



Carole Susan Cains

House of Assembly

Date: 14 April 1992

Electorate: Braddon

Mrs CAINS (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, I am honoured as a newly-elected member of this House to second the motion for the Address-in-Reply, and in doing so I declare my loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen and to her representative in Tasmania, Sir Phillip Bennett.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your election to that office. I would also like to congratulate the mover of the motion, my colleague, the member for Bass, Mrs Napier.

Tasmania has been fortunate to be served by State governors to whom diligence and integrity have been paramount. Sir Phillip Bennett is certainly no exception and whilst performing his proper ceremonial role has, together with his wife, been approachable and friendly towards Her Majesty's Tasmanian subjects. There are few Tasmanians who have not seen him in their own community. By opening Government House to the general public he has gained the appreciation of many Tasmanians and they in their turn acknowledge the supportive role of Lady Bennett.

I offer my congratulations to all those who have been elected to this House. I would particularly like to thank the people of Braddon - and there have been a number of them here today - for their support, not only of myself but of my colleagues. Every booth in Braddon was won by the Liberal Party and, with the exception of three booths, we won by 60 per cent or more.

I do not advocate one system over another, but in single-member electorate systems, whatever method may have been used to count the votes, this margin would have led to a landslide of stunning proportions. It is a measure of the fact that so many people are hurting or feeling insecure.

With the aspirations of so many Tasmanians resting with this Government there is a heavy collective responsibility on this House and, in view of the events of this morning, I think we should do well to remember that. We are not here for our own gain, we are here for Tasmania.

I am very proud to be the first Liberal woman member from Braddon and I wish to be a grassroots politician helping with the problems, however small or large, in the community. I came here to Australia on 5 April 1976, and I vividly remember it because I came here on my own with two small children aged six and four. Paul had already been here for five weeks. So it was a very daunting prospect - almost as bad as today.

Members laughing.

Mrs CAINS - It is not an easy decision to leave the country of one's birth; however we did so. It was also a very difficult decision, in a way, to become naturalised

Australians. But I must tell this House that this decision was taken willingly and we are very proud to be Australian. To those I meet I have no hesitation in saying that I am a pommy Aussie - I have a pommy voice and an Aussie heart.

For fifteen years I have worked on the family farm, with help. I have learnt how to plough, to mow and to bale. I can dig a post hole and strain a fence. I have followed the seasons and the price of beef and I believe I have an insight into the problems of the agricultural community and a better understanding of primary industry.

The very different occupation of secretary was what I was originally trained for, and it was as matron's secretary that I met my husband, who is not unknown to many here today. I was a founding member of the Australian Association of Practice Managers, and am very interested in businesses and their management. I have also served on the North-Western General Hospital board and on the Tasmanian Cancer Committee, and with thirty years of involvement with health issues I feel that I am well qualified to be chairman of the backbench committee on health and community services.

Government members - Hear, hear.

Mrs CAINS - We need to deliver the very best health services possible to Tasmanians in a cost-effective manner. We are in the midst of a great deal of change and there are many calls for specialised services but we should be careful not to have too much duplication. I feel that general practice is still the cornerstone of our health system - of course I could be a little biased.

With a hundred and fifty Tasmanian women developing breast cancer each year, I am very pleased that this Government has already agreed to expand mammography services to the isolated communities. Whilst mammography is a special need in women's health - and there are many of these issues - it should be remembered that men have a shorter lifespan than women and that health services should be distributed equitably.

As one of the two women representatives on the government benches, I look forward to addressing the issues that are brought before us on the backbench committee for women's affairs. There are many problems but these should not be dealt with in isolation from the family or other people in Tasmania.

The important services that government has the responsibility to deliver are health, education, and law and order, and these all come from the taxes of the private sector. For these services we need to be more productive. We must increase our exports to have more money coming in. We cannot simply cut back all the time as we have been doing in the past few years. The economy is exactly like the household budget. We should cut down on the luxurious clothes and some essential items but we still need an income coming in to pay for the food, the utility bills and the mortgage. Without an income there is a spiral downward of borrowing more money, paying more interest and not having sufficient funds for the upkeep of the home which very rapidly falls into disrepair.

So it is with the State. Several financial analyses show Tasmania to be in a difficult position. For the short term, there must be further cost cutting but we must also generate wealth and bring prosperity back to Tasmania. Many factors have an influence on this goal. One of them is education. It is a personal view of mine that the best junior schools are those which encourage imagination and self-expression but also give definite guidelines. Little ones need to have the basics in life so that when they are older and go to high school they have the incentive to achieve.

It has already been stated that we need to become a clever country. No one would dispute what is essentially a motherhood statement. Because of unemployment and the need for trained people it is important that colleges and universities are able to cope with more students. For the students of Braddon who have the ability to proceed to tertiary education in Launceston or Hobart, the financial burden has been very hard on a number of their parents and I am most pleased that this Government has decided to bring back the accommodation allowance for tertiary students in July of this year.

I also sincerely hope that the north west will become the centre of agricultural studies. It would help the area to continue and improve in farming excellence and give many more opportunities to young people.

Since the election I have visited many companies, a number of councils and all the port authorities in Braddon. From these discussions I have a much better understanding of the challenges facing our community. The north west has as its economic backstop a few large companies. These provide direct and indirect employment. They need to continue to thrive and we must have new ones develop. The nature and size of the resources of the north west demand large efficient processing plants for them to be internationally competitive. We cannot produce frozen chips in a cottage industry. Large industry has a multiplier effect which cottage industries do not. In order that we become competitive, a great deal has been said about enterprise agreements, penalty rates and leave loading. There is no doubt that there is a great deal more to be done in this area. Productive employees should be adequately rewarded. However, how good an employee is is very dependent on the management. Management needs to give responsibility, encouragement and a sense of achievement so that employees do their best.

Quality will always sell. From the north west of the State our quality products include: specialty cheeses; dairy products; coated and copying paper; processed and fresh vegetables; pyrethrum; opium poppies; furniture; heavy machinery; and high value seafood. There are ready markets for these.

On the down side a great deal of improvement is required. It is not unusual for me to see racks of Australian clothes where, even from a distance, one can tell that all the hems are uneven. There is no excuse for poor workmanship. In fact anything less than the best only takes away from the image of excellence which we wish to project. For us to have more money flowing into this State we need more companies making the highest quality goods and providing the highest quality services. Quality rests on two things: the ability of management - as I have already mentioned - and attention to detail.

At present tourism accounts for 8 per cent of the gross State product and provides employment for 10 per cent of the Tasmanian work force. In the past Tasmania has been promoted on the strength of the casinos and Port Arthur. With the change of direction of the visitor industry our unspoiled wilderness areas are attracting many discerning tourists both from the mainland and overseas. We must ensure that these visitors have satisfying and rewarding visits without damaging the resource that they come to see. Cradle Mountain is a very good example of this. There is an information centre there which is beautifully laid out and informs people about the wilderness; it shows them how they can safely walk in the wilderness and how to look after it.

The tourism industry has the potential to lead economic recovery in Tasmania. All businesses must look to identifying and supplying the needs of visitors; in other words, encourage more people to give a service - particularly at weekends. We must continue to emphasise the diversity of our State in promotions by Tourism Tasmania and the regional tourism associations. People can tell that somebody in our family is particularly interested in tourism.

The success of Cradle Mountain Lodge, under the management first of the Currants and now of P & O, is well known. With the attention to detail and the provision of quality service, quality food and quality accommodation it is just wonderful to go there; it is the reason for its exceptionally high occupancy rate.

Another example of attention to detail and quality is onions. I recently visited a vegetable processing company renowned for its export onions. Its attention to detail, quality products and service are also renowned. The enthusiasm of management is obvious as soon as one walks in there; it is clean, modern, efficient and a happy place to be. As far as the onions are concerned the temperature is kept just right, the air flow is just right and even the handling of the onions is conducted so that none of the product is damaged in any way. The company does a considerable amount of research to continue the ongoing process so the product stays in the best possible condition.

The company looks after the onions very well. It makes sure that there is always a company representative on the docks when these onions are being loaded. On one occasion the wife of the owner was in Melbourne - this was a few years ago - and she was supervising the loading of onions when she saw one of the containers going onto the ship without a cover on it. So she asked that the container be put back on the dock and she opened the boot of her car, took out a tarpaulin and asked for it to be lashed to the top of the container - that is attention to detail. For every 30 000 tonnes of onions shipped out of here there is an employee from that company looking after those onions throughout the world - attention to detail once again.

On a recent visit to the north west the American ambassador, Mr Sembler, emphasised that this State could be profitably based on the expansion of our quality goods. When we have quality goods we need to market them. The onion industry has researched its markets carefully and provides a product in a way and size that the buyer wants. All companies should identify the need of the market before they consider an effective promotion to sell overseas. It is an area where the Government can have substantial impact. There are so many places around the world which are not even aware that Tasmania exists. The Government must help industry embark on this sort of market research to maximise the potential of our exports.

I was fortunate enough to speak recently with the High Commissioner of Singapore, Mr Tan, and he stated that Singaporeans were buying our products but most of them were completely unaware that they were Tasmanian. He believes that the possibilities of marketing our quality products around the world, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, are endless. He said, 'Do as Singapore does. Never sit back and wait for things to happen; always have a goal for improvement and go out there and achieve it'. Just as Singapore has set goals for its future, so must Tasmania. There is little doubt that there are hard decisions ahead of us and we must face up to them.

The electorate has given this Government a clear mandate and I have every confidence the Premier and his Liberal team will lead and give the incentives to set Tasmania on the road to recovery.

I have great pleasure in seconding this motion and commend it to the House.

Members - Hear, hear.