



David Mayburn Fry

House of Assembly

Date: 12 April 2000

Electorate: Bass

ECONOMIC GROWTH, NORTHERN TASMANIA - POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE

Mr FRY (Bass - Motion - Inaugural) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That this House -

- (1) notes the great potential for future economic growth in northern Tasmania and the need for strong State government support to achieve the region's full potential;
- (2) also notes the need for the State Government to increase support for families and to provide better opportunities for young people to encourage them to remain in Tasmania, including increased educational and employment opportunities.

Mr Speaker, it is with a great deal of gratitude to the people of Bass that I take this opportunity to address this House for the first time. If I may briefly digress from the substance of the motion before the House, I would like to begin by thanking the many people who have assisted and supported me over a very long period of time in my endeavours to enter the Tasmanian Parliament.

I would like to place on record my gratitude to my long-suffering family, especially my wife Kathy, who has stood beside me over many years of campaigning and involvement in many community groups and committees. The parents of both Kathy and me, three of whom have since passed on, have been people of faith who instilled in us a sense of responsibility and a desire to serve the community. I am proud to acknowledge the part that by father, Bruce Fry, played in my life's journey thus far. He stood in many elections for the Liberal Party in New South Wales, both State and Federal, and whilst not successful in being elected taught me perseverance and the value of pursuing those things which are of enduring worth.

I would also like to thank the members of the Liberal Party, particularly the members for the Bass electorate, for their solid and continuing support. I thank my current parliamentary colleagues for their past and ongoing support. I would especially like to mention the assistance that I received from past members of this House, including Neil Robson, John Beswick, Dr Frank Madill and the late Max Bushby. Frank Madill was one who came alongside, particularly in my early campaigning days, with a bit of advice here or some encouragement there. On behalf of the people of Bass and indeed the people of Tasmania I would like to pay tribute today to the valuable contribution Dr Madill has made in this State.

Opposition members - Hear, hear.

Mr FRY - He was a loyal, honest and very hard-working member of this Parliament. His constant cheerful demeanour brought a sense of wellbeing and a positive outlook to everyone he came in contact with; he will surely be missed. One of the few regrets that I have is that I did not have the opportunity to serve alongside Frank in this Parliament and I wish Frank and Linda, as I am sure we all do, a long and happy retirement.

I would like at this point to express my support for Sue Napier as Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party. I believe that she has led the party with distinction in the relatively short time that she has held the position. I thank her for the confidence that she has shown in me through entrusting me with the various portfolios for which I have been given responsibility. I commit myself to fulfilling those responsibilities and all the other duties undertaken by a member of parliament.

Mr Speaker, I am committed to the task of helping to make Tasmania and Bass in particular a better place to live for all. I see my role firstly as one in which I am a servant of the people in this place. We must all seek to govern with justice and equity having regard in particular to the weak and powerless in our society. I draw to the attention of members the words of the address given by Monsignor Philip Green at the church service for the opening of Parliament when he said in part, and I quote:

'... this morning we come here to this cathedral, the Church of St David, to ask the blessing of God upon those who have been given the responsibility of participating in the making of decisions that hopefully will be for the strengthening and wellbeing of the people of Tasmania. I believe that our prayer this morning and the ceremonial this afternoon, though now limited, are both important. They are there to remind us forcibly - and especially the parliamentarians - of the significance of the tasks that will be enacted within our Parliament.

Parliamentarians, in your debate and legislative action you will touch the lives of people. Inevitably you will affect, for good or ill, the health and strength of the community. By your example you will undermine its spirit or fan its hope. There is not one of us here this morning who is not conscious of the complexities of the issues that lie before you and the problems that a modern democratic system throws up.

We are conscious, too, that many of the pillars of our society are being attacked. The vision of man and his destiny, that has been the foundation of Western civilisation as we have known it, is seen by many as passé ... But the secular view of man will inevitably lead to his loss of dignity and freedom - in the name of freedom he will become subject increasingly to manipulation and his dignity reduced to that by the computer print-out. But the Christian vision of man is one that proclaims his fundamental dignity - that is, that he is made in the image and likeness of God. Certainly he is susceptible to evil.

That is why society of which he is a part must, where possible, support him. In other words, the fundamental dignity of the human person and its maintenance should be the basic thrust of our democratic parliamentary enterprise. As one commentator wrote, Man's capacity for evil makes democracy necessary, man's capacity for good makes democracy possible.'

As a Christian, my view of the world and my role in it are guided by my beliefs. I believe in the sanctity of human life, that all people are unique and special because they are made in the image of God. Human life should never be judged on the criteria of usefulness or productiveness, nor should anyone be disadvantaged due to gender, ethnicity, age or physical or mental handicap. Biblical principles of truth, honesty, integrity and justice are all foundational to the manner in which I intend to carry out my responsibilities as a member of this Parliament.

Mr Speaker, the electorate of Bass contains many of the economic powerhouses of this State. Launceston has long been regarded as the State's commercial and industrial heart and must be given encouragement and assistance to continue to play this role into the future. A number of important factors need to be addressed in order to ensure that our businesses and industries continue to prosper and employ increasing numbers of Tasmanians.

I am sure that we would all agree that the provision of opportunities for education and employment for our young people in particular is vital for the future of Tasmania. We are all, no doubt, concerned at the decline in our population as many look to the mainland and overseas. We must do everything possible to provide the infrastructure and economic climate to foster the retention of our people.

Mr Speaker, our forest industries continue to play an important role in the region and every effort must be made to ensure the continuing growth in the sustainable harvesting of timber and particularly a sensible development of plantation forestry. The Scottsdale area is pivotal to this industry and contains a number of processing mills employing many Tasmanians. The dairy industry in this area is also important and needs particular attention to ensure that every dairy farmer is carefully considered in a time of uncertainty for them with the deregulation issue yet to be finalised.

Tourism is also a vital expanding industry which needs the support and encouragement of government at all levels. I believe that there is yet much more to be achieved for Tasmania in tourism and we need to ensure that everything possible is done to encourage further entrepreneurial endeavour. Tourism has the potential to play an even greater role in the George Town community. I believe that the continuation of the *Devil Cat* service into George Town must be vigorously pursued and every possible assistance given to ensure that the service is improved. Steps need to be taken to secure the long-term future of the cat, whether it is a shorter route, a larger vessel, subsidised fares or other measures to improve reliability and passenger comfort. The certainty and expansion of this service should be a priority in order to better secure the economic future of the Tamar Valley.

Large-scale industrial companies, such as Comalco, Temco and ACL have long played an important role in the economic development of the north of the State and I

believe that this will continue to be the case. The Basslink proposal and the development of the gas pipeline must now be wholeheartedly pursued. One would also hope that the various magnesite mining and processing proposals can be revived as soon as possible in order to further growth and employment in this State.

Mr Speaker, the expansion and wellbeing of small business is also a vital cog in the future economy of Tasmania. Large numbers of Tasmanians own and manage small businesses which I believe hold an important key to the future economic and employment prospects for us all. The nature of small business often means the proprietors must take significant risks in an uncertain market and in a hugely diverse range of industries, from retail to manufacturing, service to sunrise industries, using the emerging benefits of IT and e-commerce. Many live on the equivalent of unemployment benefits for long periods of time in order to see their businesses and employment prospects for other Tasmanians grow in quantity and diversity. Having recently come from their ranks, I know some of the issues with which they struggle and I hope that during my time in this place I can assist these unsung heroes in their pursuit of excellence and a better future for themselves, their families and their employees.

The complex issues of health and law and order are constantly being raised with me by the people of Bass as, no doubt, they are being discussed throughout Tasmania. We must find an answer to the burgeoning hospital queues and the spiralling costs of health care. The personal security of all Tasmanians and their properties is also of significant concern with property crime appearing to be constantly increasing. We must begin to explore ways of treating the causes of the problem rather than constantly having to repair the damage, both physical and societal.

Education plays an important role in the northern half of our State. The benefits to the whole community of the northern campus of the University of Tasmania, the TAFE colleges, the Maritime College and other educational institutions are diverse and immeasurable.

I congratulate the member for Braddon, Mr Green, on his appointment to the Council of the University of Tasmania and I will do all I can to assist and support him in his role, particularly as it relates to the retention and development of programs, faculties and facilities at the Launceston campus.

Mr Speaker, we must always keep in mind that our purpose is to serve and to seek the welfare of the people of Tasmania. We need to clearly demonstrate to them how our deliberations will benefit them, both economically and socially. It is a peculiarity of the modern era that national debate has been framed almost exclusively in economic terms ignoring the social, cultural and indeed the spiritual dimensions of national life.

I would suggest that there are three bases to a just and healthy society: a vital market, an efficient and caring State and a vibrant community. The last includes strong and healthy family structures. How then should we treat families? There appears to have been three prevailing responses to the trend of family fragmentation: deny the problem, treat the symptoms or change the economy. None of these contains the realistic possibility of halting or reversing the personal and societal problems that stem from family fragmentation. Public policy should protect and foster family.

The word 'economy' comes from the Greek word used for household management. At least in its origins the concept of economy and economics recognises the importance of the family - the fundamental group unit of society on which it was based and from which it drew its strength. The economy should be structured to serve the needs of family rather than the families having to restructure themselves to serve the changing needs of the economy.

Mr Groom - Hear, hear.

Mr FRY - We are all now no doubt familiar with the development of the environmental impact statement through which much legislation and development is measured and assessed. The value of this process has been shown over quite some time now.

One of the issues which I hope to pursue in consultation with my colleagues is the development of family impact statements which could be utilised in a similar fashion to measure the impact on families of the legislation which passes through this Parliament. Surely our families are at least as important as the natural environment.

Mr Speaker, I pledge myself today to the service of the people of Tasmania and to be part of a democratic parliament which will seek to build a Tasmanian community that can look to the future with hope and confidence and I commend the motion to the House.

Opposition members - Hear, hear.