



## Robert Regionald Cheek

House of Assembly

Date: 23 April 1996

Electorate: Denison

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### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

**Mr CHEEK** (Denison) - Mr Speaker, I have the honour to move -

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

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

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend to His Excellency my congratulations on his appointment as Governor of Tasmania in October last year, after a very distinguished judicial career including his appointment as Chief Justice of Tasmania, one of the youngest people in Australia to be appointed to this office.

It is also very pleasing to note the enthusiasm and active support that he is giving to the economic development of Tasmania in a lot of varied roles but especially in his role in Antarctic development.

I also say that I had the pleasure of attending school in Launceston with His Excellency the Governor but I must say that he took far more of his opportunities than I did.

I am very honoured to have been elected to the House of Assembly and especially honoured to be able to give this Address-in-Reply. I would also like to take this opportunity, Mr Speaker, to congratulate you on your appointment to the Chair. I think you had a very long suspenseful wait to finally achieve this ambition and certainly it was rather a long wait this morning. But having been elected four times to the House of Assembly and having topped the poll on three of those occasions you certainly eminently qualify to take this position. I can see that it is going to need a very firm hand, a cool head and a lot of control but I am sure that you have the abilities and the desire to do this in the best interests of Tasmania and the State, so congratulations.

I wish to also congratulate all newly elected members of the House and also all those returned. I would like to congratulate my ministerial colleagues on their election to their portfolios and I would also like to congratulate the new Premier who is gaining a lot of respect in the community through his efforts to try to make this Parliament work, also in the best interests of all Tasmanians.

I would like to thank the constituents of Denison for electing me to Parliament at my first attempt. I was not elected because I put in a fantastic election campaign. I believe I was elected because the people of Denison and I think the State want a change. They wanted a new direction. They wanted new ideas for Parliament and they wanted a new way for Parliament to go. They wanted a vision for the State's problems and I believe they also did not want the point scoring, the time wasting and the self-aggrandisement that they have been used to in Parliament at some stages in the past.

I enter Parliament with a lot of ideals to try to make Tasmania a better place. I am going to work very, very hard to do that. I believe we can achieve those aims and I must say I hope that the Opposition takes heed of the people's desire to achieve this result and do not try to succeed in their stated aim of forcing another election.

The people do not want another election. They just want to get on with the job of making the State a better place to live and I am frightened, I am a little bit concerned, I must say, about this morning as a new member coming into the House, that we took so long to get anywhere to go. People have told me, they told me at the break, well this is the way it is, you had better get used to it. I do not accept that. I do not believe we need to go that way. I believe we have got to put Tasmania ahead of everything else and that is why I intend to work very hard to achieve while I am here.

It is interesting to note that the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in their business confidence survey which was taken in the last two weeks of March have found that business confidence has actually increased since the election and businesses - and there were 320 of these businesses employing 29 000 people - were saying that they want the Parliament to work, they want us to work hard at making it work. And that is what I intend to do. They do not want to go back to the polls.

I enter Parliament without any pretensions. I enter Parliament as a businessman who has been through the school of hard knocks. When I was 23 and my wife was 21 we brought a newsagency at Penguin. I borrowed to the hilt. I mortgaged everything that I had. I have been through the stages where you cannot sleep at night because if things do not succeed, with the risks you have taken you lose your house and I do not believe you really know business until you have gone through these things. I really believe that parliaments do not understand business and one of the reasons I entered was because of this situation. I believe that unless you have been through the school of knocks it is very difficult to understand the needs of the business community and many lose sight of what decent, ordinary Tasmanians out there in the community want.

Actually none of us like to struggle and hurt. I sold ferrets at one stage for a living and I tell you what, it is pretty hard on the north-west coast in the middle of winter with rabbit traps being discounted to sell ferrets so I consider that having been through that it is a great leveller for everybody concerned. I must say that with some of the behaviour this morning from what I saw on the other side of the House, perhaps some

of the ferrets were rather cuddly fellows compared to some of the antics over there, but the ferrets - and I am quite proud to call myself a former ferret salesman because what it means it epitomises that whatever you do in this world if you work hard and you have a go you can achieve things, and that is the sort of environment that I want to create in Tasmania.

Businesses do not want government handouts all the time, they just want a climate created where they can get on with the job and employ people and create jobs for the betterment of the State. They do not want artificial job schemes which the Labor parties, both Federally and State, love; the subsidised schemes where the workers will go and work for a few months and then it is back to the dole and back to a state of depression. We want real jobs in this State.

There is a lot of talk about the environment in Tasmania, the natural environment, and I love the State and I love its beauty. Tourism is vitally important for Tasmania, but what I want to talk about here is the business environment: creating jobs, long-term jobs, lasting jobs; that is the challenge that lies ahead in this House as I see it. We want incentives: lower taxes, lower business charges, rewards for individual effort - real jobs.

Tasmanians are tired of our island being referred to as a backwater; they are tired of the two-headed jokes; they are tired of all the bad weather jokes; they want to take some pride in their State and what they are doing and that is what I am here with the Government to try and achieve. People leave the State in search of jobs. I want to make sure we keep them here, and I give a commitment now that I am going to try to do something about it.

I think at this stage it is important to highlight the fundamental difference between the Government and the Opposition. Before entering parliament I was in the health and fitness industry and we operated under a wonderful award called the Hairdressers Award. Thirty years ago at the back of hairdressing salons apparently they had a suntanning lamp and a bit of liniment so the unions in their great wisdom decided a gym should go in there too. This was no place for a high-tech fitness centre of the 90s that opened from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Our span of hours was 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. If you started work at a quarter to eight you still had to pay penalty rates for the full eight hours, or seven and a half hours that they worked. That was the sort of thing we had to put up with. An aerobics instructor who was paid about \$18 an hour on a Sunday, we had to pay \$135 because we had to pay double time and a half with a minimum span of three hours and of course the class lasted for one hour.

We went to the unions and tried to rectify it but they did not want to know about it. We just wanted to try and improve this sort of situation. So then the Government introduced enterprise agreements, thankfully, because the business was on its knees, and now our work force has improved from 33 to 55; we have nearly doubled it since that was introduced and the thing is the staff thought the whole award was ludicrous. They voted almost unanimously in favour of change and now they are making more money than ever before, instead of standing on a shift waiting for penalty rates they are now part of the business. They get productivity bonuses; they get commissions; they get part of the profits. If the business makes a profit they make a profit and that is what I want to see in Tasmania, that sort of attitude and that is what I am here to commit to

and the enterprise agreements - I just hope that the member for Franklin, Mr Lennon and the member for Denison, Mr Bacon, do not try and take us back into the dark ages with enterprise agreements as they have said and the party has said that they are going to do.

The Premier has appointed me parliamentary secretary for small business, which I think is a great honour because it is what I want to try to do to bridge any gaps with the business community and to go out there and try and sell my ideals. The Government within the last Parliament went a long way to undoing the damage caused by the Labor-Green accord, but there is a lot more that needs to be done. I have been talking to a lot of the business community over the last few weeks and they do not want handouts, they just want the climate created where they can do business. So I would like to take this opportunity to lay out my vision for Tasmania in the year 2020 and how we can achieve our goals of a prosperous and caring society.

In 2020 I see our population having increased by at least 200 000 to nearly 700 000 people. It has not changed the natural environment in our lifestyle. Unemployment will be a lot below the national average and tourism related businesses will be thriving. We are the No. 3 tourism destination in Australia, after Sydney and Cairns, but the main thing is we are known as the small business capital of the world because we are known as an environment where we have the lowest business costs in Australia, the best lifestyle and a skilled stable work force.

That fibre-optic cabling under Bass Strait was the start of our prosperity. It was actually the start of when companies wanted to relocate in Tasmania and be able to do business anywhere in the world. Do you think that is impossible? Let me show you now how it can happen.

Taxation. I think Tasmania must be the lowest taxation State in Australia right across the board: payroll tax; land tax; and other financial duties. That is not just targeting a few major companies with character that want to come and invest in the State, that is creating a climate that is there for everybody. Business environment coupled with our natural environment and quality of life will attract the high technology from the other companies not totally dependent on freight.

As His Excellency the Governor referred to in his speech a fine example of this is the Ansett National Reservations Centre in Launceston which will probably employ about 300 people. This could be located on Mars, in the middle of Africa, on a Pacific island because with the information technology communications the way they are and the way they are improving you can live in Tasmania and do business with the rest of the world; you could set up headquarters here, and if we have got that climate right that is what the people are going to do. That is what is going to make Tasmania so attractive. The world is Tasmania's oyster.

I was talking to the State manager of Ansett at lunch yesterday and he said that the staff in Tasmania are the most stable and the turnover is less. He said, 'Why would you want to live in Sydney or Melbourne when you can live in Launceston or Hobart or down the north-west coast and get to work in five minutes when it takes an hour there?' Why would people not relocate here when with the technology that we have now that can make companies come here?

The previous Government greatly improved payroll tax with the removal of a lot of the inequities but we have got a little bit further to go. It is a disincentive for employment once the ceiling hits \$565 000 and you know you have got to pay another 7 per cent on the next person you employ. I believe we should abolish payroll tax for one full year so that companies can employ people and once they get them on there and trained they will keep them. In most cases this will happen but they do not want to take the risk. Payroll tax has been improved greatly but we have got a little further to go.

We need a new small business department catering specifically for small business and the Government will shortly launch the Small Business Tasmania, headquartered in Launceston with offices on the north-west coast and in Hobart to fill this need. They will train and educate and assist, they will identify opportunities. We also need a small business council as an umbrella organisation for the myriad of smaller business organisations so they can all speak with one voice and make their needs and desires and everything else known.

Regulations. It has to become easier to do business in Tasmania. We have to cut out the red tape so that people from interstate can come here and when they come here they know they can come to one place. They can fill in all the forms they need, they can pay for it on the spot and then they are transferred to different government departments from there. This is the duplication between the three tiers of government which must be abolished completely and also the business red tape will be a thing of the past. I must say that Tasmania Development and Resources - TDR - has taken a significant step in this direction with its excellent business licence information centre software program which is very helpful but we have still got a way to go and that is what we are going to try to do.

A development fund - we need to launch a capital investment fund in this State so that Tasmanian developments can be managed independent of government and so that applications can be put forward and they can be assessed on a commercial basis.

Superannuation funds. Private investors will invest in this and it will tap into this huge market and therefore we can have those funds for investments in Tasmania. It does not necessarily mean that government has got to put up everything for everything that comes along. If we can put this independent of government commercial decisions can be made.

We have to establish trade offices in other nations' cities right around the world, a network of them, and they have to pay their way because if they are not getting enough businesses in they do not stay there but we have got to have them and we have got to take Tasmania to the world and they have got to get the required business that we need.

Bass Strait transport in and out of the State has to be streamlined. I know of several people - as a lot of you would do - who live in Tasmania and travel interstate to work. With transport improving that can become easier and easier and the Federal National Sea Highway Project where Bass Strait is treated the same as the National Highway for funding will have tremendous benefits in this area.

Law and order. It is staggering the people in our CBD that are so worried by crime that it is affecting their businesses. As Tasmanians we must feel ashamed when we

hear that retailers in our city centres have to put up the shutters on their shops and think about bringing in their own armed guards. Can you believe we live in Tasmania?

My phone rings hot from concerned business people and this creates a terrible image for our State. It rates as one of the number one concerns for city retailers at the present time and we must increase police patrols, which I know the Government is doing at this moment and the Police department is going to do. We are going to have a police post manned for 24 hours every day in the heart of the cities and we were going to have surveillance cameras, but that has to be wiped out.

Power costs for small business must be reduced. There is too much disparity between bulk users paying 2 per cent and other businesses paying in double digits.

We need more competition from new entrants in the Tasmanian electricity industry to achieve this aim and I know with the Government's initiative that will certainly happen in the future.

There is room for more long lasting rationalisation in local government which will see reduced costs and more local government business shall be put out to private tender to reduce costs further.

Tasmania is the only State in Australia without a retail tenancy law and that is in the pipeline at the moment, I am very pleased to say. Some rentals in the State are as high as 20 per cent of turnover in shopping centres. In other words, they are being ripped off and the shops can be moved at the whim of shopping centre managers. That is not acceptable, in my opinion, so that act when it comes in will be of great benefit.

Getting back closer to the year 2000 and the Olympic Games and the great opportunities that also presents, it is very important for the State to have an executive director or somebody based in Sydney to be able to make the most of these opportunities; to be able to go to Atlanta and seek out opportunities for our future and for our business future there. I think when it cost us the huge sum of \$150 000 or something along those lines I am sure it is going to be very worthwhile. We are in the race and we have to break the tape first there.

Tasmania has to become a pacesetter for the rest of Australia. I will not accept anything other than working hard in this Parliament for it. I will be putting Tasmania above everything else in what I do in trying to achieve those aims.

We have to try new things. We have to dare to be different otherwise we are not going to get to where we want to go.

Let us throw the old two-head jokes and the backwater jokes and the weather jokes and the rest of the sick jokes around the country back at the mainland because we have got a pride in ourselves and they are envious of us because of what we have done here. Not because of our great life style but because we are also, as I said, the small business capital of Australia and they see our prosperity by the things we have done.

It is not going to be easy but with the best business climate, the lowest unemployment, the highest standard of living we will go a long way there. As I said, it

is not going to be easy but I hope in Parliament we will embark on this journey, this exciting journey to prosperity for all Tasmanians because we can achieve it.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this Address in Reply. I urge all members of the House to make this Parliament work and do their best for the State of Tasmania. I commend the motion to the House.

**Members** - Hear, hear.