

NSW DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

‘Millers Point Oral History Project’

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: **Jack Mundey** (DOB 17 October 1932)
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INTERVIEWER: Siobhán McHUGH
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RESTRICTIONS ON USE: Nil

Note: The opinions expressed in this oral history interview are those of the interviewee and do not necessarily represent in whole or in part the position of the Department of Housing, the Government Architect's Office, the Department of Commerce or the Oral History Consultants.

Background notes on this interviewee:

Born on October 17th, 1932 on a poor dairy farm on the Atherton Tableland in far north Queensland, Jack's early life was shaped by the death of his mother when he was six. The family of five children was split up, and Jack spent much of his remaining childhood with his father, who worked for the dairy farmer. His father, a product of the Depression, influenced Jack's later politics and social values.

Though he started out a devout Catholic, by his teenage years Jack was developing a gut interest in socialism. They were poor – he went barefoot to school - but walking through

rainforests and swimming in the clear creeks of the Atherton Tablelands planted an early love of nature and the environment. Jack was an excellent sportsman, excelling at cricket, boxing and football. He ran away from school at fourteen and after a brief apprenticeship as a plumber, Jack left Queensland to play rugby league for Parramatta. In Sydney, he joined the Communist Party.

In 1957 Jack became a builder's labourer, married and had a son, Michael. When Michael was 15 months old, Jack's wife Stephanie died of a cerebral tumour. Three years later, Jack remarried, to Judy, his current wife. He was devastated by a second personal tragedy when Michael was killed in a car accident at the age of 22 – the same age at which his mother had died. In an awful irony, Michael shared his father's environmentalist objection to private transport and did not believe in having a car. He was a passenger in one when he was killed.

As he relates in this interview, Jack's union activities with the Builders' Labourers Federation started with getting better and safer working conditions. This won the members' trust and improved their self-esteem. With this new-found confidence and dignity, they were prepared to get behind the broader social issues Jack and others would address, such as the Vietnam war, Aboriginal rights, women's rights, gay rights, and famously, the Green Bans.

The interview starts in the 1950s with Jack's early union crusades.

00:00 START OF TAPE MP-SM9 SIDE A

00:04 Tape identification

So Jack, before we get into the actual Green Bans down The Rocks, I have been reading a lot about them, it strikes me that what was really interesting about them was workers, Builders' Labourers, having the audacity for the time to consider that they had a right to have a say in what they built, that was really a huge milestone wasn't it. How did that idea, that sense of wanting to have a say in what you're building, come about?

01:01 I think it would take just two long to go right into that because you'd have to look at the history. The history at the time the building industry was changing. When I started in the building industry in the late 1950s the highest building in Sydney was a twelve storey building, Cole and Chambers, in Castlereagh Street. Then during that building boom they lifted the level of a hundred fifty feet and the sky became the level, and that bursting forward meant that the union that had controlled the builders' Labourers', the corrupt, worked in collusion with the employers, got workers sacked if they were militants. That union then changed and myself and others in the rank and file committee overthrew the union leadership, got control of the union and when the boom came on we were able to organise the workers, give them dignity and confidence, lift up their wages and conditions and we won the respect of the workers.

02:20 Such things as putting the officials of the unions on the same wage as the workers on the job after greatly increasing their wages. We brought about the struggle where women won the right to work in the industry, which was unprecedented in the building industry. We fought for the rights of migrant workers because at that stage something like seventy to eighty per cent of the members of the Builders' Labourers' were migrants and we had Greek and Italian migrants. We had seven different languages at our mass meetings. So the union changed dramatically, and so we were in a position, when other things arose we could come into things. I won't go into the against the war in Vietnam, there were many other political struggles we got involved in.

Aboriginal Rights.

03:26 See a lot of this stuff, I have told the story a bloody thousand times. At the time there was a tendency to look upon unions as only being concerned with wages and conditions but of course historically the militant unions in this country have always reached

out beyond that. The very fact that in the Depression, for example, fighting against the evictions was led by the left-wing unions. Then in the late 1930s the waterside workers in Port Kembla refused to load pig-iron for Japan that came back as bullets and killed soldiers in the Second World War. Ted Roach, a leader of the Waterside Workers, was gaoled by the then Attorney-General Robert Menzies because he refused to load the pig-iron. Of course the Vietnam War, the fight against the A and H bombs. The left-wing unions have got a rich tradition in this country of fighting for things. But the Builders' Labourers' went a bit further in the sense that when the women...

04:43 I made a statement that in a modern society unions should have the right to be concerned about the end result of their labour, that things wider than wages and conditions were important, but of course while ever unions exist wages and conditions are of paramount importance. But increasingly what is the good of winning high wages and better conditions if we live in cities devoid of parks, denuded of trees, and the quality of life is not just a cliché, it is a reality.

05:18 Strangely enough at that time A V Jennings, a Melbourne-based development company, had moved in and bought land in the fashionable suburb of Hunters Hill with the idea of building luxurious units, apartments for the very rich and the people in that area rose up against it and had a couple of meetings. The driving force was a group called 'The Battlers for Kelly's Bush' and they were all women, middle-upper-class women, and threatened to go down in front of the bulldozers when the bulldozers came in. As a very last resort, there was then a corrupt government in power here, state government, Askin, now universally considered corrupt, they went to Askin and he refused to do anything about them. They then went to the local member, Peter Coleman, a very right-wing member for that area of Hunters Hill. He is, by the way, strangely enough is the father-in-law of Costello, the Treasurer now.

The man who used to edit Quadrant?

06:37 Exactly. An extremely right-wing reactionary and of course he wouldn't help them either. As a very last resort they came to the Builders' Labourers' on the basis of things that I have said about the importance of the environment and we went out there and spoke to the people and we said to them, 'Well if you can show it is not just a handful of people but it is the feeling of the people in Hunters Hill we will take it back to the union.' So they had a meeting, over six hundred people came to it, and the women came back to the union leadership and spoke. It was interesting, when they'd left some of the Builders'

Labourers' on the exec said, 'Jesus Christ, what are we doing, we haven't even got members in Hunters Hill.' Others of us argued that whether it is Liverpool, Penrith or Woollahra, if we are fair dinkum about open space being necessary, and they had a valid argument we should support them.

07:42 AV Jennings announced that they would ignore the ban and use non-union labour and at the time, as I told you before, we had won the confidence of the workers, over ninety per cent of all workers carrying out builders' Labourers' work were in a union, and the work we covered was from unskilled work, doing the footings, doing the concreting, doing the steelwork, going up high on a building with riggers and scaffolders, all of that work was covered by Builders' Labourers, so when it came to bans we had a lot of bargaining power. Whether the commencement of building, or whether stopping the demolition of buildings we had enormous power.

08:21 At the time there were something like eleven unions in the building industry, all the different trades had their own unions, and the Builders' Labourers of course was an amorphous group that stretched from the skilled to the unskilled, so we had a lot of power and the union was very strong. So we responded by calling a meeting on one of AV Jennings' jobs in North Sydney and the workers decided that if one blade of grass, or one tree was touched in Kelly's Bush that half-completed building would remain forever as a monument to Kelly's Bush. That really set the cat amongst the pigeons, the developers came out and attacked us of course. Askin came out and said sarcastically, 'Who do they think they are, they are mere labourers. Do they think they are urban town planners?' and threatened to introduce legislation against the union to take it out of existence. So right-wing Labor also ran for cover, saying, 'Mundey is a Communist and we don't agree with him,' etcetera. Hence the parliamentary papers are full of story, day after day, and the papers at the time - it was front page news the threat of the union to put the ban on.

09:49 But at the time it captured the imagination of many people in the city area because the changes that occurred in the area meant that buildings that were part of our heritage were being knocked down, there was no legislation, there were no acts of parliament to stop the buildings being destroyed. At the beginning of the boom there was a tendency to say 'this is good, bigger is better, biggest is best, we are going to become another Chicago, New York, we are going to reach for the sky.' But others of the more thinking segment said, 'Well come on, is this good, look what's happening. These fine buildings are being knocked down and people are not being consulted.' So the Kelly's Bush struggle was very, very

important.

10:41 Because it received so much publicity and after, of course, we put the ban on, it was called a Black Ban. A Black Ban has connotations of workers jacking up jobs to lift their wages and conditions. Later on, and I think this was a turning point, when we called them Green Bans, it had a more noble argument and we weren't just trying to increase the wages and conditions of the workers we were looking on a wider angle at the quality of life issues.

Who thought of the word 'Green Ban'?

11:20 Me, Jack. I think it was more reflective of what we were doing. Through all the publicity that was occurring at the time, and we had a lot of support, there were many resident actions groups everywhere trying to stop development taking place that was inappropriate. The rank and file of the union had a lot of support from resident action groups. Also the National Trust then came out, because the National Trust could see that there wasn't any support for them so they thought here was a chance. I think a lot of them were uncomfortable with a rough-hewn leadership of Builders' Labourers unionists led by Communists and left-wing Labor being their allies but anything was better, I suppose, in a storm, so a strange alliance was being formed and the ban was in place. The success of it and the publicity around it.....

12:40 On the one hand many of the conservative unions said the union was going too far, in fact they were echoing many of the things that the developers were saying. On the other hand you had people who were normally conservative, but as I said before the thinking segment of people, they said, 'Normally we are not happy being in the company of left-wingers like the leaders of the Builders' Labourers, but we are more attuned to them than what we are to what a conservative Government is doing.' So this dichotomy, where you had on the one hand conservative unions condemning the Builders' Labourers, on the other hand you had liberal conservatives saying it was good, we were filling a vacuum. I argued, and others have argued that way, that we were filling a vacuum. There should be laws in place to stop the destruction of buildings. There should be laws and avenues to allow ordinary people an expression of they wanted.

Around this time, far from laws for heritage there were plans afoot to redevelop The Rocks, weren't there.

13:51 Exactly. So what happened then, we were inundated, after the publicity around Kelly's Bush and Hunters Hill and this question of the union coming on side with the

battlers was a very appealing argument, the so-called fashionable women of Hunters Hill linking up with the Builders' Labourers Union. So we were inundated with requests for the Green Bans and our success was always that, even though we were being accused by Askin and the developers of flexing our muscles and being power-drunk and imposing Green Bans we always set a pattern that the residents had to come to us, or the people opposing construction of a new development had to come to us, or people opposing demolition of buildings had to come to us. We would then go and talk to either mass meetings or executive meetings of the Builders' Labourers and then a ban would be imposed. That was the pattern we followed and that won us credibility, even though they continually parroted that the power-drunk leaders were imposing bans willy-nilly, we argued of course strongly that was not the case. So in the course of three years there were forty-two Green Bans holding up five thousand million dollars worth of so-called development.

15:27 The bans were very different in some ways because some of the bans were against any development taking place, others bans were for residents and architects and others to have a say in modifying buildings that was taken place, others were just a blanket ban because of the heritage regulation and a call that governments should be introducing legislation so as to allow ordinary people to have a say in what should happen. There was no court, for example, it is interesting that the Land and Environment Court was only set up when the Askin Government was beaten and the Wran Government came in. Time won't permit for me to go through all the forty-two bans but they covered such widespread things as there were over sixty buildings decreed by the National Trust to be worthy of preservation and they were saved.

16:30 Of course, getting ahead of myself here, the net result was that the Land and Environment Court was set up by Wran precisely because of the extra parliamentary action of the resident action groups and the Builders' Labourers and other progressive unions in that period - that set the pattern for a change in government three years later, a change in government, and then the introduction of that heritage legislation. So it is very important.

17:06 I won't go through all the bans but in the case of The Rocks, unlike Kelly's Bush, they were mainly people who had lived in The Rocks, were born there. Nita McCrae, the wonderful leader, had been a barmaid and raised a family in The Rocks, and there were many others on the committee as well. The National Trust were cock-a-hoop about us doing this and John Morris came out, he was the executive director of the National Trust

and he rang me up when we imposed a ban on The Rocks. We said that there could be development in The Rocks but it had to be a people's plan and so progressive architects, the National Trust and the residents of The Rocks drew up the people's plan for The Rocks that would allow people to live in The Rocks with some infill of buildings, some of the buildings that were dilapidated could be knocked down.

18:09 It was interesting to get the attitude of the National Trust. John Morris rang me up and said, 'Congratulations on what you are doing' and I said, 'Well why don't you go public and say that because that will get a lot of support.' He said, 'No, I couldn't do that.' So I said, 'Come down to the Trades Hall.' He couldn't do that either. So I said, 'I will come down to National Trust,' that wasn't in it. He said, 'I tell you what I'll do, I'll meet you in the Royal George Hotel next Monday at one o'clock. I am fifty-six and I've got a sports coat and a little red beard.' So I arrived in the saloon bar of the Royal George, which had been then the pushers pub a number of years before, where all the Push used to gather there. I met him in the saloon bar on the Monday, there was only two people, this bloke with a ginger beard and me, and I said, 'This is bloody silly, what's going on?' He said, 'No Jack, I couldn't do it. The blue-rinse set of Bellevue Hill would never understand.' I have told that story a thousand times since. Within a couple of years we had the blue-rinse set and everybody else supporting the Builders' Labourers and the Green Bans.

19:27 So The Rocks, because of the history of The Rocks, it was very, very important that the people there were different there, were different to the people from Kelly's Bush so we argued whether it was well-to-do or ordinary working-class people, we would be bound by what the people wanted.

Another ban was Victoria Street, which was again different.

Well before we go there, that is terrific background, The Rocks one took from 1971 to 1973. 1971 it was when Nita McCrae approached the BLF and you put the ban on, then 1973 there was the big stand-off. Can you describe that for me when basically you occupied a building.

20:20 The struggle had gone on and there had been a couple of other outstanding bans, the one on the Theatre Royal, which was I think interesting in a sense that again, people in the city fighting for a theatre, a live theatre, and finally that was won by compelling Lend Lease, who were building the building, together with Dusseldorf of Civil and Civic, who was a very progressive bloke, the late Dick Dusseldorf for a developer very progressive, and Harry Seidler, they then agreed that a live theatre be kept in the new building that was built in the MLC building and I think that was a great victory.

21:13 Coming back to The Rocks, The Rocks had generated such interest that the people in The Rocks were very much in support of what we were doing and held the role. Nita McCrae was great, so from 1971 to 1973 the arguments went on. Colonel Magee, who was then the Director of the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, or its predecessor the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority (SCRA), they then said they would use non-union labour and they attempted in Playfair Street to commence demolition. After holding them up for two and a half years they then started. We immediately stopped all the building sites in Sydney, they marched on The Rocks and occupied The Rocks and we held out and for two weeks the struggle went on. They had the police, Askin had all the police at their disposal, to come down and attack the union and so it was really confrontation. Other unions came into it, some of the left-wing unions, Waterside Workers' and Seamen, Metalworkers came in and gave assistance, but in the main it was the fight of the building workers. Some carpenters, but mainly the Builders' Labourers Union led the way.

What about the public, general members of the public, did they support you?

22:58 Well, the residents were there all the time and the public was pretty much on side, although of course there were divisions there because the Askin Government was spending a lot of time with spin and attacking the union for going too far and flexing your muscles, and all this sort of stuff, Communist-led rebel rousers, blah, blah, blah. But in the main the people stood firm and the idea that we should have a people's plan for The Rocks, keep it essentially low-rise, with people having a right to live there and not be all driven out of the city and that there should be some place for working-class people to live in the inner city area. Really the struggle there and the struggle for Woolloomooloo and the struggle for Glebe were all for about public housing - the public housing was central to the argument, as was Victoria Street, that low paid people should be allowed to live there.

Just to wrap up on the 1973 - you were arrested that day at the battle for The Rocks.

24:11 It went on for a couple of weeks but finally it was decided that we would occupy it totally. We met and got people down there, and we went onto the site and stopped them working. We worked it out, I think there were about seventy arrests that day in October 1973 and they included a grandmother, there young people, children, there were union officials, Joe Owens. So as not to have too many union officials we had Joe Owens and myself. I was just about to step down, actually, under a role that I had introduced of a limited tenure of office, so as not to have the same people there decade after decade, so my six years was up and Owens was to come in, so we were the two officials who were

arrested.

25:09 I think there were sixty or seventy arrests anyway, and we were taken away to different police stations and put in the cells. That had a terrific affect on other unions as well because we then held a huge meeting down at The Rocks the following day and again we had all those wide sections of people and the public at large and that really was the turning point because we stopped the development from taking place. That's when the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority in time became the Sydney Cove Authority, so they dropped the 'Redevelopment'. The pressure was on then within the hierarchy about what it was going to do and of course when the Wran Government came in they changed the pattern. They built Sirius, which was public housing, and in the main kept some of the housing.

26:13 Unfortunately, with the passage of time The Rocks became more commercialised and even though there was no full high-rise building taking place it nevertheless, because it is a central part of Sydney it became more commercialised. I always argued that Millers Point is part of The Rocks because it is adjacent to them. People have given views about this, just recently in this review that the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority had I again raised that you can't really look at The Rocks without also considering its relationship with Millers Point and I think that will always be the case. After all, the housing and the people of Millers Point, the people in The Rocks, runs into each other, and seeing that they have been there so long, seeing that The Rocks and Millers Point have been the oldest part of colonial Australia, the oldest part of white Australia, the part the invaders came here, where the first meeting where the blacks took place, Millers Point is equally as important as The Rocks.

Just on that, the people who live in the Sirius building - I just wonder whether putting them there was such a good option because reading about the community life in The Rocks it is all about the life that takes place on the street, it is people meeting in the pubs. They are all in units now and how do they have that kind of interaction that they would have had in the old days?

27:57 The thing was, with the strength in the commercial sense when we won the right of people to remain in The Rocks, that wanted to stay there, a lot of the people left. Because of the struggle that was taking place a lot of them felt the pressure was too much and some people left. What happened then was that a lot of those places that were residential more and more became commercial because of its proximity to the city, because of the natural development of business. We argued this was going too far - I am now getting ahead of myself by about another two years - we argued that what was happening is that the

residential section was being neglected as the commercial section grew. That is how the then Minister for Housing in the Wran Government, Paul Landa, that was where it was agreed upon that Sirius be built. We went along with that because at least it was holding a part of The Rocks as residential. Even though we weren't crash hot about the building we felt at least it is keeping people that want to stay in The Rocks there, so it was what I call a compromise.

29:27 END OF TAPE MP-SM9 SIDE A

29:28 START OF TAPE MP-SM9 SIDE B

Millers Point was declared a village precinct in 2003 but I wonder how realistic is it to imagine having a village right in the heart of a city? I mean, if Millers Point is a village it doesn't even have a butcher, the butcher has closed down recently, it doesn't have the services that you associate with a village. Is it possible to have the two things coincide, to have a village atmosphere in a city?

30:03 Well I think it is, but of course it will be greatly weakened by the commercial strength. As I see the place, being under threat now, the Property Council would dearly love to get control of Millers Point and I am sure you would have got the history about how the public housing came to be. My understanding is that when the Harbour Trust developed it as a residential area, when the Harbour Trust had the housing, it was primarily because of all the activity on the wharf, all the noise on the wharf was such that of course it wasn't a very desirable place for such a noisy working area to be. So working-class people who serviced the wharves, or worked in the bars, or worked on the ferries they were primarily the people that lived in the area, or worked for the Council, lived in the area, so there was a long period then of working-class people being in that area.

31:19 I think the reality of what has happened since and with the strength of big business they would just dearly love to get hold of that and get rid of it, and I think that is a sort of conspiracy that is still there. I think Millers Point is under threat, I think there will be a real fight to keep the housing segments that we've got. I include Millers Point, a little bit in The Rocks, Woolloomooloo and Glebe - they are the only areas adjacent to the CBD where there are some residential public housing.

What do you think of the recent development at Walsh Bay, how do you think that has impacted the area?

Not that good, in the sense that mainly the people who have moved into it are mainly very wealthy, it is a wealthy area, Walsh Bay. You mean the building that has taken place so far?

Yes, on the wharves. Isn't there an argument that you create a ghetto if you have only poor people, that it is better to have a mix of people?

32:36 I think with public housing they haven't got to be poor people, public housing can be quite good. After all, Millers Point has never been a really so-called slum, certainly not in the post-Second World War period. The Housing Department, Public Works before that, should have done more about maintenance.

Maritime Services, it was.

33:03 The Maritime Services Board took over from the Harbour Trust, I didn't mention that, and then the Housing Department later on. I think they could have done a lot more about it. If we are talking about the possibilities now, I think that it is imperative that we keep what we've got.

So you lived there for a year in the 1980s, when you were on the City Council, you lived in Millers Point in a residential in Fort Street, what was it like to live there day-by-day?

33:42 Well actually I lived there for three years. I lived in the first place for a year at Pat Phillips. Because Pat Phillips and Beverley Sutton had stood with me on the ticket when we won, based on community independence, I won for that area, which was The Rocks area. Pat offered me a room and I lived there for a year. Then I lived for two years at the hotel, the Lord Nelson, so I was three years. All the time I was in the City Council I moved in there because I believed that representatives should live in the area. Because of my association with both The Rocks and Millers Point I felt it was imperative that I lived there. I of course had differences then with what was going to happen to The Rocks because some of the tenancy arrangements I did not agree with and that is when I moved from Pat's place to the pub.

So we are talking about the so-called Battle of the Landladies. What was your view? The Department of Housing wanted to take over direct control of the tenants in these large boarding houses and the landladies, led by Shirley Ball protested, arguing that they had had rights for many years.

Custom and Practice.

Why did you oppose the landladies, like Shirley Ball?

35:42 I opposed on the principal basis it was public housing and to have in mind where sometimes the head tenant was getting five and six times as much money as they were each paying themselves and I think that was outrageous.

So you think there were landladies who were exploiting it for personal greed?

36:05 Of course there is no doubt about that, what other reason would there be? I took that up with the Minister for Housing, who was then Jack Ferguson, father of all the other members of parliament and secretaries of the union, took it up with him. In fact a court case took place in which the landladies won a certain significant right to the area on the basis of 'Custom and Practice'. So things were strained between myself and the landladies, even though people like Bev Sutton and Pat had stood with me on the ticket. With Bev Sutton and Pat I remained friends but I just differed on a question of principle about that.

Do you think, ironically, that the landladies might have capitalised on the goodwill in the community towards the perceived battlers of The Rocks?

37:09 No doubt about it. There was no doubt about it because at the time Shirley Ball, when I was trying to get the Millers Point people more involved with the struggle in The Rocks, she claimed to be a supporter of The Rocks struggle but also distance herself from them by saying Millers Point was not The Rocks, whereas I argued they are cheek-by-jowl and the people all know each other. It is true that some Millers Point people did see themselves as different from The Rocks but just by the sheer logical position of being cheek-by-jowl how could you be? A lot of them were inter-married and a lot of them had worked together and knew each other for generations.

But some people go even further, they claim to be Dawes Pointers, they don't want to be either.

38:09 I know. I guess you will always get that and as you'd know, probably better than me, if you go back to our roots from the different countries we come from Ireland and England, people are even more parochial. So that was understandable, one of the oldest parts of Sydney should be so parochial.

You lived there for three years, describe the atmosphere. Did you get to know the local people? Did you get a sense of the history?

38:39 Well I guess I got to know them pretty well through my struggle in the union and the fact that I was elected and I was one of Australia's best-known Communists at a time when not too many Communists were getting elected to any level of government. Being such a public figure in the struggle for The Rocks I think by my getting elected it showed that there was support for what we did. I moved into the area on the basis that I believe that people who are elected should live within their area, and that is why I lived there.

On a day-to-day basis living there did you have a personal sense of being surrounded by history? Did it feel different from living in Croydon?

39:34 Well to me of course, I was there because I felt for the area. I felt for the area in

fighting for it. It was a real mixture, the people in Millers Point mainly were people who worked, as I said, in the wharves. Even then the people that worked in the wharves, or worked for the Council, worked for the County Council, or the City Council, they were all terrific working-class people. In fact one of the reasons that they sacked the Council was at that time there was a build-up, there was a real movement to sell off The Rocks and sell off Millers Point and I believe that that was one of the reasons that Council was sacked in March 1987. There was to be an election in the September of that year and I believe they sacked the Council so as to prevent that election taking place because on the Council the left-wing Labor and the community Independents, of which I was one, Sartor, Clover Moore, Craig Johnson, Michael Mobbs, other people, there were twenty-seven councillors actually. That is another story, how the Council was so big because when we looked like getting control of the Council they then wanted to get rid of the Council. They couldn't do anything about it because there had been two councils, there had been South Sydney and Sydney, this is in the early 1980s, when left-wing Labor led by Tickner and Tony Reeves started to assert themselves the Wran Government brought in South Sydney, who were all very right-wing Labor and combined the two so they would have a majority of right-wingers to pull the left-wingers into line.

41:59 Then of course they had the election in 1984 and not only did they keep control but there were a number of people like myself and two other ex-Communists came onto the Council. Then the Labor Party split and the left-wing Labor, together with the Progressive Independents had a majority. We opposed such things as the mono-rail, where we had enormous gatherings of ten and fifteen thousand people opposing it at big rallies. It was London to a brick, as they say, that we would have won the election in 1987, even more so. What they did then they sacked the Council on the flimsy reason the meetings were taking too long. A Labor Government under Unsworth sacked the Council and installed a couple of knights of the realm to run the city and that was in March of 1987 and prevented the election taking place.

You never went back onto the Council - why was that?

43:09 Well at the time there was no election, they had their appointees, they were appointed to come in, administrators. What happened then, when the Greiner Government came in. That is under Unsworth, the next year was 1988 and Greiner won the election against Unsworth. Greiner then changed it again and he said, 'We'll have elections now,' but he pushed away South Sydney, kicked the Labor out, and cut up Sydney so as the big end of

town would get control of the Council. I did not go back into that then, I said no. Then of course they got control for a while and then they changed and Sartor and the Labor Party came back.

Well Jack, since that time you've had a very broad range of interests and activities with the Historic Houses Trust and of course the long-term association with the Conservation Foundation, you started to be referred to in the press as an urban activist and environmentalist and you joined the Greens Party, so coming right up to date - you are now sitting on a committee that is going to judge the successful design for the redevelopment of what is currently the Patrick site, down there below Millers Point. What sort of outcome would you like to see, how hopeful are you that there will be an outcome that goes along with your values?

45:01 Well, as you can gather my appreciation for the strength of big business and corporatism, I have seen in my struggles in thirty or forty years in the left-wing movement, in the Communist Party and other left organisations I have been associated with, I have seen capitalism change to corporatism. Most people don't realise this, now we have got corporations really running it and in some ways it is much more difficult than just the old-fashioned capitalist. I see that the organisation of people now, getting people together, is going to very, very hard. I accepted this position on the committee on the basis it is better to be there than not there, not just being a whingeing critic outside, so I think they probably appointed me as a token person that they could say 'they have a people's representative there'. I have been on two committees actually, also now there is the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority is also looking at a heritage study of The Rocks. Again, I have raised there that you can't really take The Rocks without also considering Millers Point, and the argument of course is that Millers Point is different, etcetera. I feel the same way about the thing they are calling the East Darling Harbour area, which is as you said, the Patrick area. Of the twenty-two hectares, it is a pretty big area, half of it is to be open space. I believe the half that should be open space is on the northern end. It is on public display and I think we should encourage people to become more involved in it because there are so many different varieties. Of course, if I am right about big business the way they'll come in, they'll come in with a lot of their spin doctors and a lot of publicity and a lot of propaganda. I think we have got to keep the northern end open space in the main and the southern end allow development to take place there.

47:29 Because Millers Point is adjacent to it I think we have got to fight hook, line and sinker to keep Millers Point as it is. Already you are seeing like the Observatory Hotel, that comes down Kent Street, I think there should be a clear stop there, nothing further north from there. I think we have got to keep all of the existing housing that they've got and it

should remain that way. Any high-rise development will be on the southern end of East Darling Harbour.

The northern end is the part that goes down to the water.

Goes down to the water opposite Luna Park, around from Walsh Bay.

Is the argument completely lost of retaining Sydney as a working harbour?

48:28 I don't think it is completely lost but I think the die is cast and just to keep saying we'll keep it as a working harbour full stop, they'll just run roughshod over us. I think at least the argument about keeping it open space is really important because that will mean that from the Opera House, around Circular Quay and then under the Bridge, around Dawes Point and around Walsh Bay you'll have all low-rise, and Millers Point will be low-rise.

49:12 It doesn't mean that there won't be a working harbour, in fact you could argue that part of that open space area be used for boat building and for boat repairs, there are lot of options there, it is a pretty big area.

The other half of the twenty-two hectares, I believe, about seventy-five per cent will go for office workers and twenty-five per cent for residential, now they are talking about seventy-five thousand workers in that area, wouldn't that impinge hugely on the tiny community, the ageing community really, at Millers Point? How are they going to maintain any sense of cohesion as a community when there is this enormous amount of people just transplanted into their midst?

50:07 I think there is also a way you can get public transport in there. See that part of East Darling Harbour, if you look at the map, it is back towards the city.

Sorry, it was twenty-five thousand workers.

50:29 It is still a lot. They are back towards the city side. If you keep them down on what I call the southern side of this development, well they are really adjacent to where there is already high-rise. See, it really runs into Darling Harbour, the southern side of this development runs into Darling Harbour, well there is high-rise there now. I think twelve storeys is the highest, which is still pretty high near the water but it is not terribly high-rise.

It's not Australia Square. Do you think that calling it East Darling Harbour in itself is a bit of propaganda, PR?

51:16 Yes. When I say it first, East Darling Harbour, yes of course.

Because it is almost making it a foregone conclusion that it should become like Darling Harbour instead of being associated more with that working-class historical area.

51:32 We should call it another name, I think. We mightn't even win that argument about keeping the northern end open space, there could be a mixture.

They are going to have an iconic building, I believe, in that open space for public use.

51:54 Carr was the one that used the term, the space would be there for the future where another iconic building like the Opera House, that is what he said, could be for future generations built there. I believe it should be open space full stop, so as people can come down there. The open space area, if it was half would be a bit like Hyde Park, it would be as big as Hyde Park from Park Street down to the fountain.

Some of the residents in Millers Point I have spoken to - they talk about the boys growing up in Millers Point wanting football fields, that is what they miss about growing up in Millers Point. Would there be a chance for a sports field?

52:50 There would be. I myself think there are enough sports fields now, but I would like to keep it passive open space. There would be room in eleven hectares, that is nearly thirty acres, over two acres to each hectare, so there would be room for that, yes.

Just thinking about what you said about the difference, that it has moved now to corporatism rather than capitalism, in a way the mid-1970s when the Green Bans were at their height, it seems such a different era in that even government now has become corporate, hasn't it? Government has been into privatisation and deregulation ever since the 1980s.

53:47 Well, Thatcher and Reaganism also was here. Even though we had a Labor Government for thirteen years, from 1983 to 1996, many of the ideas of deregulation and privatisation, Qantas, the Commonwealth Bank, government insurance companies went. We are finding it even more so now with PPP, Private-Public-Partnerships, which favour greatly the private sector. You have got Greiner, the former bloody Premier making zillions with Hornibrook Baulderstone and now they are going to put in all these tunnels. After saturating ground level with motor vehicles they have now got these tunnels, often going to be given out to these people for twenty or thirty years, it is outrageous that that should be allowed. I think the Private-Public-Partnership is a classic example of corporatising things that should be the government's. The government should be getting the revenue for that, not them.

Given that is what has been happening maybe the really important legacy of the Green Bans is the legislation that followed from it because the legislation can't readily be overturned.

55:20 No, but it can be stretched too. I think the great hope we have for the Land and Environment Court and we had rights for legal aid, where resident action groups could go and get legal aid to go, well that has been whittled away. Both under the Greiner Government and the Carr Government the rights of residents to get legal aid is becoming more and more difficult and of course they can't afford the cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars to fight big court cases against these corporations that have got an unlimited

amount of money. The governments, both under Liberal and Labor have moved to more of this area of privatisation and deregulation.

So are you ultimately hopeful because of the broader awareness of environmental issues that you will actually achieve some kind of workable solution down there on the old Patrick site?

56:36 Yes I'm hopeful. I think we have got to be in there doing the best we can to maximise the open space area. I can envisage that northern part being very, very popular, and it could include playing fields as well as other areas set aside for passive open space. I don't go along with the iconic building but when Carr of course was questioned about it, 'What do you mean iconic building?' he said, 'Oh well, some time in the future they might want to build another Opera House,' he made that sort of statement, so it was a throw-away line, I think.

An architect can't really be asked to design a building unless they know what its purpose is for?

Of course and what is iconic, who is to determine that.

Exactly, iconic usually comes after the event.

57:26 When the Opera House was built they didn't say they were going to put an iconic building there, did they.

No that was bestowed on it with hindsight. Just one other question, Jack - you fought very hard to save The Rocks but the way it has turned out it is arguably quite a tawdry, glitzy, over-commercialised and even exploitative sort of area in that it exploits Australian culture but in a very crass way, many people have said. Phillip Cox, the architect, calls it a painted whore. Do you think that people can lose the plot, they can save a thing, yet the essence of it still goes, is there any danger that that could happen to Millers Point? That Millers Point could lose the very authenticity that makes it worth saving?

58:34 I think with The Rocks of course it is not all the things we want but I do think that the pubs, for example, in The Rocks, I think there are a lot of good things about The Rocks. It has still got the history. When Sydney Cove Authority and Geoff Bailey was there I think they were attempting to do things. I think since Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority they have let things go. I don't think The Rocks is a write-off because while ever we keep it low-rise and keep Kendall Lane and keep a lot of good things there and keep the pubs there I am not prepared to give it away. I think a lot of the criticism of you have said and others have said are right but it is still there, and I think we have got to make sure it gets better.

59:25 As regards Millers Point, I think we have got to learn from The Rocks and we've got to fight hard to keep Millers Point as it is, and there is no reason why we shouldn't be able to do that. Even bring back the village feeling because it is still an entity in itself and it is very close to The Rocks. I don't think it is as threatened with commercialisation as much as

The Rocks is, there is still a bit of a break there. I think it has got its own history and maybe some of the disadvantages that it had will be its advantages in the future. We've got to be eternally vigilant about it.

So the fact that it is out of public transport might have helped preserve it because it is harder to get to.

That's right.

Well Jack, thank you very much for taking part.

Always a pleasure, Siobhán.

60:29 END OF INTERVIEW WITH JACK MUNDEY & END OF TAPE MP-SM9 SIDE B.