

Mr HODGMAN (Franklin - Minister for Construction) - Mr Speaker, firstly I would like to congratulate you on your election to the Chair of Speaker of the House. I am sure you will grace that position with the dignity and the decorum it no doubt deserves. I congratulate you on your elevation to that high office.

I would also like to congratulate the mover and seconder of the motion for the Address-in-Reply and pledge my allegiance to the Crown.

I feel somewhat of a fraud; I think this is my thirteenth speech on the Address-in-Reply, and here I am, like the member for Denison, Mr Groom, taking advantage of a maiden speech - or, in the case of Mrs Jackson, a first speech. But maiden speech or otherwise, I believe it is a great privilege to be a member of this House. Certainly topping the poll in the electorate of Franklin gives me a great degree of responsibility. Hopefully I will meet that to the best of my ability throughout the term of this Government.

Whilst the electorate was generous in electing us to this House, it showed it can be ruthless. I do not think there is any member of this House who can consider himself safe. I believe the electorate clearly showed it wants performance and it wants members who are prepared to stand up and be counted. I believe we are entering a very exciting period for the rest of this decade.

I would say that in the past the relationship between the Houses has at times been pleasant and at times turbulent. I entered Parliament in 1974, at the end of the period of the Reece Government. Then I witnessed the decline of the Neilson, Lowe and Holgate governments. And decline it was - a rapid decline - with the inevitable coming of the Gray Government. It was when the Gray Government was elected and I was asked to be Deputy Leader in another place that I thoroughly enjoyed participating in government decision-making. I would consider this of course to be the House of action, as distinct from another place, the House of review. I think Mrs Jackson may well find herself home in the right place, if one recalls her election campaign slogan.

At the end of the Reece Government the Opposition of the day was effective. Many a person or group or body complaining about legislation would go to the Opposition of the day and put a case and the debate was conducted in this House. However as time rolled on and the Gray Government was sworn into office, that tradition departed and opponents of legislation would bypass the Opposition and go to members of another place.

I think the Opposition has a great problem on its hands. I think the credibility of members of the Opposition has been lost in the wash-up of the Gordon below Franklin situation. If they wish to be a viable opposition, standing up in this House and performing in a gentleman-like manner will not be their saving grace. They will have to win back the confidence of the people of Tasmania and I do not see that happening overnight.

As I said, in the past four years it was when legislation passed this House and reached the other place that the people who opposed it would lobby members of another place about their concerns in the legislation. When the question was put to them, 'Why have you raised this at the last hour? Why have you come to the Legislative Council to complain about legislation when you could have done it when the bill was being debated in the House of Assembly?' the inevitable answer was, 'We have no confidence in the Opposition; we know we won't get a decent run; we know we won't be heard.' I believe the situation of people who oppose legislation going to another place to be heard is fast becoming the established procedure. If the opposition members believe they will win back government, they must first win back respect and credibility for themselves. I believe the Leader said he was going out to meet the people. Possibly that is a good objective but that is a problem they must overcome.

When I was elected in 1974 I made a commitment to visit all parts of my electorate of Huon and I did not realise then what an enormous commitment that was. I have a great love for the wilderness and the national parks of this State and it appals me at times that the member for Denison, Dr Brown, and his group of conservationists believe they have a God-given exclusive right to say what should be done in respect to wilderness.

I am quite confident that there are many members of this Parliament who have a great love for the wilderness and for the balance between what we develop and what we preserve and I believe it should be regarded by all that the tactics we have seen at Farmhouse Creek and in the Lemonthyme area are nothing short of a monstrous confidence trick on the people of Tasmania. I must pay credit to the wilderness and conservation movements for the fact that they have outwitted or conned the media of this country of ours in putting forth unbelievable - and I repeat 'unbelievable' - stories.

But we should not be surprised because we witnessed this with the Gordon below Franklin issue, where the conservation movement of the day highlighted gross inaccuracies about what was happening with respect to that river. I am convinced the majority of people would have believed that the whole of the south west was being flooded and that the State would be lopsided with the imbalance of water. Of course, when they had that position put to them, they would take the attitude, 'What on earth is Tasmania doing?' The tide was running against this State. We had a hostile Federal Labor government, a State Labor government which could not make up its mind between the Gordon below Franklin scheme, the Gordon above Olga scheme or nothing at all and, having exhausted all the parliamentary processes and failed to achieve anything, we had what Tasmania needed - a new broom. That came at the 1982 election in which the Gray Government was swept into power. It bit the bullet; it provided the people of Tasmania with what they wanted in terms of hydro-electricity and, Mr President - Mr Speaker, forgive me -

Mr Davis - You will have to learn your titles.

Mr HODGMAN - I think this will be a problem, Mr Speaker. You will be referred to as 'Mr President', but each time it is sincerely a slip of the tongue with no disrespect to yourself, Mr Speaker.

Mr Davis - He is not wearing a wig either.

Mr HODGMAN - No. That is a point.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. The honourable member is making his maiden speech.

Mr HODGMAN - I keep forgetting, Mr Speaker; thank you. I will come to the wig perhaps in my concluding remarks to you, Sir.

That confrontation split Tasmania not down the middle - I would say 70 to 80 per cent of people were on side with the proposal in respect to the Gordon below Franklin scheme - and a very vocal minority brought this State almost to its knees. One could look at the antics of Dr Brown and the Wilderness Society with absolute fascination because this man has clearly captured the vibes of the media and the hearts of many an Australian and the following he has collected is almost a case of adulation or guru worship. At times I wonder if he realised the effect he has upon people and the road he leads them down because in the confrontations we have witnessed I think it is incredible that somebody was not seriously injured.

As I was alluding to earlier, I gave a commitment to visit all the areas of my old electorate of Huon. That required walking from Geeveston through to Scotts Peak Dam - which is button grass plain - via the Cracroft Crossing; then from Scotts Peak Dam down to Port Davey - which took another summer; and then from Port Davey through to Cox Bight. With you, Mr Deputy Speaker, along with the Minister for Health and Mr Page, I walked the south coast track through to Recherche Bay. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am a stickler for punishment I would dare say and I in fact did that track twice after the trips we did with you.

I have also walked in to Federation Peak and anybody who tries to tell me that we have a small piece of wilderness has a big argument. I would defy anyone to walk that area - to have a look at the beauties within it, totally explore the wilderness and pristine valleys there - and come out claiming that it is a small area of wilderness. I look out at the protesters we have had outside Parliament House - and I think many of those people are more at home on bitumen and cement, waving placards, than they ever are walking through the bush.

What I found when I walked through that area was that it was not the Tasmanians whom we see outside protesting who are walking through and utilising the caverns and available facilities; it is predominantly mainlanders. It is a playground for mainlanders. I found a large number of Hydro workers on that track, along with forest workers and they are the people who are always being accused of having no regard for the wilderness. Yet there they were, in the wilderness, thoroughly enjoying the benefits that flow from that area.

I acknowledge, without a doubt, that the member for Denison, Dr Brown, did a full investigation on his many trips down the Gordon River and I think he did have sufficient background knowledge. But with that issue over and the forestry one before him, I slowly but surely realise that he is failing in personal information about the values of the total wilderness of the south west. He has made some extraordinary statements and one can only conclude that the areas he is claiming have significant wilderness value are in fact areas he has not visited.

He made an unbelievable statement last year - which not only amused but absolutely dumbfounded me - when he went on national television claiming that the forestry industry was cutting timber on the fringes of Federation Peak. Clearly the man who purports to be the guru, the wonder boy of the wilderness world, has never been there because Federation Peak is about as divorced of timber as the member for Bass, Dr Frank Madill's head was of hair when he was in the play in Launceston. There is not enough timber on Federation Peak to light a camp fire let alone to be harvested on a forestry basis. I qualify that point by saying that when I walked in to Federation Peak with Wilderness Tours, Mr Bob Ceeves' professional organisation, timber had to be flown in for our camp fire. The member for Denison, Mr Davis, who I think has also been in there would no doubt confirm that point too. There is not enough timber to light a camp fire, yet the member for Denison, Dr Brown, maintains it is being harvested. Where is the validity, the credibility, in those statements? Yet the media look to him as the expert. The media flashed that across Australia and that superb part of our State, Federation Peak, will be untouched for forestry purposes for ever and a day because there is not enough timber even to contemplate foresting, let alone to go ahead and do it.

We have Farmhouse Creek, which I described as 'a dull little valley'. I do not back off from that statement. Anybody who has walked in the south west would go to many other places before he would ever contemplate going to Farmhouse Creek. The walk to Federation Peak is through the Cracroft, the walk to the South East Cape is down from Recherche and there is no earthly reason anybody in his wildest dreams would contemplate going down Farmhouse Creek.

It was said the other night on television by someone - and I think it was Dr Geoff Law - that this was the gateway to the south west. That statement was flashed across the entire Australian Broadcasting Corporation News and other media and it was of absolute bewilderment to me because Farmhouse Creek is a classic forestry area and an insignificant wilderness area; it is a hidden valley. There is no reason a wilderness person would want to go there and yet, from a forestry point of view, it is knocking right on the door of a mill in Geeveston which employs people. So why should it not be utilised?

To further qualify the point, I believe it was the Neilson Government which introduced legislation in the mid-1970s to take the cutting rights from Precipitous Bluff away from Associated Pulp and Paper Mills Ltd and to compensate that, it gave cutting rights to timber at the back of the Hartz Mountains. This was a very logical, straightforward piece of legislation which showed the forestry industry was losing very good timber on Precipitous Bluff but it acknowledged that the area of wilderness valley should be retained.

That forest sweeping down to the ocean floor - Precipitous Bluff in its majestic wonder - was considered by the forestry industry, the Government and both Houses of Parliament and I believe the legislation introduced then by the Leader of the Opposition was very good legislation. And at the time it went through the conservation movement acclaimed it as being excellent legislation: the Precipitous Bluff should be left; the Hartz Mountain could be logged. What do we have right next door to the Hartz Mountains right now - Farmhouse Creek.

There is the inconsistency; in the mid-1970s they can acclaim logging in that area; in the mid-1980s they condemn it. There is no way one can please the conservation movement. If it is given an inch, it will take a mile. If this Government is being accused of being hard-line, I accept that. I do not consider it criticism but, if it is, I accept it for what it is, because I think it is the right and proper course to take. There is no way one can compromise with the conservation movement.

As I mentioned, I think the challenges for this Government in the next and ongoing terms are there for the taking. We have a golden opportunity ahead of us, but I have to take issue with the previous speaker, the member for Braddon, Mr Peart, whose opening comments suggested that we could perhaps live with the Federal budget cuts. I believe that he is only echoing the sentiments of the former Leader of the Opposition who contended that we can live with those cuts.

It is a very simple matter of economics. If we do not get money in, we cannot pay money out. If we are being cut back by the Federal Government, all the worthwhile programs we have heard from members in their maiden speeches cease to have any relevance at all because, I reiterate, all the proposals which I have heard clearly do cost money and it is pie in the sky to suggest otherwise.

Last year this State was struck a very uncomfortable blow and there is little wonder that the State Government is quite sensitive about what it will receive this year when we have a Federal government which has I think treated this State with great tardiness since it was elected to office. One has only to look around at the capital works program that this State receives in relation to other States. We really have been sadly neglected in the past three years of capital works programs. We could probably count on one hand those Federal government projects which have been started in this State and it is only because this State Government has taken up the challenges and embarked on an extensive capital works program that we are keeping the economy going.

We are keeping the building industry viable and we are maintaining confidence throughout the State because of an extremely courageous capital works program. We have gone from over \$20 million two years ago to nearly \$57 million in capital works and that is a colossal effort - an all-time record - for the Department of Construction to be undertaking. One can look across the State and see cranes in the sky and see the building industry ticking along in a very comfortable way and that to me is the pulse beat of the economy. If the building industry is motivated, it requires allied industries to join in that progress. If one builds a house, one must buy a fridge, stove, washing machine, carpets, lights, fittings and furniture - all of which must be manufactured and which require transport and so it goes on.

I am a great believer in the building industry's being the pulse beat of an economy and I think that is why this State has been doing extremely well over the past three years and why it will continue to do so while we have a viable capital works program. Every member of this House should be extremely proud of the fact that this year we are seeing a record level of construction being undertaken by our Department of Construction.

I will conclude by saying that in another place I always believed that if, after the first ten minutes, one did not strike oil, one should stop boring. I have spoken for more than ten minutes but it is a maiden speech and one is allowed latitude in that respect. But I believe in sticking to the point and if I might say in conclusion, it is your decision in the Chair, Mr Deputy Speaker - as I said to Mr Speaker - and I know you will uphold that important position with the dignity that it deserves. Once again in congratulating both the mover and the seconder, I have absolute pleasure in supporting the motion.

Government members - Hear, hear.