



Steven Kons MP

House of Assembly

Date: 6 October 1998

Electorate: Braddon

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Mr KONS (Braddon - Inaugural) - Mr Speaker, I have the honour to move -

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor in reply to His Excellency's speech:

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the members of the House of Assembly of Tasmania, in Parliament assembled, desire to thank Your Excellency for the speech which you have been pleased to address to both Houses of Parliament.

We desire to record our continued loyalty to the Throne and Person of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second, and at the same time to assure Your Excellency that the measures which will be laid before us during the session will receive our careful consideration.

Mr Speaker, members opposite, my friends, colleagues, and of course my wife Eva; mother, Angela; father, Arthur; children, Angelika and Anastasi. It is an honour and a privilege to be here representing the people of Braddon. This is the party I believe that has what it takes. We have commanded the moral authority and won political respect simply because we chose to listen to the people - yes, the people. The Tasmanian people will be shown that the public service is still an ideal that can breathe hope into politics which has grown weary and cynical. What the party and I want to achieve is that everyone who wants to can get up in the morning with a job to look forward to and prospects to raise a family.

We do not want to abolish the market but, wholeheartedly to the contrary, to make it a dynamic working in the public interest, providing opportunities for all. We need to direct market forces, not constrain them, redirect the dogma which has been labelled 'economic rationalism' to economics with a conscience. Things certainly cannot change overnight, and we do not want to fill the people with false illusions and promises. There exists a spirit of progress which we must keep the faith with. We have to reward all those who supported us and gave us their faith, and convert those through our hard work to eventually come over and support us. We, and I want to change

Tasmania, to change the culture that has developed; to reinvigorate the people and make them proud again.

The past ten years of my life have seen a dramatic change; the individual was reduced to rubble. I have hated that, and now we are able to change that. We are the party which is committed and dedicated enough to want that change to happen. Upward mobility and equality in that ability to develop oneself is paramount; the ability to start with a dream, and the ability to fulfil it. Opportunity should never be a monopoly only for those who can afford it. I have hated the economic irrationalism that has overtaken our desires and our Christian values to ensure that our fellow man has the ability to ascend.

As Mayor of Burnie, I have stated that I now realise that I too am an ethical socialist. I have become anti-establishment and that has come about from the fact that in Tasmania we still have pockets of landed gentry who do not understand what it is like to have to work, not only to prosper but to survive. We must continually question all the values we hold onto, and reinforce our respect for one another. I have developed in my role as a business person, councillor, mayor, and a family man, a sense of true community where I fundamentally believe that we need to be committed to the welfare of one another.

But people do not expect us to make miracles, if they did we would be flattered. We know our limitations. If we thought of ourselves as supermen or women, we would resign and governments would be run by megalomaniacs. We keep government going and, as individuals, understand our limitations. Many are astonished that I am a Labor politician; the choice was simple. The system of policy and government under the previous governments were soul-destroying for me and my fellow man. I need to be blunt. I have developed a background that if I wanted to exercise political power, that would be possible for me, and in most cases easier without getting into parliament. I am obliged to toe the party line and now have an ability to influence it.

My determined starting point in politics was my disappointment with the current Federal Government who carried a complete grudge against the defenceless and most hardworking within our communities. The working class have been driven down, and I believe that I can be a bridge in the new Labor order where everyone matters. This represents a quantum leap and a shift in the foundations of Steve Kons. What we need in Tasmania is an enormous reinvigoration of our industries, a State which recognises that small business means small business, and where one-to-five and five-to-twenty enterprises matter as much as the large monoliths who can and do economically rape us and then dump us; for example, in my home town of

Burnie, companies like the paper manufacturers who continue to demoralise our people and our lifestyles.

I do have a desire to make a difference, not for personal benefit, but for my spiritual awareness. My ideals for betterment in my own community are honest and sincere and I just do not trot out the party handout for the sole reason to be 'one of the boys'. Conservatives did vote for me because they have seen that I have that spark to make the change happen and I can be an individualistic motivator to achieve that change.

The ALP is now part of the community and has a democratic relationship with the community as a whole and the partnership agreements, for example, with local government will bear this truth out more fully in time. I have become an ethical socialist, not through reading about it nor through familiar tradition but because I believe at its best it corresponds most closely to an existence that connects the rational and moral, that stands for cooperation and equality in our economic circumstances. A democracy rests on the shared perception by all that they participate in the benefits of the common will. Through government I intend to at least give people access to the type of opportunities that I enjoyed and most people did not.

Tasmanians need and deserve a clear vision of what Tasmania would look like and a clear set of ideas and those are the things we need to set out now. Detailed policy will come but that will come within that intellectual and political framework.

We are not running this Government for ourselves but the people of this State. We all go forward together over time or we will perish and I have no intention of perishing. I insist on fairness not favours for groups, peoples, unions or lobbyists, they all deserve the same degree of political respect.

The years of conservative governments which preceded Bacon's Labor Government and the reason Labor now has power is that those who voted conservative asked serious questions about their quality of life, living standards and prospects not only for themselves but for their children. We have a true mandate to reignite that spark of confidence.

I was not born into this party, I ultimately chose it from my conservative university heyday, to my shift in support in protest of State policies of supporting big business to the detriment of small without the social obligations of caring for the small enterprise which not only makes a large part of this economy but the way we live.

We have moved closer as a party to representing all because our philosophies have become what the people deserve and that is respect, not

economic rationalism. This renewed philosophy acknowledges that we care for each other en masse, not for minorities' pockets. I intend not to be a rebel in the ranks of the ALP because I know who is in charge and the direction and character of this Government.

Mr Speaker, my mother, wife and father have all applauded me in my move to join the ALP and supported my philosophical shift because they can see when our whole benefits our children's futures are also enhanced. My electorate of Braddon has over the past decade suffered intensely under disintegration of services and reduction of service levels. I with my Braddon colleagues will be no lame ducks when it comes to securing the future of those adults and children on the coast.

The trappings of power do not interest us, the new office and staff certainly mean nothing to us if the people's welfare and wellbeing are not enhanced. I will let no government escape my wrath if the people of Braddon are not protected and looked after. There can be no doubt that I was better off financially in the private sector and one day can possibly return there but at this stage of my life my priority is to do whatever I can for the people of Braddon, the electors, the supporters and those who will eventually come over - yes, my people because they have accepted me and put me into one of the highest posts of public life to represent them and I will do that; no 'ifs' or 'buts', that is my task for the next four years and beyond.

I accept that there will be jibes that I am really a Liberal, what am I doing on this side of this Chamber. But, Mr Speaker, Steve Kons now has a heart and cares about the little people and will fight for those in Braddon without fear or favour. Cooperative politics and political respect are what I intend to offer the members on the other side of the Chamber and I stress that, but that does not mean that I will not fight if they want to take the fight into the gutter.

I put the Opposition on guard that I offer myself to this Parliament the same way I offered myself to the electorate as their representative and not a brawler. My sole motivation for being here is to represent the people and not engage in self-edification or glorification.

Mr Speaker, we still have our greatest asset, the Hydro, whose net worth will continue to go up. We still have our local government who at the grassroots level will continue making important decisions affecting our lives. State debt is not an issue, it is all a matter of perception. We can and will forge ahead.

Our State's assets per capita are immense. If you look at what the State of Tasmania - in essence the people - own and control we are doing very well.

The basic infrastructure we have for 470 000 people is enormous: five ports, four major airports, public buildings - the list goes on and on. Our greatest assets are people, the same people who gave us power and placed their trust in us. It is all a matter of perception, we are well off, we are better off than most and the analogy that was recently brought to my attention was that if we took a thousand street dwellers from Calcutta, gave them \$1 000 each and landed them in Tasmania, why would they think they have landed in heaven - what would they see that we no longer see?

Mr Speaker, there is regret in the community that there is no minister based in Braddon but the fact that there is a team - and I stress a team - of members who work together and who have no predetermined public aspirations other than to serve the electorate augurs well for the relationship between the members and those that matter, the people. Bryan, Brenton and myself are no doubt the most capable team on the coast that has been there for the past ten years. Our backgrounds are diverse and varied but we have not forgotten our roots. Our interests are diverse and varied and we have not betrayed our local roots. We will continue to deliver for the people of Braddon social and economic benefits with a heart and a soul because we listen and we care. We all have young children and we want them as well as other people's children to have the opportunities that have been available to us.

Mr Speaker, the Labor leadership, Mr Bacon and Lennon, are a great political team and I have witnessed that recently. These people know how to deliver and by being part of this Government I get a feeling that we have to hold on to our hats because the next decade of Labor Government will take the people with it and out of the abyss that we find ourselves in.

Mr Speaker, I also thank you, the members of the Government, the Opposition and Ms Putt, who have made me welcome into this Chamber.

Members - Hear, hear.