

Inaugural Speech – David Llewellyn MP



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House of Assembly

Date: 19 March 1986

Electorate: Lyons

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Mr LLEWELLYN (Lyons) - I rise to support the motion, to thank His Excellency for his speech and to record my loyalty to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second.

Firstly, Mr Speaker, may I extend to you my congratulations on your election to the office of Speaker. It is an office of considerable responsibility and influence within this House and one I am sure you will fill with the dignity and impartiality that the position of Speaker demands.

I enter this Address-in-Reply debate with a personal sense of responsibility to the electors of Lyons for the confidence they have placed in me. I am also aware of the responsibility I have to all Tasmanians to tackle constructively the underlying problems of our community, some of which were manifest in our society prior to this Government's coming into office in 1982 but many of which have emerged since that time because of the Government's specific and wrongly directed policies and philosophies.

It is the intention of this side of the House to begin our return to the Treasury benches in Tasmania by adopting a positive and constructive approach to our task as the alternate Government of this State. One of the very first steps in this march will be the cleansing of the Parliament itself. The personal attacks, the abuse and the innuendo have to stop and the Labor Party means to see that they do.

The traditions of our Westminster style and system of government date back a very long time. The sort of actions I believe to be totally dysfunctional to the workings of this House have remained common practice and problems throughout the years. In the mid-1500s, Sir Thomas Smith in his book *De Republica Anglorum* records:

'The member in possession of the House is to proceed without interruption: "with perpetual oration, not with altercation, he goes through till he do make an end".'

It may well be that this maiden speech of mine will be the only speech I will make without interruption from the other side - and the Premier nods. But think of the improved standard and quality of debate if members were free to say what they felt without the abusive interjections which fan tempers and foment hatred.

Sir Thomas Smith goes on to relate other rules of parliamentary debate:

'The House must not be addressed directly: "every man speaketh as to the Speaker, not as one to another ."'

The rules of debate, which were very specific in the 1500s, about abusive language say:

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'No reviling or nipping words must be used'.

The word 'nipping' may seem a little out of place in 1986 but some particularly cutting or nipping statements were made by a great number of members in the previous Parliament. If nipping words are to be used in the future I believe it is up to you, Mr Speaker, to nip them in the bud by a strict application of Standing Orders.

The Tasmanian economy at the best can be described as fragile. We have a heavy reliance on our primary industry, our mining and our forestry sectors, all of which make up a very large part of the electorate of Lyons and all of which are under a great deal of pressure, largely because of worldwide trends and, over the past twelve months, pressures from tight Federal government monetary policies and consequently high interest rates.

We have heard in this debate some adverse comments about Federal economic policies and indeed my comment regarding interest rates is one of these. But let me say that the positive contribution the Federal Labor Government has given to our nation, and to Tasmania as part of it, cannot be understated. Following on from a legacy of woeful mismanagement by the Fraser Government, a huge inherited deficit, double digit inflation, snowballing unemployment and a sad record of confrontation with the unions which resulted in unprecedented levels of days lost through strikes and disputations, the Labor Party came into office with realistic economic policies and has reduced and held inflation and at the same time created over 600 000 jobs for Australians, benefiting all States including Tasmania.

The decision to float the Australian dollar has, in the case of mining and farming communities where exports are of vital concern, meant the difference between closing and carrying on for many as they face the world cartels, the price wars and the commodity subsidies which we have experienced in recent times. The level of industrial disputation under the Labor administration federally has dropped to the lowest in over seventeen years, so it is glib talk to blame the ills of the Tasmanian economy on the so-called deficiencies of the Federal Labor Government when in reality the situation is that the Tasmanian Government has received many millions of dollars more from the Labor Party since it took office in 1983 than it did under the Fraser Government in a similar period.

From one member we heard a sad tale of how Medicare was a national disgrace and was costing Australians dearly. What was not mentioned however were the policies of the Liberal Party in this area, nor indeed the actions of the Australian Medical Association - Australia's most militant trade union - a body which has recently stooped to the unprecedented low of threatening the elderly of our community through bulk-billing arrangements.

Mr Speaker, let me tell you what the Liberal Party would put in place of Medicare - and more to the point, let me tell you what it would cost. By sleight of hand Mr Howard wants to transfer a large proportion of the apparent costs of Medicare to the private sector. When his system was costed it was found that each family would pay about \$25 per week for basic hospital and medical coverage only, and that this payment would be on a flat basis, irrespective of income and ability to pay.

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In addition to this, Medicare would no longer be a national system with everyone benefiting. We would quickly be back to the figures of the Fraser years, when 40 per cent of all Australians could not afford to be covered and were hence at very great financial risk should they become seriously ill. So let us not start quoting philosophies without first considering the consequences.

When members and ministers get up in this place and slate the Federal Government for not providing funds for Port Arthur and its reconstruction - which I agree is a national monument and part of our national heritage - they should remember, and remember well, that the Federal Labor Government has provided \$6 million of the \$9 million currently expended on it and it is the Federal Labor Government which is being asked for an additional \$5.1 million of the \$7.7 million associated with the extension.

I sincerely hope that the Federal Government will find the money for the extension program and I agree with the statements by the minister regarding the project team's expertise and the efforts its members have put into their work; I have been there recently and have seen a great deal of that. He can certainly rely on my cooperation and support in seeing that Federal funding is obtained, but it ill behoves him to denigrate the Federal Government in the way he has done when he is asking it for that large sum of money for Port Arthur.

The Tasmanian economy and work force are highly vulnerable to price spirals, freight costs, labour and production charges and the taxes levied by governments. Our mining sector is operating at a time of low world mineral prices and many mines are now existing by virtue of the level of the Australian dollar against its international market partners. The viability of mines at Queenstown, Renison, Rosebery and Savage River will need to be closely monitored over the next few years if we are not to see massive retrenchments of the work force.

Primary produce exporters are under increasing pressure from the European Economic Community product mountains and the EEC's ability to saturate and undercut traditional markets. In addition, the measures recently taken by the United States Congress in countering pressure placed on its farmers by the EEC have placed Australian and Tasmanian producers of beef and other commodities in a very disadvantageous situation. I wish the Prime Minister well in the discussions he will be having with those people in the EEC over the next month or so and I certainly hope we will be able to see some sort of an improvement in the problems in that area. I also hope that the Kerin dairy marketing arrangements, now agreed to and which begin to operate on 1 July 1986, will give our hard-hit dairy farmers some measure of security for the future and some basis on which to plan.

Undoubtedly unemployment within our State is the most serious problem we have at this time. While we on this side of the House encourage further industrial development, mining and utilisation of our forest products, we need to focus our forward planning on establishing future development in growth areas and not in industries which in a few years will require special government assistance of one kind or another in order for them to maintain the work force. I commend the Government on its foresightedness in its commitment to the new Tasmanian Technology and Engineering Corporation. I sincerely hope this corporation will be adequately funded

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and will be allowed to become imaginative and adventurous in its operations so that it can pursue and secure projects of significant impact to Tasmania. Central to this is the redirecting of expertise within government bodies and I would look particularly at the Hydro-Electric Commission in this area. It will be vital, particularly as the capital programs diminish, for its work force to be given some opportunity to look at other areas so we are not faced with the situation of losing that highly valued manpower and expertise from the State for ever.

I was particularly interested in the comment made by His Excellency when he mentioned proposed strategies such as fuel wood and charcoal production. It is a fact that a huge resource of unproductive timber is currently standing in our southern forests, mainly as a result of the 1967 bushfires. It is a resource which could be utilised for the production of charcoal. Charcoal produced from dead standing timber, felled and split into billets and refined into charcoal or carbon could augment silicon plant production and refining, and provide an export market of its own. Undoubtedly this potential industry should be very seriously pursued.

I believe we have not seriously tackled the area of high technology in Tasmania. I have been concerned at the stories of the offers which have been made by individuals and companies to establish 'high-tech' electronics industries in this State. They have made these offers only to be frustrated by well-intentioned advisers with little or no knowledge of the technology offered; and ultimately they have been discouraged from starting up because of red tape, and lack of understanding and realisation of the benefits that they offer.

From time to time the Parliamentary Labor Party will be putting forward to the Tasmanian community worthwhile programs of development in specific areas and by so doing we will be demonstrating a willingness and an ability to act positively in the best interests of the Tasmanian people. We believe that this constructive approach will be of great benefit to our State. As part of my specific responsibilities within the Parliamentary Labor Party, I will be closely watching the police, emergency services, road safety and sea fisheries areas. Having raised the subject of the police, I want to take this opportunity to say that I consider the Tasmanian police force the best in the nation.

Mr Roger Groom - Hear, hear.

MR LLEWELLYN - It is by and large a very efficient and effective body of people with a high level of dedication and commitment and it is my intention to strive vigorously to protect and maintain that vital credibility which it deserves. It is sad therefore that nationally televised actions, such as those at Farmhouse Creek on 7 March, should place at risk that high public position for the sake of partisan political actions on the part of this Government and the conservation movement.

Confrontation brought on by precipitative actions by both parties has led - intentionally or unintentionally - to the situation where the role of the police has been placed under question. This can do nothing other than place the good name of the police and their standards at risk. As I said, the police were placed in that situation intentionally or unintentionally. If unintentionally, the Government stands condemned for its blustering confrontationist attitudes; but if intentionally, the ministers

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concerned should resign and indeed so should the Government itself, because the matter is so serious.

Political interference within any police force must be seen for what it is - a move along the political continuum towards totalitarianism. But, with the calibre of officers within the Police Department, I am confident that manipulation of their legitimate roles by political masters will be resisted at every level and I will play my part to see this never occurs.

Mr Polley - Hear, hear.

Mr LLEWELLYN - In case the conservation movement considers its action in this situation is without fault let it be under no illusions. It takes two parties to make an argument and - although the freedom to demonstrate and to protest is a fundamental building block in our democratic institution - by choosing beachheads of resistance in areas not even considered controversial, conservationists at Farmhouse Creek and at the Lemonthyme have drawn national attention to themselves and the issues but at the same time they have threatened a very tenuous fabric of our community - that of law and order. I believe they should be very cautious of their actions because of this and take stock of what they are doing. It may well be that for some, demonstrations are becoming an end in themselves instead of a means to an end.

In this age of technological development it is extremely hard for any department or private organisation to keep abreast of the latest in state-of-the-art computer technology, radio communications and the many other technological advancements. I will be looking anxiously at appropriations made to the police force for the acquisition of modern, up-to-date equipment to assist all police officers throughout the State in their task of maintaining law and order. Police officers should have available to them all the modern tools of trade necessary to carry out their jobs. Central to this is a constantly upgraded communication network and a statewide computer-based information capability. Adequate State funding is the important area we need to watch in regard to this matter.

Road safety presents a continual problem in our modern, fast-moving and sadly intoxicated society. It is extremely costly to society - from its human casualties to the cost to the community for hospitalisation, compensation and the like. A greater emphasis needs to be placed on the human factor in this area. When governments run short of funds, it is very easy to look around and slash \$500 000 here and \$500 000 there and I guess an area such as road safety is an easy target because, by and large, its budget relies on money for publicity and communication; it is non-controversial expenditure and not readily apparent if not provided. I will be watching this area of government funding.

The Department of Sea Fisheries is now linked intrinsically with the Police Department by virtue of law enforcement at sea and in recent times we have seen a spate of problems, particularly in regard to rock lobster poaching. I urge the Government to look seriously at pressing the Commonwealth to establish some form of satellite surveillance of our coastline. This may well involve international arrangements and prove very expensive but I believe it is worthy of investigation when we consider the potential of our fishing industry and, indeed, the potential for

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others to come in and exploit it - not to mention the prime aspects of national defence, illicit drug running and so on.

Tasmania's fishing industry is increasingly coming under pressure with the improvement of fishing technologies and equipment. Our industry and fishermen are dependent upon a range of fishing endeavours and the Government needs to be very aware of this when involved in negotiations regarding our resource. At the same time, opportunities need to be given to fishermen to develop new expertise and procedures to enable them to compete in the new and developing areas involving the non-traditional fish species.

I also come to this place with no preconceived ideas although, to be frank, I suppose I have been more than a casual listener to Federal parliamentary wrangles over the past ten years. I would like to think that this House sees itself as aloof from the high flyers who operate in Canberra. I am sure I am correct in that assumption, because on the other side of the House I see some excellent examples of members who no doubt have considered this fact and agree with me. However I do have ideals of how politicians should carry out their responsibilities, whether in the Parliament itself or in the electorate. I have already spoken about some of these at the beginning of my speech and I will be trying to show by example - not by words - what I mean.

Most members would realise that I hold a strong religious commitment and share places of some responsibility within the Anglican fellowship. When necessary I will express without fear or favour that conviction within this House.

If politicians are to regain respect within the community they must lift their game. The Opposition has begun this session of Parliament with that thought in mind. We have made our intentions clear and in the weeks ahead we will show our determination, not only to this Parliament but to the Tasmanian public at large.

Opposition members - Hear, hear.