

I came out after I graduated in Sydney at the end of '39 and as soon as the results were out Professor Walker, who was then the professor here in Tasmania, was over on a visit and Professor Mills from Sydney asked me to come up to his study one day, and I met Walker who had in fact been a lecturer of mine 2 years previously, and Walker made the suggestion that I came over there on a temporary basis to take the place of Ken Dallas who had just joined up in the Navy, and I was to take his place while he was away. Well, I got annual leave of absence from the Education Department in NSW where I was teaching (Q. And you had been a part-time student?) yes, evening student. I did the four year course there, I did it in Honours, and that meant a lot of hard work. Well when I came over to Tasmania I had one year working under Walker alone (Q. That would be '40 or '41?) 1940. I came with some trepidation because a certain lecturer in Sydney who I learned where I was going said he would like to warn me that the University was a very funny little place just opposite the railway station and next door to the Governor's house, and the Governor was a tartar and he used to come into lectures to see how you were getting on, which of course didn't encourage me very much. (Q. And was there any truth at all in that?) No truth at all. The house next door was half a mile away and I never, during Sir Ernest Clark's period of office, met the Governor at all. However when I got there I found that Economics was at that time merely a school in the Faculty of Arts. We had Economics I, II & III (Q. I see, and it was a department in the Faculty at that stage?) in the Faculty of Arts. There was a Faculty of Commerce which did Economics as a major but the rest of its subjects were all commercial or industrial subjects and they were taken in the main, if not entirely, by part-time lecturers. It was at that time that Stanley Burbury was lecturer in commercial law, and we had somebody else for accounting, Hewer I think his name was (Q. Cummins had left by then, I suppose?) yes. And of course the part-time people and indeed the Department of Economics did form the Faculty of Commerce, though the School of Economics was probably under the Faculty of Arts (Q. So people would do an Arts degree and they could have a full major in Economics?) yes, an Arts degree in Economics. As a matter of fact it was in my time when I was Dean of the Faculty after Walker had left us, I think it would have been about 1944, that I put up the scheme for the introduction of an Economics degree and the transfer of all the Economics subjects over to the Faculty of Economics & Commerce. I notice that at least up to 1950 it was still calling itself the Faculty of Commerce. (Yes, but it has gone through a double-change since then) It changed to Commerce & Economics, and then to Economics. (No, it changed to Economics and then to both I think it is now both Economics and Commerce, after having for a short time been Economics only. Yes, after the change was made I notice that in 1950 a calendar still speaks about it as the Faculty of Commerce (Yes, I think it was Commerce for quite a number of years until 1970 or so). It had been originally the Commerce Faculty and in those days we members of the Economics School were in fact members of the Faculty of Commerce and we had no

authority over (Q. But there was a degree in Commerce?) Yes, we put in a major for those who wanted it but the control of the units of Economics were all under the charge of the Faculty of Arts. In fact, I recall the day when I succeeded, after a considerable kerfuffle, in getting the new degree and the new Faculty basis recognised, which meant transfer too of responsibility from Faculty of Arts to Commerce for Economics. (Q. And when you say you were Dean of the Faculty, that means you were Dean of Commerce?) Yes. (Q. So the academics did have a more important say on the Faculty of Commerce, but I suppose a sample majority were non-academics on the Faculty of Commerce?) Yes. Incidentally, there was another peculiar thing about our Faculties in those days, I don't know when it was changed or if it has been changed but about 50% of the Faculty were non-academics. (Q. No, well in Commerce and Law it would still be almost that many I think). Of course here, in Western Australia, the Faculties are academic people only (Q. Exclusively are they? And did that make things difficult for you, how many tensions arose from that situation of such a high ...?) It was a matter where personal counted for a heck of a lot. I know, as I mentioned previously to you, Walker warned me when he was going away that I might have trouble with Baker. Well, when Baker came on the first Faculty meeting he brought up an old *bête noire* about this particular student whom he felt had not been given a fair trial (Q. That was Malden he had tangled with on that, had he?) Yes, it was. The trouble was that there had been a change in curriculum and certain subjects he had passed were not to be counted, but I found the solution to that which I put to the Faculty, and the Faculty accepted it including Baker, and whether I had won Baker over or not I must say I never had any trouble with him at all. But there was always a shadow of this town against gown. (?) I very much prefer the WA method, I think the control of the Faculty - an Advisory Body is a good idea, the University must keep its ears to the ground but on the other hand it must have complete control over its own curriculum. (Q. And even beyond that, would you say that in Tasmania at that time you felt there was a tension between academics and non-academics on Council, between academics and members of the community at large, or is that too general a question?) There was a certain amount of it, if I could illustrate that in one particular small way - the University, University students mainly, formed a branch the Labor Party, the Labor Club, and they invited I think it was Mr Reece - who at that time was Head of the Trades Hall before he actually went into Parliament - invited him to come along to be the guest speaker at our inaugural meeting. And in the course of the meeting a number of students had got up and said (?) and they wanted to know how they could help, could they do anything in the way of propaganda or what, and Reece in his talk gave a most emphatic statement to the effect that "you young fellows don't know anything about the thing, and you sit back and watch us and learn", which did not go down very well. (Q. So even where there was the inclination on the students' part to sympathise, it didn't meet with a response?) The students were pretty strong as a matter of fact (Q. Even in those War years there was still a definite student

consciousness?) Well, that was after the War (Q. After you got the ex-service impact?) I remember it was the first year that Ken Dallas had been returned after demobilisation, of course he was one of the first to be demobilised you know. In fact when my period of applying year by year to have my leave of absence from Tasmania (Q. I see, you adjusted a year by year appointment all the time?) Well, there was a regulation you see that Universities could not make any full-time appointments during the War; and the result was that I started off as Lecturer Grade I, which corresponds here to Senior Lecturer, part-time, and I then became Acting Head of the Department part-time, Dean of the Faculty part-time, and this went on all the way through the War.

Interview with W.T. Dowsett, Perth W.A. by M. Roe, Wednesday 30th August 1978.

W.T.D. taught in Economics Commerce 1940-50 he has something to say about the mechanics of the course. Assesses the impact of the war on the University and the very considerable change thereafter.

Has something to say about the general quality of the place, and relations with 'town'. There is an interesting anecdote about EE Reece rejecting, or at least screening, an effort to set up ALP group at the University. Dowsett took leading part in this. Himself a Pacifist, he met no overt criticism.

Questioned about any 'build-up' to the Orr case, responds that he thought nothing especially awry at his departure. There were divisions among the staff, the old hands were none too hospitable. The big change on coming to W.A. was the cheerfulness with which people went about their work.

Sound, intelligent, comment.