



## Neville Laurence Oliver

House of Assembly

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Electorate: Franklin

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**Mr OLIVER ( Franklin - Inaugural )** - Mr Deputy Speaker, when I stood for Parliament nearly four years ago I expected that my entry to Parliament would not take so long. I reflect upon the fact and apologise to the Parliament that it has taken me three-and-a-half years to get here but the wait has been worthwhile. In fact, the election feels to me like something that happened last century. I want to particularly thank Leigh Martin, who ran my election campaign in 1998, and his small band of supporters and my family for the help they gave me in that failed campaign. I can only say how delighted I am though at this late stage - in this term in the Parliament - to join the Bacon Labor Government which has done such a significantly good job for this State in this last almost four years.

I want to talk briefly about my background. Probably most people would see me as a former cricket commentator but in fact I have been politically alert all my life. I grew up in a very much working-class family in the suburb of Invermay where my father was not only a textile worker but a very proud member of the trade union movement. In such a family I think it is inevitable that the passion of my father rubbed off on me - as indeed I am sure that it has on a lot of members of this House. I grew up in a country without problems. There was no inflation, there was no unemployment and people perambulated around selecting the jobs they wanted, rather than the job that was available to them. There were rarely changes of government. In fact, in my growing up years at school there was never a change of Federal government and I look back at those years as the lost years for Australia. Instead of sitting on their hands, it is a great pity that the Menzies Government did not do more - in the visionary sense – to push Australia forward.

I also reflect on post-war migration when my father and a lot of his friends, I would have to say, were not entirely enamoured with the idea of the huge amount of post-war migration that we had. If he were still alive I am sure that he would reflect on the mistakes of those thoughts. And I just reflect on what an enormous difference that post-war migration has made to this great country in which we live. And I consider that I live in the best part of that country. I am a very fortunate person to have travelled extensively in my job at the ABC and have been to something like 50 countries over a very long period of time. I always say, unashamedly, that the best part of any trip away was the trip across Bass Strait and home to Tasmania. I can reflect, having seen the problems of a lot of countries in the world, that a lot of Tasmanians do not realise how lucky we are. In fact, as a theorist many years ago, I thought that a government initiative could be to send 50 000 whingers out of the State every year so that they would come back better Tasmanians. I am sure, however, that with these last four years of Labor government a lot of that whingeing will have gone.

I look at Tasmania into the future, which I am sure that all of us do, and I see the baby boomers that have virtually dominated our need to do things in these last several years drifting out of the work force. I invite the members of this House to think what a problem that is going to give us in 10 or 15 years time when these huge numbers of jobs are going to come onstream purely by people retiring. It is interesting to note that in 1993 5.3 workers supported each non-working Australian and by the year 2030 that will have dropped to something like two and a half people. That is going to give us a problem, and I am sure that this Government, realising that, will have already put steps in train to do something about that. I surely look at this State as one of the world's great tourism destinations and see in the coming years that that will be something that this State will rely very heavily on. It is very pleasing for me, as somebody who has watched this Government from a distance and not been part of it, to see the two-ferry initiative coming onstream, and that is going to help concrete our place in this tourism industry.

Standing and watching the Government has been a very interesting thing for me to do. I looked at those years prior to getting majority government in this State, and all you could see around the State was doom and gloom. People never, ever really, I think, had confidence in tomorrow. Working in the State and walking around the State and meeting people of all different political persuasions, it is enormously interesting to me to see the growth of confidence in the people of Tasmania during this last four years. This Government has also put forward responsible budgeting. It is interesting that the Treasurer, Dr Crean, put forward the first surplus budget in this State for 100 years, and I particularly remember the caterwauling that came from those in the Opposition as to how that could not happen, would not happen. Well, the fact is it did and it has, and Dr Crean passed down another Budget last week with a surplus and, if you look at the forward estimates, the expectation is for more years of that particular thing. This was something that the Government did with a design to push Tasmania into the future, and they must be congratulated on that, and I say that as somebody who was looking from without rather than from being within.

There is no doubt that the population in this State, regardless of how you want to pull the figures apart and look at them, is on the rise. The people with the biggest smiles in this State are the real estate agents. There has been a boom in real estate here that would obviously point to the fact that there is a need for people who do not have housing to move into it. At the weekend I heard of a record sale of land on the east coast of \$250 000, and I thought, 'More good news'. I was very interested to hear in the same bulletin the Opposition thinking that somehow \$5 million put down to promote the two ferries that are about to come onstream was election pork-barrelling. It is a great pity that we cannot all of us think about the positives that drive this State so successfully.

I just want to particularly touch now on some of the key initiatives of the Bacon Government which have developed public confidence in this State, and I have mentioned the two ferries. I watched with great interest the debate that went on, and the people who made the mistakes about what we should have,

rather than the Government doing a lot of clear thinking and putting the best two available vessels onto the line. And what an amazing difference that is going to make over these coming years to the Tasmanian people: the natural gas pipeline and associated industry spin-offs, a \$1.25 billion energy development plan and the Woolnorth Wind Farm development included in that; in the part of the State in which I live the Tahune AirWalk, which a lot of people had some doubts about, but again vision moves towards the fruition of that wonderful thing. If you went to Geeveston some years ago all you would have seen was despair. All you see now is the old shopfronts opening up again. We have the removal of the Hydro levy and the immense benefits of not selling the Hydro, and I can remember in the last election campaign when we were fighting and putting in front of the populace of this State the need to keep the Hydro, and just how important these years later that has been.

I reflect upon something the Government has done in its term of office, and that is the dropping of payroll tax. You can pull figures and look at them however you want, but a well-known businessman from down the Huon said to me that the business confidence that he is enjoying in his now thriving business was caused in no small sense by the dropping of payroll tax and the confidence the Government had brought to the community in the way of development. He is a man whom I will not name in this place - I think that would be improper - who stood for the opposition side of politics at one stage in his life, and has said to me very clearly that with the confidence that he has in the Bacon Government there is no way that his vote will move from where it already is.

Unemployment - and again you can play with these figures however you want. The fact of the matter is that in 1998 it was 10.5 per cent, and as I stand here today it is 8.6 per cent. I am sure that nobody in this place, regardless of their political persuasion, would be entirely happy with that. At least, though, there has been an achievement in the drop of nearly two per cent in that figure, and with the plans in place and the major infrastructure developments that are going on, why would you not believe that things will get better? We have a demonstrated ability to do something; on the Opposition's side of the House they have a demonstrated ability to talk, but I did not hear much in what the Leader of the Opposition said a little bit earlier on to lead me to believe that 8.6 per cent would drop all that much.

I look at some of the other spin-offs that the Government have been responsible for, and I particularly think in the sporting area of the York Park redevelopment, and the fact that we were becoming a backwater in Australian sport. Now I see regular AFL games here, and I see a game in the rugby world cup in 2003. The Government helped to facilitate the Bellerive redevelopment in Hobart, so it has all been good - good, great news, and I am proud at last to join a government that is doing that.

I understand the need for the Opposition to oppose, but the never-ending carping that comes from the other side of the House reminds me of the English cricket team of 1993 when in that English cricket team there were five former captains under an acting captain, and the rest of the players in the side

were trying to work out how they could backstab so successfully as to get the job themselves. What they were really trying to do was head down the track to having 11 captains and they never quite got there, and it is a bit the same over there. Michael, you look so sad, but I am sure that one day the opportunity might fall your way.

I just briefly want to touch upon some of the good news in this Budget for my constituency of Franklin: a sum of \$1.2 million in a \$1.5 million Huon Valley community and health centre; \$500 000 for the Rokeby Police Academy; at last the upgrading of the Glen Huon Road which surely, whichever way you look at it, is one of the great disgraces of this State, and Mr Lennon will announce, amongst the roads that are to be fixed, significant upgrading of the Glen Huon Road.

I pay great tribute to the Treasurer for this excellent Budget. David Crean, I think, is arguably the best treasurer that this State has ever had. His understanding and hard work has pointed this State towards significant economic growth and prosperity. Jim Bacon's majority Labor Government, in historical terms, came at the right time in Tasmania's history because if there ever was a time when the State needed strong and visionary leadership, it came after the minority Liberal Government years. This State has had many distinguished Labor governments, Ogilvie, Cosgrove and Reece, to name just a few, and now I am delighted to join, albeit in the dying minutes of the final year of the Bacon Government whose distinguished first term has revitalised this State. Its second term is something indeed to look forward to. I commend the Budget to the House.

**Members** - Hear, hear.