

HILL M. E. H.



Could you tell me what your first memories of Equity Chambers were and when those memories emanate from?  
--- I'm not exactly sure of the date but I should think it was in 1932 - certainly in 1933 - when I first came here as an articled clerk to see various Barristers whom my principal - the man to whom I was articled, Mr William Slater - was briefing. I recall quite vividly coming here very many times. At that time I think the third and fourth floors were wholly occupied by Barristers, many of whom subsequently became Judges and also many of whom were household names. Also at that time the press reported much more of the doings of the law courts and happens now. So the names of the Barristers who have appeared in courts were published from day to day and were very familiar to anybody mixed up in the law or interested in the law. So when I first came over here I was familiar with the names <sup>like</sup> on it: Gorman, Cullity, Cussen, Minogue, various others.

There was Harry Minogue, was there?--- Harry Minogue, yes.

Perhaps tell me who you ended up reading with when you first came up to the Bar?--- Never read.

You didn't read at all?--- No.

Was it not necessary then?--- No, wasn't the rule.

Wasn't it? When was that changed? --- Well after the War. Almost everybody did read but I didn't because <sup>when</sup> I first bowed at the Bar was during the War - just at the beginning of the War.

That's most interesting because I never knew there was that change in the rules. Most of the people I remember - like Jack Barry and those - did in fact read. So

yours was rather an exceptional case?---Yes.

Would you think it was unique?---No, I don't think it is unique but certainly unusual.

Can you think of any others who didn't read at that time? No, but my impression is that during the War there is no sort of pressure on people to read.

When you say you first came up to Equity in about 1931 or 1932 - that was when you were doing your articles - how long after that did you come to the Bar?--- I had two bursts at the Bar - it was either later 1939 or early 1940.

So you worked with Slater and Gordon as a solicitor for quite a few years before you came up?--- I was admitted in 1938.

I see - because you were doing an articulated clerk's course. Got it. And so that took to about 1938 and then in fact you came to the Bar - you were admitted to the Bar? --- No, I worked with Slater's for a while, then I came to the Bar.

And where did you have chambers then?--Selbourne.

Selbourne, you went directly to Selbourne. Were you sharing over there? --- Yes, first I was. It brings back some memories . . . Yes, I certainly shared. Then I got a room when John Morris was at the War and he arranged for me to use his room and then Hugh Gordon, who was then a partner at Salter's, he wanted to go to the War but he said he couldn't go unless I went back and worked there during the War, so I went back and worked there and after the War I came back to the Bar. And then I went back to Selbourne and my own room.

Were there any formalities to be completed then? You'd resigned from the Bar, you had formally ...? --- Re-signed the Bar Roll.

You then re-signed. When you came back in 1940?  
--- 1948, I think it was.

You stayed there until 1948. And you went back to Selbourne at that stage? --- Yes.

And were rooms more plentiful then? --- I don't remember having any trouble getting a room at that time but subsequently I know there was a great deal of trouble in people getting rooms.

Having been in and around Equity at about 1931, 1932, 1933, do you recall any of the sort of chat or the talk that was - the discussion about the move over to Equity and the various people's feelings - if they had a resistance to it and how they reacted to it? --- Yes, I've discussed it or I've heard discussion about it by quite a number of people including Barry, Cullity, Gorman.

To what effect? --- An attempt that they'd made to force everybody into Selbourne chambers, there was resistance to the idea of fairly rigid control of the Bar and people felt their individualism or independence was being interfered with. I've heard it said that Pat Gorman was the leader of the move and that he had a very big following, and it was obvious that he did have a big following because Equity was pretty full.

Did you gather that the main reason for the move, or substantial reason, was to move to more comfortable and larger chambers - then Selbourne was getting a bit passe? --- Yes, I think that entered into it too. It always seemed to me that their main objection was the

semi-conscription that operated at Selbourne, although I can't believe that it was anything like it is today.

No, well that was what I had in mind, whether I would have thought the controls were much less before?

--- Yes, all the \_\_\_\_\_ more loosely organised than it is now. And much more, of course.

Of course that's probably one of the factors that was important then, that there were so few. But the ones who came over from the list that I've got of the tenants . . .? --- I knew most of these blokes.

On that list of those who were in Equity in 1932 - obviously some of them would have come in later - I think somebody like Dick Eggleston didn't come till 1932, so they may not have all been there in 1931. Of the original ones who were there, some of them, of course, I believe, went to the War and didn't come back to the Bar. Does any name of that identify itself to you as some of those who perhaps didn't practice either because they were killed in the War or because they pursued different occupations after the War? --- Not sure, but I've got an idea Brahm(?) was such a person.

Which was P.D. King? Do you know anything about him?

--- Yes.

Gordon McArthur was the politician, wasn't he? He was that very large man? --- Yes.

I can remember coming in to see Eugene . . .?

--- P.D. King, that's Phil King.

Phil King? --- Yes, I knew him.

Did he stay at the Bar until he retired? --- I've got an idea he died very young. Yes I think he did, I think he came back to the Bar but died very young. I wouldn't be sure. I don't know Borroman at all.

What about Arket? --- Willie Arket, yes, I knew him.

I have a feeling that Eugene usually talked of Willie Arket and I can't remember any details of it? --- Yes, he was there, he was down there on a - where Len Reed was I think, he's the predecessor of Len Reed.

His name rather indicates either that he was Chinese - he was Chinese, was he? --- Yes, he was a full-blood Chinese.

Did he have a big practice? --- Yes, he had a very good name as a very shrewd operator. It was said that he got his shrewdness from his Chinese origin but he was a very nice fellow.

What happened to him? --- He died.

But what age would he have been in about 1932 - would he have been well established - is he somebody who would have been at the Bar for quite a few years? --- Yes, he would have been well established but as to what age he was I wouldn't rely on my judgment because I was very young at the time and anybody who was a few years older seemed to be . . .

Very old? ---Yes.

That's right, but I don't recall his name at all, yet the person I knew, you see? --- Willie Arket, yes.

So if you go forward 15 years from there, he obviously wasn't at the Bar at that stage and I wondered if:

(a) he died or (b) he \_\_\_\_\_? ---No, I'm pretty sure he died.

You said that of those ones who came over - and looking down that list it's fairly clear that a great number of them went on to the Bench or did very well in their professional life. Do you think there's any reason - do you think the fact that they: (a) came over to Equity showed anything in their character which was likely to make them a success in their professional lives, such as independence of spirit or something . . . ? --- The only thing that I can think of that showed they had a bit of independence - and that probably attracted solicitors so they built up big practices. Yes, a lot of those people became Judges.

I remember Eugene used to say in defence that Equity was bled more with people going over to the Bench - what should I say . . . ? --- Qualitative advancement.

\_\_\_\_\_ but at the same time it continually drained the quality of people coming - you had to keep hoping that people who were coming on would be similarly talented in their field? --- Yes. I don't know that it had all that much to do with it but I suppose the independence attracted attention.

Your time really wouldn't make you familiar with any of the immediate discussion of the transfer from Selbourne over to Equity because you were really too young at that stage, weren't you? --- No, I don't remember the exact circumstances, all I've heard is a bit of hearsay, gossip, chatter, about it.

Do you think it might compare with the 1961 move from Selbourne into Owen Dixon? --- Well I think they've got parallels, yes.



The efforts then to make - not make, but suggest to everybody in Equity that they'd be better off in Owen Dixon? --- There was no doubt that was the idea but I think the same sort of spirit prevailed that people wanted to keep their independence, didn't want to be organised too highly, and I think that sort of trend will always operate. Personally I think it's a mistake to try and house the Bar under one roof, but that's another matter.

I wondered if the people who were here when you came over - if you had any special stories about - probably a multitude of them - say take somebody like Jack Cullity, who you knew fairly well, I think, didn't you? --- I doubt if anybody knew him better than I did, perhaps may be Gorman. Jack Cullity - I know so much about him it would take a month to tell it and also it's difficult to tell. He was a self-effacing sort of a bloke who kept very much to himself, he was said to be a loner, a very difficult fellow to get to know but once you did know him he was a wonderful person. I never knew anybody who paid so much attention to detail in the cases conducted, nor who identified himself so much with the cause of the client for whom he was appearing. He appeared for some people who had very notorious reputations but he wouldn't have a word said - at least to him - against them, although he quite recognised their short-comings. He had a real feeling for people who had been pushed about by society. He was a person who really was a legend in his time. I'm surprised to see that on this list he doesn't . . . one of the original tenants.

Yes, I noticed it's 1937? --- He was certainly here for a very long time because I recall many, many times bringing over briefs to . . . Now I do recall, it's funny how conversation will revive your memory. He was not in

Selbourne chambers but he had a room - there were a couple of others whose names I forget - over in a building in Little Collins Street, owned I think by a fellow named Doria, Bill Doria, who was a solicitor. And they used to refer to it as Doria's building. It was a peculiar building, an old building with funny little stair cases. I remember now that Jack was at the top of one of these little staircases. I don't actually recall a date on which he came to Equity - all I know is he was there for a very long time.

Do you recall who was with him in this other building?  
--- No, it may come back to me in time. There were at least two other people there, but he was the one who had a big practice. People think he only practised in the criminal jurisdiction, but that's not true. He practised in all sorts of jurisdictions.

When he came here in 1937, had he been practising for some years prior to that?--- Yes.

He had. I haven't got a note of when he was admitted to practise, but I'll get that. --- He read with Tom Brennan, too.

Did he? The fact that he was in another building with two or three, perhaps more, other barristers, would that have affected the solicitors as far as finding him to brief him or was he already sufficiently established for them to seek him out wherever he was? --- He was in big demand. I don't think it would have mattered where he was. As far as his practice was concerned, he was certainly sought out.

Would you think that building was knocked down to make a big decision for a move because my memory of him would be that he wouldn't move unless for some special reason he

\_\_\_\_\_? --- I think they got thrown out. I can't remember the exact circumstances but Max Bradshaw might know about this. I've got an idea he was one of the people who was the - he was in the same building either then or some time soon after.

I think Dick Eggleston and two or three of them were in a building called Brougham chambers, but that was not . . . ?  
--- That was on the other side of the street.

That was not the same one, no? --- No. That was a place that was set up when the crush started in the accommodation after the War, Brougham chambers, as far as I recall, but Cullity and a couple of others were in this building at Doria long before then.

When you mention that he had many so-called notorious clients, could you recall a few of them specifically and any particular stories about them that would be interesting? --- I remember he told me about appearing for Freddie Harrison and going out to see him at Pentridge. He told me it was very dangerous to see him in the circumstances provided by the gaol because on one occasion he had gone to see Harrison, Harrison had complained about the conditions in the gaol. Cullity listened to him, did nothing about it, but as soon as he left Harrison was paraded before the Governor of the gaol and called to account for complaining to an outsider about the conditions in the goal. So Jack rightly concluded the conversation had been overheard.

Harrison was \_\_\_\_\_? --- He was a notorious gunman, thief.

Pre-War or . . . ? --- No, I think he was just after the War, I don't really recall.

He was a fairly notorious character at that stage? --- Very well known. Similarly Bradshaw. I heard them talk about Coates, about what Cullity and Gorman said was the frame-up of Norman Ross for a murder up in the lane off Bourke Street. He talked about Angus Murray, who escaped from the Geelong goal in 1923 and was charged with a murder in the company of Buckley. Went on the run and hid away for seven years but Murray was caught and ultimately hanged. His case went to the High Court. I've got an idea that Gorman appeared for him because he always spoke of Murray very highly.

I think he may have been the one - I have to look up a letter - Eugene got a letter from him after he - was he hanged? --- Yes.

Yes, I think there's a letter somewhere in Eugene's files about this man who was about to hang and the letter of thanks he wrote to Eugene expressing himself in very sensitive and unusual terms for a man with his record. --- Murray had a series of convictions but, according to Gorman, he was a pretty good sort of a bloke and apparently Cullity subscribed to that.

And Buckley was associated with him later - he was the one who originated "Buckley's chance" wasn't he? "You've got Buckley's chance of getting off"? --- No, that was the fellow who cohabitated with the Aborigines last century. Down at Queenscliff there's Buckley's Cave. He had nothing to do with the Bar, Mr Buckley.

No, but I thought it was Buckley's chance - there was a Buckley who was in one of these cases, I thought that that was . .? --- Yes, but that's nothing to do with Buckley's chance, but Buckley and Murray held up a bank manager named Berryman. And in the course of the operation

Buckley shot Berryman and Berryman was inconsiderate enough to die.

Was that in Hawthorn? --- Yes. They didn't catch Buckley but Murray was caught - betrayed. He was tried and found guilty of murder and hanged despite a couple of appeals. Buckley was caught some seven years later. I've heard Cullity on this subject when - he didn't tell me the person who informed on Buckley but I can't remember his name. He was arrested by an inspector named Lyons who got great credit for having tracked Buckley down but he didn't really, according to Jack, wasn't really entitled to any credit at all because somebody had simply told him where Buckley was.

So he was one of a - or they were a number of - two of a number of people you can recall with Jack Cullity. What about people like Coates and Stokes - was it Stokes? --- Henry Stokes. \_\_\_\_\_ Jack Cullity often on Stokes but Coates was a different character altogether. He was detested by all other criminals. I've heard both Gorman and Cullity speak of Coates with contempt. I personally of course don't know Coates at all but I gather he was a pretty despicable character whereas these other people did have some sort of character, but like a lot of people you follow a criminal lightly(?) Seemed to me to have a bit of a kink, used to be a bit odd. On normal things they are perfectly normal but there's something that seems to lure them into this sort of enterprise.

Can you recall much of Jack Cullity's background? There's very little I know about him as far as his - I could probably talk to Eugene but I not too . .? --- He started off as a clerk in the Customs office in Fremantle and somehow or other he got the idea of doing the law course. As far as I know he came to Victoria.

To do his course or had he done it there? --- To do his course. I know he was working when he did his course and then he did his articles with . .

He would have done an articled clerk's course, wouldn't he? --- No, I think he did the degree course but worked throughout ~~out~~, that wasn't unusual in those days. And then he was articled to Frank Brennan who was a Minister in the Labor government of Scullin. He told many stories about his activities there. Brennan had a big trade union practice, or what was then a big trade union practice - it wouldn't be regarded as that now. I recall him telling me about a seamen's strike and prosecutions during it and he was very active in that though he always was never sure exactly what his political outlook was except that he had a definite sympathy for people he regarded as having been pushed around.

He was never active politically, ~~I don't think~~, was he?  
--- No, not that I know of.

And never recall many political discussions with him at all whereas most people would chat about politics to some extent? --- I had political discussions with him but he always disavowed any specific political affiliations - he only talked about politicians he'd known and he had a great respect for Evatt which personally I shared. In fact when Evatt died I remember saying to Jack that "There was one fellow who shed a tear for Evatt and that was me" and he said, "Well, you're wrong, there were two, I was the other". I didn't know it then and he recounted a few of his experiences with \_\_\_\_\_, all in Evatt's favour. I'd had a lot of experiences with Evatt, many of which were in his favour and some of which were in his disfavour but notwithstanding I liked the fellow, unlike many other people who disliked him intensely.

With Jack Cullity there was a feeling, how well founded it is, I don't know, that he was very close with money, whether that was because of his past it had been said that he would have died with almost the first guinea that he earned - have you got any views on that? --- Yes, I've got some strong views and it's not true as a generality. As I said I think I probably knew him better than anybody with the possible exception of Gorman. He was a product of the Depression of the 1930s and so was I, only I was much younger, but I couldn't get a job when I left school - left a big mark on my \_\_\_\_\_. Almost everybody/<sup>who</sup> lived through that Depression had a mark left on them and they were more careful than most people with money. I think it was no more than that in Cullity's case. I recall when Hughie Martin died - Hughie Martin had also been a client of Cullity's and he had a very notorious reputation as a criminal, but he was a person I knew myself who was really a fine fellow and he'd been sentenced to 15 years for attempted murder, I think it was. When he died Cullity came to me and he said "I understand that they're erecting some sort of tombstone to Martin" and I said "Yes, that was true" and he said did I know who was organising it and I said "Yes, I did - a fellow called Malone who was the then secretary of the Builders' Labourers' Union" and he said he would like to make a donation to it and would I fix it up for him and gave me what was then a significant donation. I saw a great deal of him, particularly in the last 20 years of his life and rather indignantly repudiate the suggestion that he was lousy in the sense that people say. I've heard it said myself.

Do you think it was more that he - and I've found this with other people with a similar - as you say, going through the Depression years, that they never got used to

the fact that they could afford to spend more than they did but their training was not to be extravagant and buy themselves luxuries. In their personal treatment of themselves they were not extravagant at all? --- That's right, I'm a bit like that myself still.

Are you? Yes, well didn't know really how to indulge themselves whereas say the young people these days have taxis and all the sort of mod-cons that are available, but in those days you were taught to be very close with money and it was much more difficult for them to spend money, even though it was in the bank? --- As I've told you if you've been through the experience where you didn't have it for a long time.

So it was something that you just didn't get over? ---  
\_\_\_\_\_ used to having money.

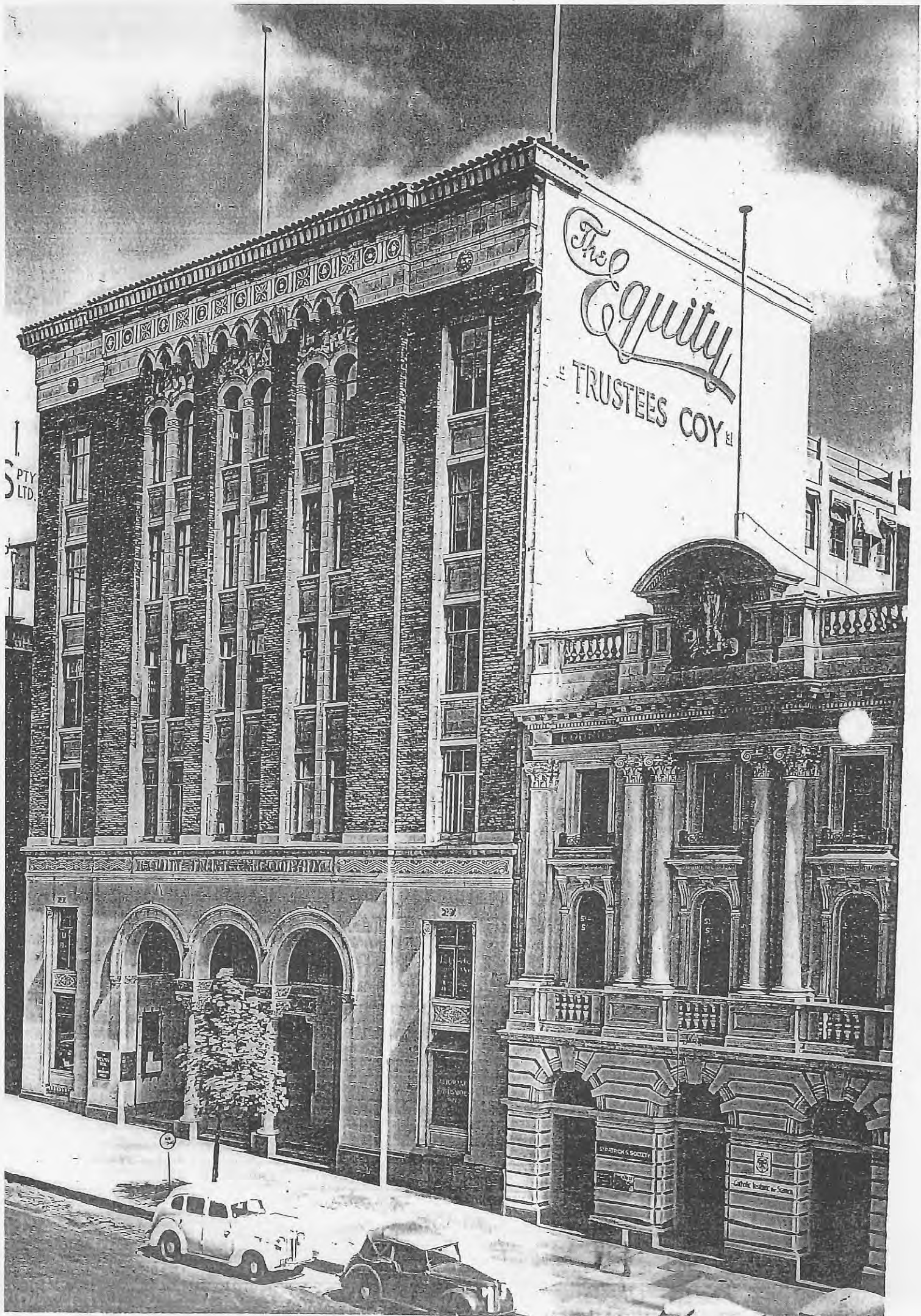
Yes, so he probably did have more money in the bank and invested and so forth without realising that you could have been kinder to yourself? --- Yes, but he wasn't mean in the sense, even to himself - careful sort of a  
\_\_\_\_\_.

In the latter years of course he had some quite good trips overseas so he had begun at least to

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