



Daniel Hulme MP

House of Assembly

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Electorate: Franklin

RECOGNITION OF VISITOR

Mr SPEAKER - Just before I give the call to Mr Hulme, the new member for Franklin, I would like to recognise Senator Bilyk in the Gallery and welcome her to the Parliament. I now give the call to the honourable member for Franklin. This is his inaugural address.

Members - Hear, hear!

PREMIER'S ADDRESS [12.31 p.m.]

Mr HULME (Franklin - Inaugural) - Mr Speaker, today for me is a very humbling day. It is a tremendous honour to be elected to represent my fellow Tasmanians in this Parliament. It is a responsibility that I do not take lightly, and an opportunity that I will embrace with everything I have.

I am well aware that my passage into the House of Assembly was not along the road most travelled. I have been swept into this Chamber in the wake of two Tasmanian political giants and two passionate members for the electorate I now represent. Paul Lennon and Paula Wriedt are icons of the Labor Party in this State - they sat in this Parliament for a combined total of 31 years. The greatest trait that they share in common is their deep commitment to the ideals of the Labor Party in fighting for the rights of the disadvantaged and believing that every person has a right to be valued, and in working to build a more vibrant and more caring Tasmania.

I believe that their great achievements for this State will be celebrated for many years to come. It was a great privilege to work in the office of Paul Lennon during his time as Premier. His leadership in supporting economic development through value-adding projects like the pulp mill, and the passion with which he led Tasmania to be the first and only State in Australia to provide compensation to the stolen generations were just two of his many tremendous contributions.

As the youngest member of this current Parliament, my aspiration is to do what I can to emulate their successes in advocating on behalf of the people of Franklin. I will be in this place fighting for the timber workers of the Huon Valley, their families and communities, and for their right to ongoing employment in an industry that has supported generations of families in Geeveston and Huonville. I will be in here advocating for the rights of the disadvantaged and the unemployed - the people who have lost hope in ever sharing in the benefits the rest of us take for granted. I believe my job as a parliamentarian is to stretch out a helping hand at every opportunity, and it is a task I approach with great enthusiasm.

Mr Speaker, as I drive through my electorate to sit down and listen to the needs of local communities, I am always struck by what a beautiful place the electorate of Franklin is. Whether you are driving past the ocean and river views at Lindisfarne, Bellerive and Rosny; the beaches of the South Arm Peninsula, Kingston and Blackmans Bay; the small villages along the Channel; the green hills of the Huon Valley or the bays of Bruny Island, it is a place of some magic. And stretching to the west covering most of the electorate of course is the vast wilderness of the South West National Park.

Wherever I go, I meet people who have a commitment to their communities, a sense of ownership and belonging to their part of Tasmania, people who have such a passion for the work they do to make their community a better place - and I am always reminded that it is in fact these people that are the community. A collection of roads and houses would be nothing without the energy and the love and the belief of the people who live in those houses and drive on those roads - from Clarence to Dover and everywhere in between.

They are the coordinators of neighbourhood houses and community centres, the chiefs of volunteer fire brigades, the secretaries and presidents of sports clubs, community associations, chambers of commerce, school parents and friends organisations, seniors and youth groups, RSL sub-branches, Lions, Rotary and Apex clubs, Coastcare and Landcare groups and historical societies. Their community spirit and selfless dedication reaffirm my faith in the limitless capacity of the people of Tasmania. What better job is there in the world than one which puts you in touch with these places and these people every day?

Mr Speaker, I first moved to Tasmania at the age of 10 when my father, faced with the choice between two job offers, decided to move here rather than Papua New Guinea. He is a keen bushwalker and one of the factors in his decision was his love of the Tasmanian wilderness. Encouraged by my father, I have also become a bushwalking enthusiast and have developed an abiding respect and affection for Tasmania's wild places.

Being an expert in information technology, my father also cultivated my interest in the possibilities of technology as an agent for positive change. I continued my interest in IT right through to my honours year of an undergraduate degree in computing, and a little later when I worked part-time as a branch development manager for the Australian Computer Society. At the time I believed strongly in the power of information and communications technology to shape the way we live and work, and I still do. My interest in IT was motivated by a desire to have some part in changing the world, but while I was at university I must have been struck by the realisation that another profession had a greater transformational power.

Like many politicians, my interest and involvement in politics started at university. I joined the Labor Party in early 2000 after talking with friends who were involved in the campaign to reverse the defunding of higher education by the Howard Government. In such a competitive global environment where so many countries were making massive investments in universities, I failed to understand why Australia was the only country in the OECD to reduce its higher education funding as a proportion of its gross domestic product. Like the Premier and the Labor politicians who have graced this House for generations, I believe in the power of education. We on this side of the House know that it is an honour and something worth fighting for. This party was built by people who had to fight for the right to an education, who were born not into a world of opportunity but into a world where you had to struggle for every chance you could get. The belief that has driven the Australian Labor Party for over 100 years is the passionate devotion to the idea that as a community and as a society we rise together and we can only celebrate true equality when every Tasmanian child has the same chance at education and the same standard of health care, regardless of the income of their parents or their station in life.

I remain a proud and committed member of the Labor Party because I recognise that it is the only party that truly understands how to harness the drivers of economic growth and productivity to deliver the education and health services we need.

Former Treasurer and Prime Minister Paul Keating led an aggressive economic reform agenda that eventually led to the longest period of sustained economic growth in Australia's history. I think his dedication to creating jobs for Australians was laudable and ensures his place as a Labor icon. Unfortunately, his economic record was trashed by the following Government who, ironically, were the beneficiaries of his hard work.

For as long as I can remember having any political beliefs I have believed in the power of the economy as a force for good and positive change, a force that can generate the wealth to allow government to provide the services that all Tasmanians deserve. The first order of

business for any government should be to create and protect jobs. There is no greater driver of social capital than a job. There is no better way for a person of working age to gain a sense of identity, dignity and self-respect than having a job. There is no better driver of improvements in health outcomes and living standards, of education and training qualifications and accessing affordable housing. By creating jobs we can go a substantial way towards achieving these things before the Government has to spend a cent. There is no doubt that in trying to achieve the best economic and social outcomes, job creation must be the number one government initiative.

I want to see a Tasmania where every person in need of a job is engaged in stable, dignified and meaningful employment. That is what the Labor Party has fought for in Tasmania for over a century. As the Premier reiterated in his state of the State address on Tuesday, it remains the driving force of those who have the honour to sit on this side of the House.

Mr Speaker, I am just old enough to remember a time when the first ambition of any school-aged Tasmania was to leave the State at the first opportunity. Melbourne and Sydney drew Tasmanians in their late teens like some irrepressible magnet. Young people wanted what young people have always wanted - a path to opportunity, the chance to get a job and establish their adult lives. Back in the mid-1990s that meant getting on the first plane out as soon as you were old enough to buy your own ticket.

The uncertainty, anxiety, fear and pessimism that abounded in the days of the hung parliament of 1996-98 caused young Tasmanians to leave in droves, leading to an alarming population decline in the State. It has taken a decade, but we have been able to turn that trend around. When Jim Bacon was elected Premier in 1998 he expressed an optimism about Tasmania's future that few at the time were willing to share. The persistence of his optimism gave people a reason to hope, to believe that things could be better. He also had the foresight to recognise and exploit Tasmania's natural advantages for the State's economic gain.

Tasmania's economic performance over the past decade was not a miracle, nor was it an accident. Majority Labor government has brought Tasmania out of the depths of economic despair. It is no accident that Tasmania's unemployment is now below the national average when previously it was 2 per cent higher. It is no accident that business investment in Tasmania since 1998 has grown by 75 per cent. It is no accident that the number of long-term unemployed in Tasmania has fallen to a quarter of its 1998 level. It is no accident that \$1.6 billion in government debt was paid off without having to sell the Hydro. It would be easy to dismiss this as the local effects of Australia's economic boom, but that is only half the story. After all, Tasmania's economy has been the fastest growing in Australia, faster even than the resource-rich States of Western Australia and Queensland. Most Tasmanians I speak to now say there is a renewed sense of optimism in this State and people moving to Tasmania today have the chance to seize economic opportunity as well as appreciate the State's natural beauty.

The success of the Bacon Government was in pursuing and delivering major infrastructure projects and supporting those industries that built on Tasmania's natural advantages. Two fast ferries across Bass Strait provided competition with the airlines and dramatically boosted our visitor numbers. Wind farms on Tasmania's coasts and the importation of natural gas complemented our renewable hydroelectric energy. The business environment was changed by turning Tasmanian from one of the least competitive tax regimes to the most competitive in the country. This economic strategy has paid significant dividends. The hard work done by Labor governments to strengthen our economy could not have been more timely.

With the onset of the global financial crisis, there has never been a more important time than now to take action to protect jobs. Many of those jobs that we need to protect are in our hard-working forest industries. The families and communities of the southern part of my electorate of Franklin have built their lives around a sustainable Tasmanian timber industry for generations - a forest industry that today complies with the international standard for environmental management systems, the regional and community forest agreements, the Australian Forestry Standard and the Forest Practices Code. Our forest industry today takes

action to protect endangered species and maintain a sustainable supply of timber, and is being innovative not only through continuous improvement in its harvesting practices but also by seeking value-adding opportunities that create jobs in Tasmania.

The forest industries have a vital place in the diverse Tasmanian economy and can continue to be an employer for thousands of Tasmanians for generations to come. We must not get hung up on false dichotomies between jobs in forestry and jobs in tourism, because forestry and tourism have coexisted for decades and will continue to do so. There are no workers in the State of Tasmania that are more threatened, vilified or obstructed from going about their lawful business than those in forestry.

I have had the chance to meet with plenty of forestry workers to see the hard work that they put into sustainable forest management. They come to work every day for a chance to earn a decent living, not to be exposed to the derision and the name-calling that is unfairly heaped upon them. They genuinely feel that as far as some Tasmanians are concerned nothing they do will ever be good enough because the critics will not be happy until they have shut down the forest industry altogether.

Mr Speaker, it is time to end this siege against Tasmanian workers. If there is one thing that I would like to achieve in this Parliament it is to step up our efforts to combat the campaigns of misinformation about the environmental impacts of our sustainable industries such as forestry and fisheries and the campaigns of misinformation against value-adding proposals such as the Bell Bay pulp mill.

I believe we also need to strengthen deterrents against those who use illegal and dangerous methods to stop forest and forest-processing activities. The right to protest is about the right to make a political point without fear of retribution. It is not about stopping hard-working Tasmanians from going about their lawful business. In a democracy the legitimate means of effective change are by the ballot box and the soapbox, not by stopping Tasmanian workers from earning a lawful living.

I am young man and I believe that my generation has an enormous amount to look forward to as we see what Tasmania can become in the years ahead. Instead of playing tug-of-war with the naysayers, I would prefer that all Tasmanians were pulling on the same end of the rope. I would like to see a Tasmania that embraces sustainable development and economic progress. If we are to mitigate the worst effects of the global financial crisis, then our future lies in innovation and value-adding. I support wholeheartedly the Premier's statement that he would like to see maximum value extracted from every rock that we dig from the ground and every fish we pull from the sea. I believe that we do have a strong marketing brand as a clean, green State, despite some people's best efforts to trash our reputation. With that reputation come some enormous economic opportunities.

We need to encourage investment in further renewable energy projects such as the proposed Southwood biomass power generator and the exploration of geothermal energy. Tasmania has so many opportunities to create a strong and reliable portfolio of renewable energy, and with Basslink in place our energy exports would become so much more valuable in the carbon-constrained economy of the future. By providing water security to our farmers through irrigation projects we can increase our production and export of high-quality food and beverages. Tasmania's low cost of tenancy makes us a perfect place for businesses that are not otherwise location-constrained. Once our optic-fibre infrastructure is commercialised, we will be a perfect hub for innovation in information and communications technology, and through strategic marketing and regional collaboration we can continue to develop and expand our tourism industry.

Of course, to build and develop we need to minimise constraints. That is why another key to our economic progress is planning reform. It is reasonable to expect developers to undergo a process to ensure a positive balance of economic, social and environmental outcomes, but that process should not allow projects that meet the criteria to be killed by the passage of time. It should not be possible to hold up planning proposals through spurious and vexatious appeals that push decisions beyond commercially acceptable time frames. All approval processes should have clear time lines that are strictly adhered to. We also need a

consistent framework for planning schemes across Tasmania. If we can achieve this through sensible planning reform then developers will have a clear sense of what criteria they have to meet for approval and whether it is worth the risk of putting their project forward in the first place. I applaud wholeheartedly the planning reforms the Premier outlined in his state of the State address and look forward to the kind of sensible, enabling planning system that will be put on the statute books. It will also send the message to developers that Tasmania is open for business and that we welcome progress in our State.

I believe that with the right leadership Tasmania can avoid the recession that we have seen so many countries around the world slide into in recent months. These are tough times that call for the strength of a majority Labor government. These times also call for the strength of a leader such as Premier David Bartlett. David Bartlett is a leader who has a vision for a clever, kind and connected Tasmania. His drive and energy and focus on all that Tasmania can be have already ensured his place as one of the great leaders of this State. I look forward to the continuation of his clear and positive leadership of a majority Labor government for many years to come.

Mr Speaker, I take my seat in this House in circumstances that are less than ideal. It is the nature of our electoral system that sometimes new members benefit from the misfortune of others. I am sure I speak for others who have been in this situation when I say we would prefer to be elected in different circumstances, but when it does happen, when the opportunity to serve arises, we owe it to our predecessors to make the most of it.

There are several people I would like to thank for their contribution to my personal journey to this place. First of all, to my parents Garry and Margaret, thank you for respecting and supporting my life decisions, for providing me with moral guidance and encouraging me to achieve all I can. I would like to thank my former employers, Paul Lennon and Senator Catryna Bilyk, without whose guidance I would most likely not be here. Catryna especially has been one of my greatest mentors for nearly a decade. I would also like to thank all the friends and supporters who have wished me well in my political career since it was first conceived. Thank you in advance to those who will still be with me campaigning in March 2010. Thank you to my parliamentary colleagues who have offered helpful advice, support and encouragement and thank you to the voters of Franklin for placing your trust in me. Clearly I was not your first choice, but I intend to prove over the next 12 months that I will be working hard to make your lives better.