

## **BMC – Leyland Australia Heritage Group**

### **ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

**INTERVIEWEE :** Norman Jones.

**TAPE NUMBERS :**

**INTERVIEWER :** Deborah Stomps.

**BMCLA DS 07 & 08**

**INTERVIEW DATE :** 25<sup>th</sup> November 2002.

**NUMBER OF TAPES :** 2

**RESTRICTION ON USE :** (as stated in Release Form)

### **INTERVIEW TAPE LOG**

This interview took place at: The Norman Jones home at Pleasure Point, NSW.  
on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2002.

This log was prepared using a Sony Cassette-Corder TC-146A recorder by Norman Prescott.

This interview is part of the Oral History Project of the BMC – Leyland Australia Heritage Group.

**Tape Log NORMAN JONES.**

<b>Tape : BMCLA : DS 07, Side A.</b>		
<b>COUNT</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>NAMES &amp; KEYWORDS</b>
0  50	(Tape incorrectly quoted as DS 06 by Interviewer) Born 1923 Lake Macquarie, NSW. 1941 Joined BHP Newcastle as Commercial Trainee. 1942 Joined Forces and served with 6 <sup>th</sup> Division Signals in New Guinea. Resumed training with BHP in 1947. Had interest in mining and moved to Joint Coal Board in 1950. Describes endeavours to improve working conditions of miners and effects of dust diseases. Describes influence on his attitude to helping workers.	BHP Steel Newcastle. 6 <sup>th</sup> Division Signals. Coal Board. Miners.
100	Because of a desire for change and experience in the industrial field he joined Nuffield Australia as Employment Officer at age 30 (1954). Was involved with CKD Plant and, on the Austin/Morris merger, the start-up of the Unit Plant. Work mainly comprised recruiting masses of labour with large migrant intake from 1955 to 1960. Many were Greeks and Yugoslavs. Turnover of labour rose to 200% in later years.	Nuffield Aust Employment Officer. Labour demand. Migrants. Labour turnover.
150  200	Achieving production rates had priority, causing pressure on workforce which was untrained and had language problems. An ugly industrial environment. Many migrants were cultured people. The management system was not equipped to meet this situation. Production managers Alterator and Atkinson reflected this ideology and rode rough-shod over workers.	Production- emphasis & effects. Migrant culture. Alterator. Atkinson.
250	Quality Control conformed to standards set by Production. Conflict in fixing faults on a moving line. Quality Control lacked support. Also affected worker performance. By 1960 this created criticism of the product by public and media. Fred Stuart, appeal to Personnel on work stress. Senior management, Ron Bitmead, would not confront Production.	Quality Control. Work stress. Fred Stuart. Ron Bitmead.
300  350	CAB management was Australian, Unit Plant and Body Plant managers were of UK origin. Problems were mainly in CAB. Worker job satisfaction was never considered. Good pay was the inducement. This caused problems for Personnel. Company assisted assimilation with English language classes and health programs. There was friction between nationalities. Croats had difficulties, often resulting from war-time experiences. Frustration arose from language difficulties. Jones attempted negotiation to overcome. Australian workers were easier to handle. The pressure on quality led to loss of market share.	Australian/UK management comparison. Worker aid programs. Nationality frictions. Language frustration.
400  450	It was 20 years before Company developed methods to overcome labour problems- (P.North from 1970 on). Previous MD, R.L.Abbott recognised problem but had not been able to improve. He encouraged on-job training (Tom Jessop / Alan Kemp) which was good, primarily with professions and apprentices, not line-workers. Middle managers discouraged such action. Camaraderie in the workforce did exist from the G.A.Lloyd days. Had commenced with a representation of Freemasonry associated with the NSW Police Dept. (Chief Inspector Barnes) and mounted police under Sergeant Lightfoot, often in the Plant to access the racecourse.	R.L.Abbott. P.North. On-job Training. Tom Jessop. Alan Kemp. Camaraderie. G.A.Lloyd. Freemasons. Mounted Police.
	Tape DS 07, Side A continues on next page.	

<b>Tape : BMCLA : DS 07, Side A (continued).</b>		
<b>COUNT</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>NAMES &amp; KEYWORDS</b>
510	(continued from previous page.) Jones summarised highlights of his time at BMC. The actions of P.North in the 70's to overcome autocratic management in the workplace and the major strike of 1972 with 4000 workers stood down due to Union bans on parts deliveries, in which Jones represented the Company in Court Hearings.	Highlights P.North era. 1972 Strike. Court action.
	End of Tape DS 07, Side A. (continued on DS 07, Side B.)	

<b>Tape : BMCLA : DS 07, Side B.</b>		
<b>COUNT</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>NAMES &amp; KEYWORDS</b>
0	(continued from DS 07, Side A.) Continued on 1972 major strike. Justice Colman describes as industrial cannibalism, which throttled the Company. Ban on supply was externally by Storemen & Packers Union aimed to gain wage increases at BMC Footscray Plant. Vehicle Builders Federation who had closed-shop agreement with the Company exerted pressure on the S&P Union to end strike.	72 Strike. Storemen & Packers Union. Vehicle Builders Federation.
50  100  200	Over 10 years from commencement Jones became, progressively, Staff Officer, Industrial Officer, and Industrial Relations Manager from 1968. Company recognised that line-worker was not getting fair treatment. High instance of dismissals could not be tolerated, also inconsistent actions by Supervision. Decision was made that, dismissals could only be effected by Industrial Relations Manager. Caused consternation with Production management but came to be accepted. Decisions seen to be fair. Jones not identified as a Company man or a Union man. Unions came to accept as genuine. Arguments with Atkinson continued – examples of trivial reasons for sacking.	Industrial Relations. Decision on dismissals. Arbitration of disputes.
250  300  350	Describes incidents and behaviours in workplace – Trim shop ladies, CAB storemen, and conditions in toilets. Used vigilante tactics for workers to resolve themselves. Considered a consequence of worker frustration. Migrants bought own food – no Company effort to meet dietary needs in Canteen.	Workplace behaviour. Dietary needs.
400  450	P.North instigated labour research and change. John Engel & Peter Robson joined Company to effect. This justified his earlier efforts. Gives example of sacking in which he had to front MD (Abbott) and offered to relinquish his authority – it was not accepted. North introduced hierarchal change with worker teams and leaders in Production (Swedish system). Intended to get recognition of worker contribution. Received little cooperation from middle management. Over time it might have been accepted.	John Engel. Peter Robson. Worker Teams.
490	Reverts to 1972 major supply strike – describes as an emotional highlight. Others were the resignation of North and the retrenchment of 3500 employees at the factory closure.	Emotional effects.
	End of Tape DS 07, Side B. (continued on DS 08, Side A.)	

<b>Tape : BMCLA : DS 08, Side A.</b>		
<b>COUNT</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>NAMES &amp; KEYWORDS</b>
0  50	(continued from DS 07, Side B.) (Tape incorrectly quoted as DS 07 by interviewer) Continues on emotional impact of the 1972 supply strike. VBEF (Vehicle Builders Federation) felt ire of workers, which was unjustified. Company experiencing problems at that time – economic losses and falling market share.	1972 Strike. VBEF.
100  150  200	Discusses causes of North resignation and Plant closure. Felt North inherited problems and was an enlightened Director who could have saved Company but UK chose not to accept. Deputy Chairman, John Martin, did not intervene to assist. Personnel Manager, Ken Myles, and Jones had task of sacking 3500 employees – describes program and redundancy arrangements. Jones experienced personal and health problems, which involved hospitalisation. Describes his own and workers emotional problems. Efforts made to assist with Commonwealth Employment Service set up on site.	North resignation. Plant closure. John Martin. Ken Myles. Redundancy Program. Emotional effects. C.E.S.
250  300  350  400	Describes his empathy with workers in that period. Example of Bilco, a Yugoslav with mental disturbance, involving physical violence, police, and Court case. Jones handled with Solicitor, George Mutton, and resolved. Reverts to description of his long-held feelings for the frustrations of migrant workers and describes his social contacts with various national groups. Different behaviour patterns – some violent, some passive.	Worker empathy. George Mutton. Worker reactions. Social contacts.
450         510	Describes selection process for employees who continued with Company. Mike Ellis involved. Jones moved to Bondi Junction – experienced health problem. Later moved to Liverpool site, finally serving as Consultant to the Company. Retired in 1981 after 28 years service. His wife, who he first met as Joy Norris in Personnel Dept. at Nuffield Aust. in 1955 also had continuous employment with the Company and left some 18 months after him.	Ongoing employment. Mike Ellis. Joy Norris.
	End of Tape DS 08, Side A. (continued on DS 08, Side B.)	

<b>Tape : BMCLA : DS 08, Side B.</b>		
<b>COUNT</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>NAMES &amp; KEYWORDS</b>
0 50 100	(continued from DS 08, Side A.) Further anecdotes from workplace. First migrants were Maltese in 1955 who assimilated well. Interpreter was recruited from Paint-shop – he had been librarian to King Farouk. Afternoon shift were better quality workers, often working second jobs. Migrants without skills needed more help with English classes, information, and medical services. Sister Carmel Madden had 4 nursing sisters employed.	Maltese migrants. Afternoon-shift. Sister Madden.
200	Company endeavoured to assist workers. Union did not rely on worker participation and had limited contacts, largely due to language problems. Described worker delegate, Eric Mohr, and many arguments but with respect on both sides. Mohr assisted in instance of strike blockage of containers on the wharf. Describes unique perspective of shop-floor relations with senior management. Started well in G.A.Lloyd era.	Union/Worker relations. Eric Mohr Delegate. Management/Worker relations.
250 300	Describes Lloyd family – daughter’s charity work and singing career (married to J.Dirkin). Describes next MD, J.Buckley, and “white elephant” car model he created (Morris Marshal). Also unfair sacking of Personnel Manager, Max Douglas. Describes next MD, J.Graves, as very silent, never seen.	Lloyd family. Dirkin. J.Buckley. Max Douglas. J.Graves.
350 400 440	No action to improve workplace in this period. Workers had to exert themselves as individuals in order to get on. This problem did not apply at staff level. Emphasises lack of pleasure for line-worker whilst loyalty existed at staff level. Company failed to overcome an obnoxious way of motor-vehicle assembly. However, these conditions also applied at GM, Ford and Chrysler/Mitsubishi. The causes were at Board level. A better result was possible and Jones regretted this was never tried in his time.	Worker/Staff motivation. Manufacturer comparison. Regrets.
	End of Tape DS 08, Side B. / End of Interview	