



Graham Sturges MP

House of Assembly

Date: 24 September 2002

Electorate: Denison

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Mr STURGES (Denison- Inaugural) - Mr Speaker, I move –

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

To His Excellency the Honourable Sir Guy Stephen Montague Green; Companion of the Order of Australia; Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire; Commander of the Royal Victorian Order; Governor in and over the State of Tasmania and its dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia:

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 assure Your Excellency that the measures which will be laid before us during the session will receive our careful consideration.

I would now like to take the opportunity to address this House and make my inaugural speech.

Mr Speaker, through you, I would like to extend my congratulations to all members on their election, particularly the newly elected members, and thank the House for this great pleasure and honour of speaking in this forum for the first time. This I can assure you I do as a very proud Tasmanian.

Firstly and most importantly I would like to put on record my sincere thanks to my wife Jill, son Ben and daughter Amber and other members of my family who have not only supported and worked with me during the campaign but also rode the election roller-coaster with me and stood by my side throughout.

I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation and thanks to all those people who supported my campaign, especially those in Denison who have given me this opportunity. I have previously provided basic assistance to candidates standing for election, but I never imagined the amount of work and effort required to maintain and run an effective campaign from start to finish.

I therefore must acknowledge the tremendous support, assistance, guidance and perseverance of my campaign team, and the many volunteers who are out there at all hours of the day and night letterboxing, putting up posters, folding pamphlets and tirelessly working to get my message to the people of Denison. In particular, I wish to extend my sincere thanks to my campaign manager, Nicole Wells, and the entire team - Carol Brown, David O'Byrne, Lynne Fitzgerald, Kevin Harkins, Kerry Becker and Peter Miller.

As I have previously acknowledged the role of my immediate family, it is also important to me that I thank my extended family, the Tasmanian trade union movement, for their tremendous support leading up to and during my campaign and, in particular, my own union, the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union, with whom my active association goes back some 28 years. In addition, I would like to thank the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union for the support they have extended, as well as the Health and Community Services Union of Australia, the Electrical Trades Union, the Maritime Union of Australia, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, the Rail, Tram and Bus Union and the Australian Workers Union. Mr Speaker, it would be an absolute understatement for me to say that I am proud to be union.

Amid the current environment of ideological economic rationalism and industrial reform, it is so easy to forget how important trade unions are and have been to Australia. Unionists have struggled to establish the living standards most Australians enjoy today. Rather than recognising just how important unions are and have been to the social and democratic fabric of our country, conservative political parties choose to denounce unions' rightful place in our community and continue a relentless attack on workers' rights and conditions. Over the terms of the Howard two-party Federal Government we have experienced an excessive onslaught on the rights of the union movement in general and, in particular, have witnessed the decimation of the rights of workers to genuinely bargain collectively, to access representation without fear of persecution, and to seek effective resolution of disputes through an independent umpire.

Given the extreme and excessive tirade of attacks launched on the union movement by the conservative forces at state and national level, you could be excused for thinking we are in the midst of an alien takeover. This relentless attack must be defended, most importantly because the victims of this attack are ordinary Tasmanians who choose to have a go to get a fair go. It is for those reasons that we must be ever vigilant to ensure the quality of life derived from previous struggles is at least maintained, especially in these times where attacks on workers and workers' rights are generally accepted as fair game. It is therefore imperative that the Federal and State industrial relations systems provide equity and justice for workers' rights, and give access to genuine collective bargaining that recognises the rightful role of unions and representatives of those bodies at the negotiating table.

To that end, it is essential that the role of representatives at the workplace is properly recognised and equally, that recognition be given to the need for these people to be properly resourced, trained and given the necessary time to effectively fulfil their role. Only then, Mr Speaker, will the concept of collective bargaining and the Australian ethos of a 'fair go' be suitably achieved, rather than the current master/servant attitude perpetuated from on high by the current Federal Government, which is being willingly supported by State conservatives and many employer groups.

Mr Speaker, I took the momentous decision of standing for election on the basis that I firmly believe I can make a positive contribution on behalf of all Tasmanians, but in particular the battlers and the workers. I see my role as ensuring that these people get a voice and the fair go that they deserve on the basis that their options and their opportunities are not limited by their respective income levels and their capacity to pay.

In four years of Labor government, significant growth and development have been achieved throughout our State, building and restoring the confidence and hope of all Tasmanians. Some of the many positive initiatives benefiting Tasmania have included Labor delivering the first balanced budget in 100 years, which continues to be maintained in surplus. The days of double-digit unemployment are over and population decline has been arrested. Education funding has been significantly increased to the tune of \$121 million and 11 000 new computers have been allocated to schools. The Health budget has been massively increased to improve services and repair the black hole left by the previous Liberal Government.

I look forward to the next term of stable Labor government, with enhanced access to Bass Strait travel, natural gas, online twenty-first century telecommunications, enhanced social

equity and the continued industry growth and development. More specifically, I look forward to being part of a government which acknowledges the need to provide assistance to those Tasmanians who are doing it hard, a government which recognises that there are families and individuals who are battling and is prepared to shape up to its obligation in government and give people a hand-up through a variety of social initiatives.

During the campaign I extensively doorknocked and consulted widely within the electorate of Denison and the clear message from people with whom I met was that they wanted a stable, decisive and representative government which is prepared to provide unambiguous, timely and positive action for the betterment of Tasmania. This message, Mr Speaker, was clearly reflected in the outcome of the 20 July State election, with the return of the majority Bacon Labor Government receiving 52 per cent of the total votes cast - a message which should not be lost on this House.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, as I previously mentioned, it is an absolute honour to be speaking here today. As a boy growing up in a Housing Commission home in Moonah, I never envisaged in my wildest dreams that I would be given the opportunity and the privilege to address this House. I intend to fulfil my obligations to this position as a dedicated, hardworking and accessible member for Denison.

Members - Hear, hear.