

ORAL HISTORY – QUEENSLAND COMMUNIST PARTY

TRANSCRIBED RECORD OF INTERVIEW WITH SONNY MILES and SHIRLEY MILLAR

Date: 1st May, 2014

Interviewer: Ross Gwyther

[This transcript has been slightly modified by the interviewees to add explanatory notes when necessary. These notes or words are in "italics"]

SONNY: To understand my background, I was part of a migrant family that arrived in Australia in 1929, the beginning of the Great Depression. My family were tied up with the mining industry in Scotland, and my old man was an early militant, and he was victimised, of course, couldn't get work, so they migrated out because part of the family was already out here – my Mother's side.

So to understand how I became such a strong Left-orientated person, you've got to understand that background, and you know, I spoke at Isabel's funeral? My father was one of the three that formed the Communist Party in Collinsville, which became one of the strongest Party Branches in Australia.

So I was, just as a person would become a Catholic, born into a Catholic family, I became a Communist because I was born in a Communist family. There was no intellectual background or anything like that. That all came much later.

Now, Shirley mentioned the overseas. We were part of the first delegation sent by the Australian Communist Party, and we spent four years in China, studying so-called revolutionary theory. We spent these four years over there, but as I said before, my interest now is in retrospect, and you can always have a better insight in retrospect – as they say in bowls, always the best players are sitting on the sidelines commenting on the game, you know.

So now I believe I can see pretty clearly our mistakes. The first mistake was we were given the term "Scientific Socialism," which contained the concept of inevitability. That was probably old Marx could share some of the responsibility for that, he and Engels, because I think they termed it "Scientific Socialism," and it's not scientific at all, of course.

But with that concept of inevitability, all our strategies were based on capitalism collapsing, and the buggers wouldn't collapse, would they? And they're still going, and they're still finding reserves because they've got the best brains that money can buy to help perpetuate their system. So that was the first thing that I can see real clearly.

Then *under the influence of the particular leadership of the time*, we followed the Bolshevik line, and the Bolshevik line was to build a network of professional revolutionaries, and that was where the Party took me – I worked on the wharf and they took me off the wharf to become a professional revolutionary, see? *Recognising the role of the democratic process, I should have been left on the wharf.*

Now, it's interesting that ASIO has just told us that they had a mole in every Communist Party Branch in Australia, so what chance would we have had? We'd have been arrested in the first ten minutes. Had Menzies succeeded in getting a "yes" vote, we could have all

been arrested in the first ten minutes. So that was a wrong line. We should have been based on the democratic history of this country. We were the second *country in the world* to have universal suffrage; we were the first to have a basic wage; we've got a lucky history there, because a lot of the emergence of the Labor Party is all due to the discovery of gold actually. Everybody and their brother with wheelbarrows went to the gold fields, and there was a terrible shortage of labour for the squattocracy and the budding industrialists.

So that was a history that allowed the birth of the idea that the working people needed more than just an economic voice struggling for wages. They needed a political voice, and that was the birth of the Labor Party.

Now, I must tell you about our Chinese experience, because that was another mistake. Like, first of all, the Bolsheviks' *line* there with Russia, with absolutely no history of democracy at all, and manifest in the fact that, instead of following the line of that Philippine President, and using the Marcos establishment as a museum, the Party moved into the Kremlin, which was the seat of the Tsar's dictatorship, and that was shown that they had no... Togliatti, the leader of the Italian Communist Party, said, 'You speak to the Soviet Comrades about a democratic process, and they look at you blankly. They don't understand what you're talking about.'

So take that background, relate it to Australia, and you see how unrelated that experience of building a professional revolutionary underground had in Australia, instead of expanding on the democratic foothold that we'd gained in this country due to a number of factors. We're one of the first countries in the world, in the First World War, to vote 'No' on conscription. You know, they're big, historic facts, and in that book of Bob Carr – what's the name of the University in Melbourne?

ROSS: Monash.

SONNY: That General who in the early '30s, he was approached by the *Australia First Movement* – he was a very popular general, in fact, the argument is that the First World War would have ended three months earlier, had he been the General in Charge – that's among the Generals themselves, according to Bob Carr – but he wrote this letter and it's really worth reading, and it's in Carr's book, wholeheartedly rejecting any thought of a coup d'état that, no, he was for the democratic, so it's a really good letter, but what I'm saying is, here is the history we should have been proceeding from, instead of the Bolshevik *history*.

Now, we went to China, and China introduced us to what they called "ideological work". Well, we could call it brain-washing, too, you know, because that would be closer. Again, the history of China to win political power, they had to base on almost 100% peasantry. The working class was tiny in China. The great body of power, military power lay on converting the peasantry, and if you can expand on the Catholic confessional, this was a mass confessional called "self-critical meetings," where the idea was to, they called it to "get rid of the silver bullets of the bourgeois, and become solid Communists", you see. Then Liu Shao Chi wrote the book on How to Be a good Communist and so forth.

To talk over there about workers in this country having a refrigerator and a motor-car and – they just looked at you with scepticism and that.

So again, we come back all full of this stuff, and it was the wrong line again.

SHIRLEY: And what about the Soviet lecturers?

SONNY: Yeah, then we had these Soviet lecturers. Oh, Christ, what bloody boring----

SHIRLEY: They read from the history of the CPSU and we'd all read that, but we got it again when they came, you know, big fellows in their great big overcoats, and they were so boring!

SONNY: I asked a question on – Stalin wrote a book on “The Economics of Socialism”, I think was the title, and in that I questioned the absence of the idea that revolution couldn't be exported, which was my original understanding, and I can't remember the exact question I asked, but as Shirley said, his response, this Cherekov, ‘It's in the book.’ That was his response. ‘It's in Stalin's writing.’

SHIRLEY: No individual thinking on his part, but, ‘It's in the book.’

SONNY: ‘What are you talking about? It's in there.’ So you can see now in hindsight we can see the wrong strategies. Today – and I've got to come up to today, because that Naomi Klein, the Canadian writer, has expressed it very, very well. They said the corporate world is – she didn't use the word “swamping” – but over-running the whole world and killing us. See, it's frightening now to see what a grip the corporate ideologically have. You can't even watch a football score, but you're got an idiot running round with a bucket on his head for KFC and, you know, and that [*psychological*] domination, to me, is the question that should be put up by the Left.

Now, where is the force in Australian conditions that can be created to halt and eventually reverse this trend away from sustainability, back towards sustainability? And it seems to me that the Greens, the militant Trades Unions and the Left of the Labor Party----

SHIRLEY: And the young forces that are active in the world, you know, with the media and all of that.

SONNY: Yes, that Get-up

ROSS: Well, look, I'd like to explore your ideas for what the strategies should have been more, but before I do that, I want to try and just give people just a bit more context of your background in this, so can you tell us just a little bit about, actually, when you got into the working force and what you did – a very short summary of your life. So when would you have actually started working? What sort of period was that?

SONNY: I started work at 14, actually. I never finished school. That would have been '39. That's the year I was 14.

ROSS: And where were you living then?

SONNY: I was a nipper. It goes back to the first laying of bitumen roads in Collinsville, and you know when they're laying the bitumen it has to be watered, but today they've just got a switch and the water goes on and off. They didn't have that switch, so they had to sit a boy on the back of a truck, ‘Turn in on! Turn it off!’ That was my first job, and then I had to boil the billy for the other workers at smoko. That was my first job.

The next one, I was an apprentice butcher, and then because I was working on 19/6d. a week and my name came up in the mine, and it was three pounds ten, so in those days it was all about getting a job. I've told Shirley and others the story of my first job. I came home from my first day's work and here's a place set at the table. I said, 'Who's this for?' you know. It was for me. That was the – and no encouragement at all. If you were caught reading, you were trying to get out of work. That was the background.

SHIRLEY: That was the era.

SONNY: So that was the distance I had to travel, and I can thank the Chinese for that, because I don't think I would have anyway developed the critical mind that I have, without the studying of theory and practice in those four years in China.

ROSS: So which four years did you go to China?

SONNY: Well, we started in '51 to '55. We went over to May, I think it was, '51, and came back – I don't know what month it was when we came back, but it was on four years, which is a long time.

ROSS: And you went, too, Shirley?

SONNY: Shirley, yes. I was married to Vince Englart, so I was only 18, and it was really, you know, I hadn't had that much experience, but my father was a Communist and Ted Bacon – do you remember that name?

SONNY: You'd remember Bluey Miller, too, the President of the Colliery Employees Federation? That was Shirley's father.

ROSS: So [*Shirley*] can you tell me just a little bit about your growing up? You grew up in Collinsville, too?

SHIRLEY: Yes, but we left there when I was about 11 – I'm 83 now – because Dad became President of the Queensland Miners Federation then. We had to move to Ipswich for that, so I left Collinsville when I was about 11, but the early stories, like, our two families, my mother and Sonny's mother, were sisters, and they were very close sisters, and we lived [*in Collinsville*] so we just ducked through the fence between the two houses. In fact, my sister and I used to go up to Sonny's place. My mother and father used to like sleeping in on a Sunday, and Heather and I would sneak up there, and Uncle Bobby [*Bonnie's father*] would say – so the thing is that when they came out from Scotland, they talked of living in tents, but my mother spoke of how wonderful they had their tents. They had cretonne around boxes and that was the cupboards, and they lived like that, but it was a lot of Scottish people who had humpies, and bag humpies. But they had their hogmanays and sing-songs, so they had a good social integration with each other. Then gradually, as work got better, they got houses and shifted into houses. But that community was pretty close, wasn't it, Sonny?

SONNY: Yes.

ROSS: And then you moved down to Booval?

SHIRLEY: Yes.

ROSS: What year was that?

SHIRLEY: Gosh, I'm no good at that. I was 11, and I'm 83 now.

ROSS: So it would have been during the War?

SHIRLEY: Yes, it was.

ROSS: In fact, I've just interviewed Digger Murphy, because I think he took over the leadership of the Union after your father?

SHIRLEY: Yes, well, he was always there close to Dad, Digger.

SONNY: They lived close together, too, didn't they?

SHIRLEY: Yes.

ROSS: I remember Warren Bowden had a sort of campaign against all this noise [*of aeroplanes over houses in this area*].

SONNY: Yes.

SHIRLEY: We lost the battle.

ROSS: He lived at Morningside/

SHIRLEY: Yes.

ROSS: Were you involved in that campaign at all?

SHIRLEY: Yes, and Kevin Rudd took it up, too. You know, there were campaigns and we had little marches down the road and so on, but we lost. It's just continuous, but you get used to it, don't you, Sonny?

SONNY: Yes, I don't take any notice of it.

ROSS: Just going back, you told us a bit about your father setting up the Communist Party in Collinsville?

SONNY: Yes.

ROSS: That was a great anecdote that you told. I want you to tell that again for this tape. Can you tell us that again?

SONNY: Well, believe it or not, Collinsville is in North Queensland, but it can get cold, really cold.

SHIRLEY: And hot!

SONNY: But this was a cold, winter's night, and they had to have a lantern, and there was a little hall, there was Kelly's Hall here and they crossed the gully – now, how this little shed came

into existence, I haven't got a clue, but it was only about 12 ft x 12 ft or something like that, but it was where any organisation officially would set themselves up, because it was public – now, they could have done the same thing sitting in front of the fire at home, but, no, had to go...

SHIRLEY: Had to go to the meeting place.

SONNY: They got this hurricane lamp and trekked down there and officially set up the first branch of the Communist Party in Collinsville. Now, that was Bob Myles, Jimmy Henderson and Bluey Reynolds, Bill Reynolds. That was the three. My old man was elected Chairman, Jimmy Henderson was elected Secretary, and Bluey Reynolds was elected Treasurer, and as I said, all unopposed.

So it was interesting, and my mother was active, too. There are some good photographs of them, you know, in the 1948 rail strike, where my old man was bashed with Grayson and all those, and Patterson, you know, was seriously injured in that.

SHIRLEY: And Patterson [*and his wife*] stayed at our place quite a few times. Their first child, they insisted on him sleeping out on the veranda of the house just on the bare boards. You know, they had very hard ideas on bringing up the kids.

ROSS: And what about actually getting involved in the Communist Party? What sort of period in your lives did you actually do that?

SONNY: Well, I became State and District Organiser in about '59, I would say it was. I wasn't long back – no, it would probably be earlier than that, probably '56 or '57. I wasn't long back from overseas, and we were trying to get a foothold in the AWU jobs, and whenever I got an AWU job, the AWU Organiser used to go and see the boss and get me sacked.

So I ended up in Jimmy Brett's in Newmarket Road there, you know, and I got this story later. I was working in what they call the yard, sorting, and so apparently the Organiser approached Jimmy Brett and said, 'You've got a red hot Red here. You'd better get rid of him.' 'Oh, is he? Well, you'd better take him down and point him out to me.' They apparently came down and pointed me out, and Jimmy Brett said, 'He's the best bloody worker I've got. I'm not going to bloody sack him!'

So they left me there, but it was a hopeless task, trying to overcome the dominance of the AWU Leadership over the – it was poorly organised. So they decided that was a waste of time.

Then, I never left the [*party*] till 1970, so I was, like, 12 or 13 years State and District Organiser.

ROSS: Just going back to when you actually joined the Party, would that have been?

SONNY: I was 16 years old, because there was no Youth Organisation, and I was one of the most active Communists there, so they waived the Rules and let me join at 16.

ROSS: This is still in Collinsville?

SONNY: Collinsville, yes.

ROSS: So what year was that?

SONNY: Well, when I was 16, that would be '41 or '42, I would say.

ROSS: And what about you, Shirley, when did you actually join the Party?

SHIRLEY: Well, Ted Bacon was the one who was working on me to join the Party.

SONNY: I don't think Shirley ever did, did you?

SHIRLEY: Oh, yes. But I left the Party when the Soviet Union went into Czechoslovakia. I couldn't cop that, so I left the Party then. You know, I was in it for quite a few years.

ROSS: So what sort of age would you have been when you joined it, roughly?

SHIRLEY: Well, from about 18, I suppose, but I can't remember---

ROSS: And you would have been living in Booval then?

SHIRLEY: Yes, but, see, we went away for four years then, so when I came back I'd joined – you know, I don't have any memory of being in a Party Branch or anything before we went away, but Vince was the active person.

SONNY: Vince became an Organiser after me, a District Organiser, and---

SHIRLEY: I always felt I was too young to go, in that I didn't have a lot of experience, you know, but the whole delegation was not a good one – was it, Sonny?

SONNY: It was terrible.

SHIRLEY: There was another couple there, and they weren't, they had no political understanding at all, you know, so whoever decided on the team that went, you know, [*it left a lot to be desired*].

SONNY: Keith McEwan, who wrote, *Once a Jolly Comrade*, he was one of them, and there was Bill and Shirley Arthur, and I was talking to Eric on the phone there last year, and I said, 'Whatever became of them?' He said, 'They walked down the gangway after four years, and that's the last we saw of them.' So that was the nature of the delegation. There was some terrible choices. I don't know what the hell – well, I'm still puzzled about, with the poor educational background that I had, I can't understand being selected, you know. You would think they would have picked people with a bit more critical mind, but---

ROSS: You sound like somebody who has got a critical mind, to me.

SHIRLEY: He has got a critical mind.

ROSS: I think they chose the right person

SONNY: Well, I can thank the Chinese for that – and I'm criticising the Chinese now.

SHIRLEY: He learned to read, which he does a lot of, all kinds, and enjoys, don't you, Sonny?

SONNY: Yes, but I think the fact that the working person has even now, when they've got to provide the bread and butter for the table, it doesn't allow a time for the depth of reading that is required to come up with a critical mind, and----

SHIRLEY: And lots of people, like, that are working now in the workforce, they don't have a lot of time unless they've got an easy kind of job, you know, to do a lot of deep sort of reading.

SONNY: I've educated myself more after I retired than even when I was working for the Party. I was working like hell and finally in the last couple of years I was paying my own wages. I had the Party ute, and I used to do the landscaping, you know, where a house had been built and the yard had to be cleaned up and *landscaped*. I was working three days a week at that, and then four days a week at the Party, and I paid my own wages for the last couple of years.

So I remember this discussion with my brother, Bob. He was in the Fire Brigade and we were having a beer at the 'Gabba Hotel. That was close to the Fire Brigade that he was in, was just up the road, you know, and there was this fireman and he said, 'You're an Organiser for the Communist Party. You'd be on a good screw,' and I said, 'Well, I'll tell you what I'm on. I'm on half the basic wage, actually.' He said, 'Well, you're a mug!' So I said, 'How can you win?'

SHIRLEY: Yes, well, that's what we had when Vince worked there, too, you know.

SONNY: Yes, he was very keen on Chemistry, Vince.

SHIRLEY: And he helped ever so many kids coming up with their Maths. He was very good on Maths, helped a lot of people.

SONNY: That was his strong suit.

SHIRLEY: Yes. He would have been a good teacher, but they wouldn't allow him to get into the teaching profession in Queensland, and his brother was the same, Kevin, but he went to New South Wales and became a teacher and he was happy.

SONNY: Yes, that would have been his calling.

SHIRLEY: That's what Vince should have done, but then he was attached to the Party here.

SONNY: And a much happier life, he would have had there.

ROSS: Now, Sonny, can we just get back now to you joined the Party during the War then, 1942 or so?

SONNY: Yes.

ROSS: Just in the rest of that post-War period, can you tell me a bit about what being involved in the Party meant for you then, how did it affect your work with your fellow workers and so on?

SONNY: Well, we were full of optimism, you know, with Stalingrad, and even Churchill said, it tore the guts out of the German war machine, so we were on a high then, but I've got to come back to the basic strategy. It was all based on us being ready, build the Party, because it's interesting, the Leader of the Labor Party now is on the same thing, build the Party – all with the concept that we've got to be ready when capitalism collapses. But as I said, capitalism refused to collapse and so we were on a high then.

ROSS: So what did that strategy – Build the Party – how did that strategy of building the Party, how did that translate to you? What were you encouraged to do?

SONNY: Well, lecturing at classes, lecturing at what we call cottage lectures. That means the local branch would approach local people to try to get them interested in the Party, and then we would be appointed to go and give a lecture on what Communist was all about, you know. I was pretty crude, you know, I mean, it was pretty simple stuff, but it's interesting now, I must say, when I find out that they had a mole in every Communist Party Branch, well, I related to a lot of Communist Party Branches, and I've nailed some of them. But I'd say, 'Now, who did they plant in there?' you know.

So that was a waste of time, of course, but, yeah, well, you can't get away from the fact that for somebody with an uneducated background like I had, it was something of an ego trip to, you know, to be elected to this and that, and at the District Conferences I used to get every vote but one, and I'd scratch my head and say, 'Who's that one?' So I was quite popular, but what you've got to realise is that at that time it was a big frog in a little puddle, not a frog in a big puddle, and a bit of an ego trip, you know, to be an official, sort of thing, despite the wage level and remuneration side of it.

ROSS: And what about when you were still working, before you got involved full-time more or less with the Party, when you were still working you would have been doing work in the Union that you were in, too?

SONNY: I was a seaman for 24 years after I left the Party in '70. I was a seaman until I retired.

SONNY: So what about in that period just straight after the War? You would have been working, and being involved in a Union and --

SONNY: Well, see I got married and one of the jobs I took was cutting timber. Don't tell the Conservationists this now – cutting mill timber up, in from Double Island lighthouse, to get a cheque so I could get married. It only lasted six years, the marriage, so it was a bit of a waste of time, you know. Well, it wasn't a waste of time because I got a good son out of it, yeah, Roger

I finished up in the Army, you know, in the Second AIF, and the 12 Small Ships, for a couple of years. I was never much of a soldier because I like making my own decisions. I don't like people making my bloody decisions for me. Yours is to do and die, not to ask why, you know, in the Army. So, yeah, I had a couple of years but I don't regret it now.

ROSS: You spoke highly of Eddie Heilbronn, who was Stan's father?

SONNY: Yes, old Eddie, I took Eddie into the Mt Isa dispute. I took Eddie out. I was relieving Bishop, and he was overseas in Russia, I think, and I was Acting Secretary up there [*in*

Townsville] while he was away, and took old Eddie out to – his stamping ground was out at the Isa, you know, originally, and I took him out there. It was a great experience, actually.

ROSS: This is during the dispute?

SONNY: Yes, with Pat Mackie, you know. He was a joke out there. They never took him seriously at all, but the press took him seriously, you know.

SHIRLEY: He was in the press all the time, wasn't he?

SONNY: Yeah, yeah. Yes, it was very interesting because – and this needs highlighting, actually – they had a hall, a public hall that was level with the street, and inside they had a bench with seats and there had to be one of the strike committee available at all times for any member of the public to come in and ask what the dispute was all about. They ended up, they had the whole of the bloody town behind them, but what I'm saying is, the democratic form that was practised there ended up – the local businessmen were, you know, signing up.

Another feather in the cap of the democratic process, isn't it, you know, that any time of the day from such and such a time to such and such, there would be at least one member of the Strike Committee available for any member of the public, any visitor, any tourist going through, to go and have it explained what the dispute was all about. There was a lesson there, a very, very important lesson: the more open and democratic you can be, the more chance you've got of getting – and at this point in time when we're trying to build a People's Movement, and I'm very critical of, you know, in the days of the 'Vanguard roll of comrades,' and 'History is with us, comrades,' you know. History has let us down pretty badly, hasn't it, but this 'Vanguard roll' business, the fact is that no single ideology, whether it be religious, political or whatever, will be the answer to human problems at this point of time in history. Only a movement that's built out of the best progressive elements of each will be the sort of movement that will confront the corporate world.

In Al Gore's book, on 31 January 2010, the highest Court in America ruled that a corporate body had the same right as an individual to support presidential candidates or any political party, and any time the elected legal body is preparing legislation, the corporate lawyers had the right to sit in to check that their particular corporate interests are not interfered with.

SHIRLEY: What hope have we got?

SONNY: Talk about a grip over the population!

SHIRLEY: I find it a very frightening world at the moment.

SONNY: Shirley is not very optimistic about the planet.

SHIRLEY: No, I'm not. I think it's just so wicked that, you know, all this killing is going on.

ROSS: When you started talking, you were talking about how the Communist Party should have based itself on the sort of democratic conditions that had built up, and your example of what the Strike Committee did in [*Mt Isa*] is an ideal example of that – but can you give a bit more idea of what you think the Party should have been encouraging its members to do during those early years when it was very strong?

SONNY: In hindsight I've developed a critical mind, but it would have still been difficult. If I had the same critical mind that I've got now, back then, well... Remember Frank Hardy? Frank Hardy, Yevtushenko the poet, Hardy went over [to the USSR] and Yevtushenko woke him about Stalin. Now, Hardy come back and attempted to raise this criticism and he was rubbished by the leadership, so what I'm saying is when there's historic tides, like, following the Bolsheviks, they're not easily turned.

In fact, I can think of a number that wanted to raise criticism. Well, if they'd been in Stalin's day they would have been subject to the principle, 'No man, no problem,' and that's like Kirov. When we really know the history, Kirov was a threat to Stalin's leadership and very popular, so what does Stalin do? Get's him knocked off and blames counter-revolution, and started the whole thing.

Then Bukharin and all these, these were wonderful bloody comrades that fought through all the difficult bloody period of the First World War and Two – he knocked the bloody lot of them. But what is the important thing, not a word of this got through till after the conference in which Stalin was exposed.

See, Stalin died when we were over in China.

SHIRLEY: Yes, and everybody was weeping, weren't they?

SONNY: Yes, the grip... The Chinese don't feel capable of destroying the Mao myth, and I can't see how they will ever develop a meaningful democratic process without taking on the Mao myth.

I can't see how they can possibly preserve – see, what was frightening in China, and I don't know if Shirley remembers it or not – but we were over there in the period of Tibet, and the Cold War was pretty close to a hot war, and Mao made a statement, 'We're not worried about nuclear war. We've got a population that [will survive].. I was bloody shocked. Jesus Christ! 'We'll outnumber them, sort of thing, with our population.'

Talking about that, the Vietnam War, see, I don't think I would make a good General at all, you know, because the Tet Offensive caused 600,000 young Vietnamese lives. It won the political point. It ended the War, but I don't think as a General I could – it was a poor military move, but a brilliant political move, because all these young people, they were just coming up out of the ground in American camps where they could just get riddled down, you know – 600,000 in just a couple of days!

SHIRLEY: Terrible, terrible.

ROSS: Yes, but I want to keep coming back to what you think. If you had a Communist Party, forgetting about in that past period, how do you think the strategy should be, if you had Communist Party that was fairly strong today, given that we don't have one, but if you did, what sort of strategies do you think we should be using to base ourselves on the sort of democratic conditions that we've got? A view? Have you thought about that?

SONNY: Now, Bob Durbridge in his speech to one of the Left Conference, the Red and Green, he raised the essential point that in Australian circumstances we really don't have a viable, acceptable, credible body that could challenge the capitalist system. He raises the point – which I agree with – that that is what has got to become the strategy of seeking to create a

People's Movement, not an ideological movement, though different ideologies will be related to it, but a People's Movement is the only thing that can possibly halt the onward march of the corporate dominating the whole of the world.

Additional comments from SONNY: *There is no way the corporate world can pursue their selfish end on Aussie soil without attacking democracy. The first line of defence here is the ABC already one Liberal Senator is calling for it to be privatised to overcome in his words its "left wing bias". Defence of the ABC independence could possibly become the ground for immediate struggle.*

SHIRLEY: See, it was a great loss to lose – I mean, we all thought, well, Socialism is going to be the answer for mankind, you know, and to lose that ideal has been a big thing, I think. People are a bit lost, but you can see hope with the young folk wanting to make the world more democratic, and for them to have a say, but it's hard, isn't it?

SONNY: Yeah, well, even the Muslim leaders, one of them interviewed there a short time ago, they said to him, 'Well, why did you raise these objections in 2011?' He said, 'We did. The press wouldn't publish them.' So this has got to be challenged. We're talking about a strategy now.

For example, language. Daily they refer to the Union bosses, Murdoch press. They're not bosses. They're elected officials. Now, it seems to me on these points, instead of accepting that, there should be really objection of going and sitting in, occupying in and saying, 'Now, you use the right language, and the right language is "elected officials of unions," not "union bosses".' I'm just giving that as an example, and there's a multitude of particular concrete issues like that. You've got to relate what progress is being made in relation to changing positions and contributing towards a People's Movement.

The time factor here is a big factor that enters the equation, isn't it, you know?

SHIRLEY: It certainly is.

SONNY: And I think that's why Shirley's a bit pessimistic about a---

SHIRLEY: I can't help it. I just feel there are so many areas where it's just not being dealt with, is it?

ROSS: If you just wanted to sum up your sort of lessons that you'd like to give to young activists in the future?

SONNY: Yes, well, I'm writing my own farewell for my son to deliver when I go, and I believe that you should learn to live with those things you can't change, but learn to help change those things that you shouldn't be asked to live with – wars, poverty, pollution, injustice. These are all things that human beings in the 21st century shouldn't be asked to live with. That's what's going into my farewell, but I look back on my life and that's the way I've lived, actually. That's the way I've lived my whole life.

SHIRLEY: Yes, you have.

SONNY: I've thrown my whole energy into trying to change those things that we shouldn't be asked to live with. So that's the best I could do in summing up.

Additional comments from SONNY: *Loyalty is the most admirable human quality, but if it is not accompanied with a critical mind it can become blind. This has caused untold damage in human history- just look at the inquisition, and at Stalinism, if you need proof of this.*

ROSS: What about you, Shirley, have you got some thoughts? If you're wanting to give some sorts of lessons to young people – as you say, there's young people who are getting active and wanting to do something.

SHIRLEY: Yes.

ROSS: From your life's experience, what would you be telling them?

SHIRLEY: See, I'm the pessimist. I can't, I just feel that things have deteriorated so much on the planet and I love to see the young people, you know, trying to do something about it, but I just feel that it's gone---

SONNY: That the odds are too great?

SHIRLEY: I do, I do.

SONNY: Yes. The only way out of that is to stop listening to the news.

SHIRLEY: Well, I can't. That's the trouble. I listen to it all.

ROSS: You can't bring yourself to stop?

SHIRLEY: Yes, I listen to it all. Oh, no, it's very sad, I think.

SONNY: Of course, the other side of it is that the news is very tainted and controlled by the corporate world. That's the news that gets through. Like that Muslim said, 'We did protest, but the Murdoch press didn't print it.'

SHIRLEY: There doesn't seem to be any way they're going to get rid of the Murdoch press. Like, it's dominating, isn't it, and it's only what they want to get into it.

SONNY: Well, we did at the wharf, the "rotation of hatches" dispute. We [*threatened to occupy*] the *Courier Mail*. They told lies, and we made them withdraw it, so actions can be – what I'm saying is, there's doing it in Wall Street now with the banks, and they're the sorts of actions that, like, taking them on, instead of saying, 'Oh, you can't change City Hall,' you know, that attitude, that there are specific and concrete ways. This Naomi Klein says, you know, from little things big things can grow, and it's got to be these little things.

I think one of the strategies that was wrong with us was that we did brush over them. The Communist Party was strongest in the '30s because they were the first line against evictions and, you know, these were the people that they're defending them, and now the same thing is happening in America. The activists are there to stop the evictions and so forth, and it's out of these things that a People's Movement will be created, I think, so you can have the general strategy in mind of the combining of the Greens, the Trade Unions and the Left of the Labor Party, but that'll only be built out of these type of actions, the

specific targeting of action that they let people, - show people - that they can change. They don't have to accept. They're not unchangeable. They are changeable.

SHIRLEY: See, I think we're going to have a lot more unemployed coming up, and that's going to be, you know, a very sad scene for people losing homes and, you know.

ROSS: So do you think that's something where activists should be out there supporting..?

SHIRLEY: There's going to be a lot, you know, that are losing homes, because, you know, I think our kids have it. They've always had plenty, you know, like, it's hard for them to think of, you know----

SONNY: The most optimistic point that I have is – I have a little laugh, you know – these are kids this high now, and they are radically different from that age that I can remember. There's been generations that have been spectators through the TV and so forth, they've been – but these new ones, they're going to participate, and I see them as the growing up that's not going to accept it.

ROSS: I'm glad I heard you at that----

SHIRLEY: Isabel's funeral?

ROSS: Yes, because I was just taken with that little story about Collinsville, setting up the Communist Party there.

SONNY: Yes, well, it was a way of really establishing what Iso's background was, and why she became a militant and supporter of the Left, with that sort of history that rubbed off on both her and I, of course, and she never changed and I never changed. I've still got the dream.

End of Recording