

OPEN FOUNDATION - AUSTRALIAN HISTORY - ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

SUMMARY OF ORAL HISTORY TAPE.

SUBJECT: " A DECADE IN THE HISTORY OF NEWCASTLE STATE DOCKYARD 1966 - 1976 FROM AN EMPLOYEE'S PERSPECTIVE."

INTERVIEWEE: Mr. JIM SMITH - GENERAL BOILERMAKER

INTERVIEWER: ROBYN SANDERSON

Mr Smith's work when he began at the Dockyard was mainly cleaning weld<sup>er</sup>s and though he thought it unnecessary it provided employment. In the decade that he worked at the Dockyard Jim estimates they built 20 ships that were entirely different and each required new plans. Unlike other shipyards that maintained continuity in procedure and design. Jim believes this record of 20 ships to be a testimony to the industriousness of the workforce.

The Boilermaker's Society was considered by Jim to be the strongest union and he believed they mostly led the union movement in the yard. He also cites the stupidity of the management in changing work procedures that led to demarcation issues as one of the reasons for industrial unrest. He also recalls situations whereby the management sought to gain extra time on contracts by creating situations that resulted in strike action. Jim has documented evidence that he lost 9 months in his 10 years due to industrial action.

Supervisory positions were created to reduce union activism which led to an over supply of supervisors that the men had no respect for and supervisors status was generally low. The scale of supervision went from foreman to assistant foreman leading hand to assistant leading hand and this applied to each trade.

The proposed graving dock could have meant viability for the dockyard. The modernisation undertaken by the Government in 1966 could have been more constructive, improvements such as reversing the direction that steel sections moved to the slipways would have reduced the huge transport bill. Machinery should have been updated, an air machine that Jim used was stamped 1932 Walsh Island - antiquated machinery meant less efficiency and uncompetitiveness. Also the establishment of a 7 man board to manage the dockyard was seen as ineffectual as far as the workforce was concerned.

The media's representation of the Dockyard's industrial action was that no matter which union walked out, they were all lumped together and the headlines said "the Dockyard's on strike". Jim lost a fortnight due to a strike by 37 men from another trade. The impression the public derived from the media was that the dockyard workers were wasters and employee's of the dockyard became stigmatized as a result.

Shipbuilding at the dockyard was originally subsidised by the government by about 45% this was reduced by the Whitlam government to about 25% until finally the government cut all subsidy. When the Whitlam government came to power in 1972 there were seven dockyards , by 1976 there were only about three.

The Dockyard's biggest financial loss was a dredge, the Ham 2/11 it lost \$500,000 due to stringent requirements. No other dockyard world wide would build this dredge but our mugs did.

In Jim's first six months at the dockyard he rarely worked a full week due to strikes for wages and conditions. By changing jobs from an ironworker at Allis Chalmers to a boilermaker at the dockyard Jim's wages dropped considerably.

The Federal Government in 1953/54 was a Liberal government and they brought the destroyer the "Hobart" to the dockyard for a complete re-fit in an attempt to keep the dockyard workers in employment. The re-fitting of the Hobart took nearly three years to complete after which she was laid up in Sydney Harbour for six months and then sold for scrap to the Japanese.

Viability should not be a consideration for shipbuilding in Australia - an island continent whose lifeline to the world is the sea, therefore for Australia not to have a healthy shipbuilding industry to secure and defend it, is a shame.

ROBYN SANDERSON

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ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OF MR. JIM SMITH.

OPEN FOUNDATION 1988

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

LECTURER - MARGARET HENRY

1,000 WORD ESSAY USING

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH

SUBJECT - NEWCASTLE STATE DOCKYARD

INTERVIEWEE - MR. JIM SMITH

ROBYN SANDERSON

THURSDAY 10am - 12pm

A BRIEF HISTORY OF NEWCASTLE STATE DOCKYARD.

Newcastle State Dockyard since its inception has always been subjected to the political machinations of the reigning government regardless of its political leanings. This statement can be substantiated by the history of the Dockyard, from its very beginning to its final demise in 1986. The desire to keep Newcastle an Industrial city in an attempt to win the working class man's vote was the motivation behind Mr. Arthur Griffith's (Minister for Public Works) decision in 1912 to build a Government owned Dockyard in Newcastle. (1) The original dockyard was built at Walsh Island (now Kooragang) at a cost of 850,000 pounds, its first official launching was two ferries in 1914. Like most industries the Dockyard prospered throughout the war years but the post-war depression of the '20's saw an end to large shipbuilding. The Government of the day tried unsuccessfully to sell the Dockyard, later they helped the Dockyard diversify into the general engineering industry. (2)

In 1925 the then Prime Minister, Mr. Bruce announced Commonwealth funding for a floating dock which was completed in 1930 at a cost of 500,000 pounds; the State Government contributed 365,000 pounds and the Commonwealth paid the balance from a Defence Department grant. (3) Once again the Dockyard was prosperous but only for a short time as the orders declined and the current political party was deposed. The new government was against Government owned utilities and preferred privately run utilities, to this end they proposed selling off the Dockyard; ergo the State Dockyard became a political scapegoat once again. No buyers were found as the economic climate was very shaky, eventually the Dockyard was dismantled and brought in pieces from Walsh Island to the Carrington site to be used for ship repair work. Prior to the Dockyard, ship repair work was undertaken at the Carrington Site by the Public Works Dept. after Walsh Island closed the dismantled Dockyard was returned to its original site and its original purpose. (4)

The problems that dogged the early history of the Dockyard have that "De Javu" <sup>déjà vu</sup> quality and it appears that the Dockyard since its inception has been a political football at the mercy of the presiding Governments. The current Dockyard was built in 1942 mainly for the construction and servicing of naval ships and for a time became a very successful force in the shipbuilding industry. Between the years 1942 to 1966 the dockyard built approximately 65 vessels of varying sizes. According to Mr. Smith there were some very lean years at the Dockyard about 1953/54 when shipbuilding contracts were few and far between.

(1) J.C. Docherty, Newcastle the making of an Australian city, Sydney, 1983, p34

(2) Docherty, Newcastle the making of an Australian city... pp38,39,40

(3) Docherty, Newcastle the making of an Australian city.. p 42

(4) Docherty, Newcastle the making of an Australian city. p43



Apparently the Government of the day, which was the Liberal Party was concerned about the lack of work at the Dockyard so much that they had the H.M.A.S. Hobart brought to the Dockyard for a complete re-fit and overhaul. It took approximately three years for the re-furbishing of the Hobart after which she lay in Sydney Harbour for about six months and was then sold to the Japanese for scrap. The Government effectively kept the Dockyard in work for three years just for the sake of keeping it going.(5)

Mr. Smith asserts that during his decade at the Dockyard (1966-76) they produced approximately 20 ships, unlike earlier years these ships were unique because they each had their own set of plans and were completely different from each other. In this respect the Dockyard was itself unique and because of this shipbuilding profits were much lower due to the lack of continuity in the types of ships they built.

Other factors that made the Dockyard's shipbuilding less profitable were their quality control standards, welds were ground off to give a more complete finish some Boilermaker's thought this was unnecessary as other foreign shipyards didn't bother with these details. Another reason shipbuilding was less profitable was the fact that the workshops contact with the slipways was not direct and in fact ran the opposite way, this meant that the Dockyard hired very expensive private transport carriers to transport parts and equipment to and from the slips, the costs involved were huge, in a one year period the cost amounted to \$10,000.

Unions at the Dockyard were considered militant, the strongest of these unions was the Boilermaker's Society as the Boilermaker's ranked as the main part of the Dockyard workforce. During the mid '60's the Dockyard workforce was on strike regularly fighting for better conditions and higher wages. A report by the Hunter Valley Research Foundation in 1967 made submissions to the Dockyard Management on proposed expansions and an economic evaluation of the Dockyard. In this report a table cites the statistics of man days lost by the workers and their respective wages due to strike action. The table covered the years 1960-1966, 1962 had the least man days lost being 1,098 man days and wages lost were \$7,698, the highest figure came from the 1965-66 period when man days lost were 12,500 with a loss of \$92,533 in workers wages. (6)

Not all the industrial disputes were caused by the want of better conditions but quite a lot of the industrial unrest was created by the Management who either needed more time on their ship building contracts (ship building contracts had a clause that allowed for a week's extension for each day lost by strikes) or through their own stupidity caused demarcation disputes by giving the tradesmans work to other trades.

(5) Smith, James Oral History on Dockyard

(6) Hunter Valley Research Foundation Report, Pamphlet Box, Regional Library

The deciding factor in the balance for the Dockyard was the often promised Graving Dock or Floating Dock, a model of this proposed graving dock was displayed at David Jones in 1966. Over the years the graving dock was proposed in submissions from the Public Works Department twice, recommended by the Hunter Valley Research Foundation twice and mentioned as the solution for the Dockyard by almost every politician who thought to gain some mileage from the situation at the Dockyard. In 1974 the Public Works Department even had a complete tenderers booklet made for the purpose of attracting tenders for the proposed graving dock, ultimately rocketing costs were given as the reason for the dock not to be built.(7)

The local media may be seen as responsible for much of the unsympathetic attitude of the general public to the Dockyard and its workers. As many as 17 different unions were represented at the Dockyard but whenever there was any one of these unions on strike the headlines in the local paper usually read "the Dockyard's on strike" "Dockyard workers stop work" etc., when in fact it may have been 15 workers from a minor union. To many people not directly involved with the Dockyard it was interpreted that the Dockyard as a whole was on strike and the frequency of small industrial disputes gave the impression that the Dockyard workers were always on strike regardless of the union they belonged to. The private companies reaction to ex-dockyard employees was based on the exaggerated reports in the media of strike action was fairly hostile as they also believed Dockyard workers to be trouble makers who did not work and only caused trouble, many people in both the private and public sectors believed most Dockyard workers were red hot communists. (8)

Mr. Smith believes the catalyst for the end of the Dockyard was the decision by the Whitlam Government in 1972 to reduce the shipbuilding subsidy that was gradually reduced to 25%, then 10% until it was nothing at all. Most ship building yards world wide are heavily subsidised by their respective Governments, the Japanese shipyards receive approximately 60% subsidy from their Government and reduce their costs by building only standard ships clients wanting extras have to pay for them.

A second report by the Hunter Valley Research Foundation in 1976 recommended increased subsidies to the Shipbuilding Industry, stating that during 1960-66 capital investments in the public and private sectors of shipbuilding in Australia had doubled by contrast the capital investment in the State Dockyard went up by a mere 8%. (9) In the same report H.V.R.F. challenged and disposed the validity of several arguments surrounding the Dockyard, the arguments being that labour productivity was low, that the workforce was responsible for their predicament, that the taxpayer's were subsidising the wages of the workforce, and finally that the purchase of cheap overseas ships was more advantageous. This report was also made public in the local paper but whether the public

chose to believe the facts or the previous propaganda became of little consequence, as the fate of the Dockyard had by this time been sealed. The Dockyard eventually got its floating dock the "muloobinda" built in Japan and towed here, of course it was too late to alter the downward spiral of a very troubled industry. At its peak the Dockyard employed 2,300 people as well as supporting various smaller engineering works, by early 1977 the workforce at the Dockyard was reduced to approximately 500. The remnants of a once powerful industry were left to struggle in a very diversified, different dockyard, this struggle continued for a further ten years and now we have no Dockyard .

"Shipbuilding never has been an industry of big profits, even overseas most shipbuilding is heavily subsidised. To see an island continent that depends so much on the sea for its trade without a thriving shipbuilding industry is crass economic stupidity".(9)

- (7) State Dockyard Pamphlet Box, Newcastle Regional Library
- (8) Smith, James Oral History Research
- (9) Smith, James, Newcastle Morning Herald - letter to the editor -

*Bibliography*



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1988

I, JAMES ERNEST SMITH ..... give my

permission to ROBYN SANDERSON .....

to use this interview, or part of this interview, for  
research, publication and/or broadcasting (delete one of  
these if required) and for copies to be lodged in  
the ARCHIVES OF NEWCASTLE .....

UNIVERSITY .....

for the use of other bona fide researchers.

Signed Smith .....

Date 15/7/88 .....

Interviewer R. Sanderson .....



# STATE DOCKYARD NEWCASTLE

OFF BOURKE STREET, CARRINGTON  
ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:  
THE GENERAL MANAGER,  
P.O. BOX 59, CARRINGTON, N.S.W. 2294  
TELEGRAMS: STATEDOCK, NEWCASTLE  
TELEX: AA 28073  
PHONE: (049) 610-401

Mr. James Ernest Smith  
8 Tighes Terrace  
TIGHES HILL NSW 2297

PLEASE QUOTE: CLR:DS

YOUR REFERENCE:

1st March, 1984

## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Mr. James E. Smith was employed at the State Dockyard, Newcastle as a Boilermaker from 28th September, 1966 until he was retrenched on 12th October, 1976.

During this period Mr. Smith lost a total of 205 working days or 287 days on a 7 day basis. He was paid for 9 years, 3 months, 1 day service, equivalent to 1 month 25½ calendar days (8 weeks ½ day @ \$157-45 = \$1275-35) .

STATE DOCKYARD

  
C.L. RYAN  
ACCOUNTANT FINANCE

SHIPBUILDING — DOCKING — SHIP REPAIRING — MARINE & GENERAL ENGINEERING

# STATE DOCKYARD

LD:

Long Service Leave James Ernest SMITH (939), Employee No. 6998  
Ministerial Employee - Born 7.11.1927

<u>Service</u>	<u>Yrs. Mths. Dya.</u>
State Dockyard 28.9.'66 to 12.10.'76 ( Vol. retrenched)	10. 0. 15.
Less absences without pay 204.3/4 {5}	
287 {7}	9. 14.
Actual service as at 12th October, 1976	9. 3. 1.

It is recommended that Mr. Smith's service be established at 9 years, 3 months and 1 day as at 12th October, 1976.

TOTAL LEAVE DUE	M	D
	1	25 1/2
LESS ✓ TAKEN		NIL
TOTAL ✓ DUE	1	25 1/2



CHIEF CLERK.

18th October, 1976

  
C.L. RYAN  
ACCOUNTANT FINANCE

SHIPBUILDING — DOCKING — SHIP REPAIRING — MARINE & GENERAL ENGINEERING



OPEN FOUNDATION 1988 - AUSTRALIAN HISTORY - ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH PAPER  
 TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY TAPE.  
 SUBJECT: A DECADE IN THE HISTORY OF NEWCASTLE STATE DOCKYARD 1966 - 1976  
FROM AN EMPLOYEE'S PERSPECTIVE.

INTERVIEWEE - MR. JIM SMITH, 8 Tighes Terrace Tighes Hill Ph 61 2867

INTERVIEWER - MRS. ROBYN SANDERSON ( Mr Smith is Mrs Sanderson's father)

R.S. - Mr. Smith you were a Boilermaker employed at the State Dockyard between 1966 and 1976 - could you tell me something about the type of work you were involved and if you think it was successful?

J.S. - Basically the work that I performed was, when I first started at the Dockyard in 1966 was GRINDING cleaning up after welding and ah structural work, grinding off all marks, welding marks and ah dags and filling up the holes and cleaning off afterwards to take the special paint that they were using on the ship aah I considered that it was an unnecessary job but the Insurance companies that insured the ship insisted on it and we did a successful job and it provided work for quite a number of boilermakers so <sup>that</sup> everything seemed to be okay there.

R.S. - How many ships do you think were built during the 10 years you were at the Dockyard?

J.S. - In the <sup>period of</sup> time that I was employed at the Dockyard there were 20 ships built and the majority of them were one-off called one-off jobs eh eh there was no "one" that you could say was the same err a different set of plans for each ship aah everything was different on them and there was no continuity of parts flowing to them, then so therefore they were unviable in that respect because every <sup>over</sup> ship was different and had to be approached in a different manner.

R.S. - Was this unusual?

J.S. - Definitely Yes most shipyards when they build ships like the Dockyard in the original days back in the 50's they built a series of ships in the D class and the K class freighters and they were all built off the one set of plans and the hull design and everything was the same consequently the the the design was cheaper and more efficient because parts and and that flowed continuously whereas when things that were ships we built in 1966 and 1976 were one-off different and consequently you had a fresh set of plans and everything was different on each ship.

R.S. - So that's contrary to popular belief that Dockyard workers were idlers and didn't perform?

J.S. - Well if you can say that we were idlers when we produced 20 ships in 10 years that's 2 ships per year, well if that's idling then I would like to know what an idler is.

R.S. - When you first began at the Dockyard, what was the status of the unions and was there much industrial unrest at that time?

J.S. - Well the union's status, was they were quite strong predominately the Boilermaker's Society, was the strongest union in the yard and they more or less led the union movement in and there was quite a bit of unrest but basically the unrest there was ah particularly at this time was generated by in the main by the stupidity of the management the management frequently



- J.S. - introduced changes to work procedures without the consultation of the unions and workers on the job and consequently brought about problems with demarcation or because of cutting across different trades like the fitters and plumbers and boilermakers, and all fitters and plumbers doing work that was originally belonging to the boilermakers and vice versa this was one of the basic causes, a lot of little things brought about stoppages such as when boilermakers had a meeting in the lunch hour and right on starting time resumption of work the yard foreman and the Industrial officer would come down and tell them they had 5 minutes to finish their meeting and go back to work - and that upset the men and ah then they'd extend their meeting somebody would move a motion to extend the meeting and ah consequently the Industrial officer and the works foreman would come and tell them that there was further work for them for the rest of the day and they went home, on other days they would um ah take the meeting outside down to the park in Carrington and that was another half day lost. So it was all a lot of these things happened through stupidity with the management and um it was one of the ploys when management wanted to gain some time - they had a clause in their contracts when ah the agreed building time of ships giving them a week for every day lost by industrial action and quite frequently they deliberately pushed their workers into a position that they had to take ah that they had to have a stoppage and the result was that quite a lot of time was lost unnecessarily simply to gain the management a bit of time on their contracts. ah
- R.S. How much do you think of the industrial unrest was motivated by the company for that reason?
- J.S. - Quite a bit, <sup>of it</sup> quite a bit of it about 60% I'd say, In that period of time that I was employed at the Dockyard I lost something like ah 9 months in 10 years, that'd give you a bit of an idea how much industrial unrest there was but as I said before most of it was brought about by stupidity of supervision and management.
- R.S. - During your employment at the Dockyard the status of supervisors changed considerably - Can you tell me how and why do you think it changed?
- J.S. - Well the status of supervisors um there was too much supervision and the men resented it, over -- night they'd create supervising positions some of this were due to the industrial record of a person like if they were active in the union affairs you get you get them out of the union movement the management would promote them to assistant foreman or leading hand and then their attitude to the job would change and uh they wouldn't be the activists that they were previously but um the status of the supervisors was very low because the majority of the supervisors had no rapport with the men on the job you couldn't approach them you couldn't talk to them um they made a decision and that was that it no ----- that was the be all and end all and uh a lot of mistakes was made on that account.
- R.S. - What sort of ratio are we talking about, when you first started what was the ratio of supervisors?
- J.S. - The ratio of supervisors when I first started there in 1966 was about 1 foreman 1 leading hand to about 30 - 50 workers, and when it came down to 1975/76 when the place was ready to close up the ratio was about 1-5.
- R.S. - That's quite a lot of bosses isn't it ?

- J.S. - They were not all full foremen aah these are down the scale you got um on the slipways you have a hull supervisor and you'd have foremen 1 aft, 1 forward and 1 midships you had assistant foremen you had a leading hand ----- and for every foreman you had a leading hand and this gives you 9 - 9 bosses in the one trade and then you've got ah that's only the boilermaking trade, you've got fitters, plumbers, electricians, shipwrights ah carpenters, so you can see quite a lot of supervision.
- R.S. - And there was approximately 17 unions at the Dockyard, is that right er correct?
- J.S. - Yes and they all had their scale of supervision.
- R.S. - How important to the Dockyard was the need to have the graving dock so long promised by the various governments?
- J.S. - Well -- had the graving dock become a reality I feel it would've been most likely ah a factor that would've kept the dockyard viable - building berths are restricted to a certain extent in their length and facilities but a graving dock of the size that was promised to us by the government ah ahem would intend to be built would've had the had been the deciding factor that would've kept the dockyard viable for sure.
- R.S. - Between January 1966 and December 1966 the Government spent \$3 million on modernising the Dockyard - Do you think that was ultimately wasted?
- J.S. - Well it wasn't spent wisely put it this way a lot of things that needed to be done weren't done such as the cranes - the yard cranes on the slipways were out-dated and ahem underpowered for the jobs that they had to do and consequently the lifts that they lifted were restricted by the fact that they weren't big enough strong enough to lift the bigger sections, another thing too was the fact that the improvements that should've been done weren't ah reversing the procedure in the workshops where the sections were to be built and put together instead of them going east to west they should have been coming west to east so that the finished product would end up closer to the slipway right on the slipway, in actual fact the reverse was the case and the steel moved from east to west and then had to be transported by private couriers, low loaders and semi-trailers and a lot of money eas wasted - semi-trailers and low loaders and that were stuck in the workshops for days and days and days gaining demurrage for the company and costing the dockyard money ----- the transport costs were monumental and the use ----- was an example of money wasted. No Of the \$3 million the government spent in '66 was a drop in the bucket. Machines that I have used machines during my term in the dockyard that were left overs from Walsh Island, I used an air machine reeming out holes on a ship repair job and the date was stamped on the side of it - it was 1932 Walsh Island and this was the sort of thing that we had to put up with antiquated machinery and they expected us to do a job, to compete with other shipyards that had modern up-to-date machinery - It wasn't on!! I think the effort that we produced the number of ships in the time in the ten years that I was there that we produced those ships is a testimony to the efficiency of the work force that we were able to do this with the out-dated equipment that we had at our disposal.
- R.S. - The other thing that I would like to ask you - When the state government

- R.S. - When the State Government established a 7 man board to manage the Dockyard Do you think that it was good or bad for the dockyard?
- J.S. - Well put it this way I don't think they had the representatives from the work force Mr. Ducker wasn't worth 2 bob he was a right wing labour man and gimpy McDougall the Lord Mayor and sometimes a member of the board and neither of these people ever made any worthwhile contribution in regards to the workers in the place. To my knowledge they were just puppets that nodded their heads to any suggestion that was put up to them and never made any representation on behalf of the work force.
- R.S. - What effect did the local media's reporting of strikes etc have on the Dockyard?
- J.S. - A very bad one - aah it didn't matter what the union was or what the issue was any time that anybody walked out at the dockyard the headlines in the newspapers and the radio, television news was the dockyard was on strike I lost time through the actions of 37 men of another trade, I was off work for a fortnight through being stood off through these guys and at no time did the newspapers or the radio or tele vision say that give the truth about what the strike was caused by and just lumped us all together in one lump and said "the Dockyard's on strike" and people reading the papers and looking at television and listening to radio news got the impression that the dockyard workers were a lot of wasters and it became a stigma to own that you were a dockyard employee and this was largely due to the unfair reporting of industrial disputes by the media.
- R.S. - Shipyards worldwide are usually heavily subsidised by their respective Governments - Do you know to what extent the State Dockyard was subsidised and was this a deciding factor in the viability of the Dockyard?
- J.S. - Most assuredly the Dockyard was subsidised as far as I know when I first went therein '66 ah the subsidy on Australian shipbuilding was about 45% and ah later on it was cut down to about 25% and ultimately when the Whitlam government took power in 1972 the first thing one of the first things that he did was to cut the subsidy on shipbuilding altogether and this killed shipbuilding in Australia. When the Whitlam government came to power in 1972 there was a shipyard in S.A. that was Birken Head, there was Whyalla, Williamstown Naval Dockyard in Victoria, Cockatoo Island Dockyard in Sydney, the State Dockyard in Newcastle, Evans-Deakin in Brisbane, Walkers in Maryborough and in '76 when the dockyard closed there was I think three left and since then the Carrington slipways one opened up and because of the type of ship that it's built it's been successful.
- R.S. - From the 20 ships that's been built during your time at the dockyard were any of them unprofitable and why do you think they were?
- J.S. - Yeah, the Ham 2/11 the dredge built for the Westminster dredging company was unprofitable we lost \$½ million on that straight out because of the requirements of the insurance company, we had to do re-work a lot of work over and over again to get it suitable for their inspectors - who were the harshest inspectors you ever seen in your life, they weren't so harsh on their own stuff they bought over from Holland though, but this is one of the reasons the dockyard lost a lot of money. They took the plans of this thing as I under-



- J.S. - as I understand it all over the world and we were the only silly mugs that were told to build it.
- R.S. - The profit sharing system that used to be in force at the Dockyard in the early days yeah share the wealth - ah did that affect you at all?
- J.S. - Ah not really it only lasted a little while after I started it finished about '68 I think aah the two B.P. Tankers were part of it I think and uh and it went just after that. It didn't last very long.
- R.S. - That apparently wasn't any incentive for the fella's to stop striking as there was plenty of strikes in the first 12 months you were there. How much time did you lose in the first year that you were there.
- J.S. - Oh I couldn't say off hand - quite a bit though.
- R.S. - I remember it was a lot. Well
- J.S. - Put it this way
- R.S. - I remember you sold your motor bike to get enough money to feed us.
- J.S. - yes um ----- it was very very rarely that you'd get a full week in ah the first six months I was there I don't think I worked I'd be lucky to work a full week.
- R.S. - um ah what was the main bee in the bonnet that time?
- J.S. - Um ah there was so many issues ah we were fighting for conditions you know ah wage increase.
- R.S. - That was something else too when you first started working at the dockyard they were among the highest paid workers weren't they? Is that right?
- J.S. - No! No!!
- R.S. - Was it the reverse? When they finished were they paid better?
- J.S. - No I dropped money when I went from Allis Chalmers to the Dockyard, when I was working at Allis Chalmers I was a 2nd class welder and uh came up from there to the dockyard and I dropped money.
- R.S. - Yet you took a higher position.
- J.S. - I was classified as a tradesmen yeah took a tradesmans position and I dropped money in the process they weren't highly paid at all.
- R.S. I was just thinking of something else then too - what was it?
- J.S. - They got better paid later on but they only got better paid -----
- R.S. - I was just thinking about the fact that the State Dockyard from the time it began until the time it ceased being a government concern was always a political football?
- J.S. - Oh yeah, yeah everybody had a go at the dockyard.
- R.S. - It didn't seem to matter what party was in power.
- J.S. - But the funny thing is that people, the government that you would expect that it would do less for the dockyard was the one that did the most for it.
- R.S. - "Liberals"
- J.S. - When the dockyard was ah in bad straits through lack of orders and that was back in it was about 1953/54 just before they got all those ah D class and K class freighters to build - they were in bad trouble so the government of the day, the federal government that is brought the ah destroyer the Hobart here got a complete refit and she laid at the dockyard for nearly 3 years they re-fitted her and put this, that and the other thing in it um bullet-proof steel and all that sort of thing, electric motors and miles and miles



J.S. - miles and miles of cable and when they finished it they took it to Sydney and put it in mothballs and it was in mothballs in Sydney Harbour laid up at Garden Island for 6 months and then they turned around and sold it to the Japs for scrap.

R.S. - What a waste.

J.S. - But there you go that was done by a Liberal government

R.S. - Just to give the people work.

J.S. - Just to keep the place going.

R.S. - I think we've probably done enough Dad

J.S. - Just another thought while I'm on it "Yeah"(R.S.) Ah whether or not it is viable or not Shipbuilding eh is an essential thing in a country such as Australia - is an island continent "Yeah we're surrounded by water" (R.S.) where ya where ya lifeline to the rest of the world is the sea and for a country such as Australia not to have er a healthy strong shipbuilding industry is a shame and it is not in keeping with good security neither defence.