



Anthony John Benneworth

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Mr BENNEWORTH (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to congratulate the mover and the seconder of the motion for the Address-in-Reply, and pledge my allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen and the Governor of Tasmania. I also want to take the opportunity, if I may, to congratulate the new Speaker on his election. I suggest that probably I am the luckiest guy in this House because I had him sitting beside me and when I lost him I picked up probably one of the best parliamentary debaters in the country.

I entered State politics because, like many of my fellow Tasmanians, I envisage a vibrant and energetic State, a State with vision, a State united and a State where prosperity and a reasonable standard of living can be expected.

During my time here I will be taking a special interest in the areas of tourism, sport, recreation and social justice. Sport and recreation are enjoyable. They promote fitness and they entertain. However they are more than that; they are part of our economic fabric.

The attraction of major sporting events to Tasmania is an important goal. In my opinion people have a right to see their sporting heroes firsthand as often as possible. Major sporting events have an important spin-off as tourism benefits. In 1990, \$10.9 million came to Tasmania because of sport alone. That represented 13 270 visitors. In a more typical year such as last year - devoid of the World Rowing Championships, for example - the income from major sporting events was \$8.9 million, with an extra 9 740 visitors.

Sport and recreation infrastructure coupled with a professional and dedicated department will enhance Tasmania's ability to bring people to the State. In recent years the World Veterans Orienteering Championships at St Helens, the world canoeing titles at the Gorge in Launceston, the first Australian Masters Games, the World Rowing Championships at Lake Barrington and Tasmania's inaugural test match have all attracted thousands of people to Tasmania and with them came wealth for our State in the form of tourist dollars and interstate and international publicity.

Later this month, for example - as we have already heard in this House in the past two days - our State will proudly be the venue for the Targa Tasmania rally, which has an entry of magnificent cars from around the world. It will be worth an estimated \$10 million to Tasmania and if we do it well, it may become an annual event. By our standards that is big money and the spin-off is the publicity around the world, particularly in Europe.

The Government's sport and recreation policy will aim to make Tasmania the headquarters of veterans sport and recreation in Australia. Our policy will also commit us to pursue a bigger share of the lucrative special events market for sport and recreation. The objective is to create jobs by complementing our tourism industry through the attraction of many more visitors to Tasmania.

The commercial importance of sport and recreation is highlighted by the department's figures on the 1988 Asia Pacific Orienteering Championships. It determined a cost-benefit ratio of some 30 to 1. The 772 competitors alone spent a total of \$773 000 while they were in the State, which is more than \$1 000 each. That money benefited many small businesses across the State. More than 250 media representatives visited Tasmania for the World Rowing Championships and the test cricket match between Australia and Sri Lanka provided saturation television coverage to our major tourism markets interstate and overseas.

The strengths of Tasmania's tourism industry include our natural beauty, wilderness and wildlife, our history and cultural heritage, our distinctive and high-quality food and wine, our lifestyle, friendly people and relatively clean cities, water and air, and our variety of attractions and activities within a small area. Overall the strengths of Tasmania's tourism product lie in its diversity, its small scale, its boutique character and local flavours, allied with our spectacular natural resources.

However the weaknesses of the Tasmanian tourism product relate to an over-emphasis on the touring concept, which discourages repeat visitation and causes a low average length of stay, and thus a lower yield per customer in the accommodation sector. The lack of consistent standards of accommodation and service, coupled with the inadequate development of attractions based on our natural competitive advantages, demand immediate attention.

Tourism can be a volatile and unpredictable industry and it is susceptible to external influences over which Tasmania often has little or no influence. The best we can do is get the fundamentals right; to concentrate on the competitive advantages of the State as a tourism destination, to market these assertively and imaginatively, and to respond flexibly to the vagaries of the market.

One truism that we must all remember is that tourism is everybody's business. The benefits will be felt by all, but to get it right requires a commitment from all Tasmanians. Division will harm our objectives. Tasmanians do not have two heads, as a cricketering colleague of mine once said, but the past divisiveness - often highlighted by the public perception of the wars in this House - makes Tasmanians, the rest of Australia, and perhaps the world, think otherwise.

Since being elected I have received a complaint from a constituent who decided to visit a Tourism Tasmania office in a mainland capital city. He was told not to bother with the east coast of Tasmania, as there was not much there to see or do. He also inquired about our wine industry and was told quite frankly we did not have one. In fact our wine industry's future, given careful planning and marketing, is potentially one of our greatest assets. The most recent figures available show us that the Tasmanian wine industry is worth some \$20 million annually. Recently the Bacchanalia Festival held in the Tamar valley highlighted the unbelievable growth of this industry. The

industry has grown spectacularly and approaches an example of what can be achieved in Tasmania by people with entrepreneurial skills and vision.

I would like to take this opportunity to declare my personal interest in Tasmania's most overused and misunderstood word, 'parochialism'. I would like to quote the Chief Justice, Sir Guy Green, on this very vexed and often distorted issue. Speaking at a dinner held in Launceston last month to mark the *Examiner* newspaper's one hundred and fiftieth birthday celebrations, Sir Guy said of parochialism:

'I know that there are people who sneer at those who support and identify themselves with their local community or their local region - glibly and unfairly dismissing their interests as parochial and petty.

I suppose we would have to admit that there have been occasions in Tasmanian history when an over enthusiastic assertion of local interest has been an impediment to progress.

But while acknowledging that sometimes it is necessary to look at things from a Statewide rather than a local point of view, I am also firmly of the opinion that the existence of the several strong and cohesive regions which we have in Tasmania is in fact one of this State's most valuable assets.'

He went on to say:

'By giving individuals and small groups a better opportunity of being heard than they would have if they were submerged in a larger population, our regions help to make our system of government more truly democratic and more truly representative.'

Sir Guy finalised his statement by saying:

'Our regions in Tasmania are not afflicted with the social fragmentation and alienation which are found in the larger mainland cities, but comprise people who are characterised by the genuine concern they have for their community, by their readiness to make a personal contribution to its welfare, by their enterprise and by their capacity to bring innovative ideas to practical realisation.'

This gives me the ideal opportunity to congratulate the *Examiner* newspaper on its contribution to northern Tasmania and to Tasmania as a whole over 150 years. It has been the voice of northern Tasmania and it today recognises and fulfils its primary role - that is, to look after and reflect the voices of the region. Let us not forget that more than 50 per cent of the population of this State lives in the north, an area described just recently by the *Sunday Tasmanian* newspaper as 'that bit of Tasmania north of Oatlands'. Oh dear!

There is nothing parochial about working for a fair go for all Tasmanians, whether they be north, south, east or west, businessman or bushie, man or woman, Liberal, Labor or Green. That is our job. With today's communication technology the argument for

centralisation is just not an option. Our people, who themselves live in all regions, should quite rightly demand equality. As a State we have a finite amount of wealth in resources; the perception that they are not being shared freely is of course the cause of parochialism. Future development planning must take this into account and mistakes of the past must never be allowed to occur again.

The public development dollar will not stretch over all major regions and the decisions of the future will have to be taken with due regard to such matters as necessity, needs analysis, transport and communication, and the proper sharing of wealth and resources. Proper, systematic and fair government planning should also be available throughout the State to assist the private developer. Yet this may prove difficult to achieve.

A recent paper from the Department of Political Science at the University of Tasmania, prepared by Stephen Tanner and entitled 'Parochialism, Politics and the Tasmanian Press', highlights the relationships between the three regions of Tasmania and their three corresponding newspapers. Mr Tanner points out that while no clearly defined geographical boundaries exist to delineate one region from another, their existence is now taken for granted. The regions, he found, do not exist as a result of an exercise in cartography or bureaucratic decision making; the regions in fact correspond with the three newspapers' primary coverage areas as determined by their circulation data.

But despite the influence of regionalism on the State's history and political agenda, the three regions do not correspond with the electoral divisions. Therein may lie the solution: politicians are not elected in electorates based on newspaper circulation data.

Having tried to make that point, I will continually strive to promote the area I represent - Launceston, the Tamar valley, the north east and, of course, Flinders. At the same time I will strive to maintain a balanced overview of the State's future needs and wants with due regard to the very important and vital regions throughout the State.

It will be interesting to monitor the role of the Green independents over the next four years. The perception is that they seek to be all-powerful, that they have all the answers. Regrettably, in pursuit of their goals they have disrupted the lives of many working Tasmanians and they have caused division. For the record, their vote at the election dropped some 23 per cent, from 17.1 per cent in 1989 to 13.2 per cent in 1992. Yet they claim that the people of Tasmania have overwhelmingly returned them because they retained five seats. To rewrite history selectively, contrary to the facts, does them no credit. Certainly the Hare-Clark system of voting has allowed the core Green supporters to return the five sitting members - and I congratulate them - but their vote did drop, with a large 23 per cent swing against them.

That vote was picked up mainly by the Liberal Party. The Liberals gained 54.1 per cent of the State's vote. Many Green supporters of 1989 - the people who saw them as the great hope for the future - left them, having seen the destruction they caused to the State during the at times heady years of the Labor Green accord. I remind this House that 9 055 voters walked away.

I am not anti-conservationist. In fact the environment movement has made us all more environmentally aware and that is a great service, deserving of recognition. The Tasmanian Green movement was part of a worldwide movement that stood up and screamed to a rapidly developing and industrialised world that we were destroying our birthright. Nevertheless to deny legitimate progress by means of confrontation is to put in doubt the future of our State and our children's welfare.

Green efforts in this and future parliaments should be put to far better and more constructive ends. No one doubts the knowledge, the sincerity and the genuine concern they have for the protection of our natural heritage, but surely now is the time for them to sit down with the Government and industry to constructively assist progress in this State. Now is the time for them to listen to and respect the views of other people - people who have the creation of wealth and prosperity as their solution, and who have the provision of jobs for Tasmanians and the unashamed vision of a better and more prosperous Tasmania at heart. Balance is what is needed in Tasmania and a confrontationalist attitude does not achieve that.

It should be recognised that the voice of the people has spoken in a most forceful way with the convincing election of the Ray Groom Liberal Government. Yet since election day we have been subjected to the member for Denison, Dr Brown, setting himself up with his group of protesters at the east Picton forest blockade. I ask myself, has he not made his point? Why not try working with us - the majority of Tasmanians - on this and other issues? Has the Green movement in this State gone too far? This House, and in fact the Parliament of Tasmania, has been wracked with disruption for far too long.

To emphasise my point further, I would like to quote from the recent Curran Report:

'Recent surveys show that a low level of confidence appears to exist amongst both current and potential investors in Tasmania's economic mainstay industries involving use of local resources. This low level of confidence is associated with the perception that resources are progressively being locked away, making investment more risky.'

Later in the section 'The Tasmanian Economy', the Curran Report goes on to say:

'The setting aside of substantial areas of the state for conservation, and the uncertainty created by inability to reach community-wide agreement regarding which areas should be set aside or made available to a range of uses in the future, limits the possibility for substantial investments in forest based industries, and constrains further mining development.'

I recently attended a meeting of the Tasmanian Traditional and Recreational Land Users Federation, a group which represents somewhere between 60 000 and 90 000 Tasmanians. This group is fighting a battle, with little or no resources, against the fullyfunded conservation movement for the use of its traditional lands. Over the past

four or five years this group has witnessed a never-ending number of draft management plans which have been produced, funded and resourced at enormous public expense with little or no user input. I could elaborate at considerable length on the concerns of these traditional user groups. At the very minimum they must be given the right to be heard.

Be warned: there is militancy in the air amongst fishermen, shack owners, horse riders, fossickers, four-wheel drivers and hunters. Their voice surely has to be heard. We must now follow through on their behalf and ensure that no more will the wishes of the people be ignored by the vocal, yet very heavily resourced, minority. There are rights and wrongs, but let them be independently and fairly sorted out.

These are just a small percentage of the population of Tasmania who have lost confidence in their members. The instability of the past cannot and should not continue and the people of Tasmania - 54 per cent of them - have said, 'Settle down and get on with the development of Tasmania, for our future's sake'. Remember also that the Labor vote fell to a record low of 28.8 per cent because many Labor supporters did not vote for a party which to their mind was not now working towards a solid future for Tasmania.

The next and last point I wish to make is one of accountability. The member for Franklin, Dr Bates, is quite clearly either anti-sport or heavily into scoring points - and from my two days here, I think he is both. During the election campaign he made comments - very publicly - about myself as being a cricketer. That was very perceptive, I thought. As a sportsman I have learnt some valuable lessons, including respect for an opponent who played with fairness. Also I have learnt self-discipline, respect and the ability to listen, learn and handle all situations - not just those in the comfort zone. Sport can be for many people a sound foundation upon which to build a responsible parliamentary future as a representative of the people. I hope to be a representative of the majority. Both Labor and Green voters have asked me to represent them in this House because I am seen to be positive, willing and able to listen to all views. I am also accountable and it is therefore incumbent upon me to let my government colleagues know my thoughts and concerns, debate them with them and then seek an acceptable situation.

Let me say that I have come to this House with an unashamed passion for sport and its associated values. I realised many years ago that a willingness to work that little bit harder, a willingness to try to learn something new every day, was a necessity for the development of any talent that I was blessed with. The highlight of my career was undoubtedly the Gillette Cup victory in the late 1970s. An acceptance that we had someone who knew a lot more about the game than we did, and having the good sense to listen and learn from him - particularly with regard to one-day cricket - enabled little Tasmania to attain its greatest sporting victory ever. Of course I am talking about Jack Simmons.

In my opinion, too many of us today are too arrogant to accept advice. I approach my parliamentary career with that experience still very vivid in my mind. I intend to listen and learn from people who have more experience and more knowledge of this

institution than I do, but most importantly to those who have the health of Tasmania and the State of Tasmania at heart.