and Silver Valley Uranium Mines bought another mining company down there, Mawson Pacific. So what you're seeing is a defunct mining company that's become a developer. They've got this magnificent land there. They've turned themselves into two companies now, there's Anson Australia or something and Gordon Pacific. And they've employed very good public relations consultants and so on and <sup>have</sup> done the right things like paying money into politicians' fighting funds and things like that. They're very clever, they've really outsmarted the people.

Q. What was the proposal? What did they want to develop?

A. They came forward with the idea that they were going to develop a tourist resort, but no one really knows what it will end up like because tourism is the 'in' word at the moment. So it was hard to fight from that point of view because you really didn't know what they were proposing. It came forward as a sort of a blob on a map Tourist Resort. 500 million dollars, you can't knock it, can you? But in actual fact, the company doesn't have 500 million dollars it barely could scrape together 30 million dollars at the outset. So what are they going to do, I don't know. But you see, the public planning procedures were all thrown away. You had a new council in and they wouldn't listen to the people, they wouldn't allow them a hearing even. And then you've got a new state government come in and thrown planning away. You mentioned something about planning legislation- one of the most important things is planning, I suppose, in terms of parks and trying to look ahead at the shape of cities and towns. Well, after the war, you had this series of County Councils in Sydney and Newcastle; that's the Cumberland County and the Northumberland County and they were local government bodies really, another tier of government. But they were thrown out in 1964 and the State Planning Authority Act was brought in. The State Planning Authority was set up, then the State Planning Authority was thrown out, they became the Planning and Environment Commission. Then the Commission finally went and it became the Planning and Environment Department, directly under a minister you see.

And now... (Q. It's gone too has it?)

Yes, it's all gone. Now you've got the Planning Department and the Environment Department. But planning is under Mr Hay, the minister at the moment. Well, in effect the present state government appears in my book, to just throw <sup>PLANNING</sup> money away completely. I just think it's a mess now. Underlying all this, is an act of parliament, the latest thing, is the Environmental Assessment Act 1959, it was brought down. Now that act is a very good act in itself, unfortunately, it all depends on the minister, the whims of the minister. We really don't have a statutory act that can be enforced. Because finally when you come to enforce something which is very good, and finally down the line, it's just going

to be to a minister to either decide whether he thinks it's a good thing or a bad thing. So what you have now, it's particularly bad now, if you can get a pipeline through to the minister and see that money runs, well, there you go. People, like community groups, of course, don't have pipelines through to ministers. Indeed, if we want to ring the minister's department, it costs a fortune from Newcastle; everything's STD. Everytime you want to send a document it costs you \$5 if you want to put it onto a FAX or something. So, the moment you're outside the Sydney ring, the region, it's very difficult to keep in contact with the centre where all the decisions are made. Any rate, I suppose, if you were wanting to make a million dollars, there's no trouble getting a pipeline through. One of the other terrible things that seem to be happening, which may not be new, is the setting up of companies that are only \$2 or \$3 development companies. For instance, Gordon Pacific. I mean as a company, they've never paid a dividend. They've only been trading under the name of Gordon Pacific for 18 months. When they were Wallermain they were either going broke, there was no.....

Comment: It sounds abit shonky, doesn't it?

A. Well, not so shonky. It's quite legitimate, but then again you've got a company, for instance, for Greenpoint. A company that's going to give you all sorts of things at Greenpoint, is only a \$5 company. Now, that's their \$5 paid up capital. 5 share holders. I'm sorry, there's 4 \$1 shares. Mr Vogan, for instance has a \$1 share and 10 B class shares, what ever they are. There's another group called...I won't mention who they are, that has another 40 B class shares. All in all, I suppose you might have \$55 in the company. You see, they can do...that's all they've got to loose. You can't loose more than \$55 in a limited liability company. The company that was going to build the Tower down here, they were only \$2 paid up company. Companies are set up like this and they can go along with all sorts of pretty pictures to the boardroom and you get a good public relations bloke in charge and they tell a good story. Like Gordon Pacific "we're going to build a Botanic Gardens down there". 15 million dollars they're going to spend! They haven't even got 15 million dollars to spend, but they tell you they're going to spend it.

Comment: Jobs. Creation of jobs, that's always....

A. That wouldn't create jobs. What they're saying is, there's the potential to create jobs, not that they're going to create jobs. Yes, so it's a matter of money might fall down from heaven or there might be a nice Japanese entrepreneur, and that's the way they hope to finance these things. What they do, is get councils to short-sheet the planning rules and all sorts of things. It's a great shame there aren't a few aldermen about who ask questions, you know, be abit more thoughtful when these fancy developments come up. You know, we've seen dozens of them on the Newcastle

Foreshore down here.....Windward Passage-you know going to build a great big tavern on the fore shore but it doesn't look like... in fact last week he pulled out all together. The business world is a difficult world, however, councils could really look after the public interest, not just after a business man's interest. But, there's also bonafide businessmen who have large amounts of capital established in an area and they really should be helping to see that they don't go under too and to see that they're properly serviced. But instead we see always where there's these shiny dollars in the distance, instead of going to a consultant and finding out what's their paid up capital or look at their annual reports and so on, they take them at face value and listen to the public relations blurb, instead of looking behind and seeing what really is there. So that's one of the things that's happening recently, because we live in a time when people play with money. You don't get, unfortunately, the big money is being made in the playing with the money. It's like a big gambling..you push the money backwards and forwards and everytime you push it back, you're making larger investments. It's not really investing the money at all, it's just paper. Unless that money, that paper, is actually used to make something that actually creates wealth or provides us with something tangible, it's just paper. And come the time when depositors decide to withdraw their deposits or realize their capital, everything's alright, but if people start asking for their money, the whole thing falls to pieces. So, it's a little bit of a ...it's important that local government and planning doesn't get involved in this race with the speculators. Any rate, that's the problem of the moment, speculation.

Comment: How are we going? There's something I'd just like to read you, I think it's interesting- In recent years the ever increasing awareness of the seriousness of environmental issues ...but the active conservationist is still regarded as a pink-tinged, interfering extremist (laughs). Do you still find that so?

A. Well, I think that if you had a \$2 company, and you only had pretty pictures to show people, you'd be frightened of anybody who looked behind the pictures, wouldn't you? So I think that conservationists in that sense, they are not liked by the speculator at all. There's no friends there. But I think that the bonafide business interests, there's no real problem. Because we're all working towards trying to make the planet a better place, if we like to pare down and see what people are really on about. It's just that some businessmen may feel they can do it best their way, you see. But, if they're making CFC's, I'd say they can't. Of course the big issue today is that we're coming up against the population time-bomb. Now that's really underlying all the problems

in the world, whether they be economic as well as environmental. We just haven't realized it, there's a lot of people haven't realized it. Still we're in amongst it, it's happening.

Comment: There's the One Earth Campaign that was launched just on the weekend with a worldwide concert. That's the first time I've heard that on such a scale though I've heard that message before. A. Conservationists are on the side of life and living things. I would find myself quite at home with a lot of people, a lot of issues - anti war, anti...injustice and so on. It's definitely...we've got to limit population. Now I don't know how it's done, but it's something in this generation we've got to do. Because otherwise, we're coming up against that steep rise in population and there's no way the earth can sustain, there's no where else to go.

Comment: Something's got to give.

A. There's no where else to go. Once upon a time they thought we'll develop the space probes and things like that. We'll all go and live on Mars. No, no, no we're all part of the earth. You know our body is made up of part of the earth, we are tied to the earth, whether we like it or not. There mightn't be an umbilical cord there, but in effect it really is because our body is composed of the atoms that come to us from the food we eat and so on, and we're as a part of the earth as any tree or anything like that. If we allow our particular part of the earth..if we allow ourselves to grow too much in numbers we take over too much of the bio-mass. In other words all the living things, and we force out too many things, then we could send the whole thing crashing (comment: Everything.) Just the same as you get in...recently we had swarms of these little cup moth larvae. All the trees all round Newcastle were defoliated. They built up in population and then they just disappear overnight, like that. Suddenly, there comes a time when they've just taken too much and a virus or something goes right through the lot. It just does them all. You know it's a salutary lesson for human beings there.

Tired?

THE END.