

CORONERS AMENDMENT BILL 1982

CONVEYANCING AND LAW OF PROPERTY AMENDMENT BILL 1982

Bills presented by Mr Bingham and read the first time.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Resumed from 16 June 1982 (page 70)

Mr SALTER (Wilmot) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to congratulate you and the Speaker on your election and I swear my allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen.

I have been informed by quite a few members of this Parliament that this is the only time during my parliamentary career I will be able to say anything I like to the Opposition without any risk of interjection. I certainly will not be doing this because I think it would show a lack of courage and there is certainly nothing to be achieved from some of the rubbish I have heard thrown across the Floor in the few weeks I have been here. I will be brief, and hopefully to the point, during my term and I feel that even an occasion such as this should be no exception.

I am very proud to represent the Electorate of Wilmot in this House and particularly proud to represent my own area, the Fingal Valley and the east coast of Tasmania. To the best of my knowledge I am the first Liberal member ever to be elected from this area which is of great importance to Tasmania because of its agricultural, forestry, fishing and tourist industries and especially because of its massive coal reserves. It is one of the few places in Tasmania with energy for sale.

I suppose the issue which concerns me more than anything else - and I believe it would be of concern to everyone in this Chamber today - is unemployment. It is such a concern to me that I believe party feelings should be put aside. It is a concern to me to see young people with a capacity to contribute to Australia's prosperity being denied the right to work, through no fault of their own. I personally feel that the only long-term solution is a voluntary retirement scheme allowing those people who wish to retire from the work-force to do so. They may perhaps be not quite sufficiently ill to obtain a pension - there could be various reasons. Some people have saved up enough money and would retire at 61 or 62 but will not retire because they are not allowed the fringe benefits associated with the normal retirement age.

We have to pay those young people receiving unemployment cheques - the dole-bludgers as some would call them - all those fringe benefits. So why not transfer those benefits to the other end? At the moment right throughout Australia a small percentage of people in the middle are supplying all the benefits to the elderly and the unemployed. It would be better to have those young, productive people working to the best of their abilities. That would allow people who want to leave the work-force to do so, even if it is not for the reasons I have mentioned. Even if at 61 years of age they feel lazy and want to get out, we will have youngsters coming into the work-force with the right attitude. I think increased productivity is the answer to many of our problems. I also feel that Tasmania, with its high rate of unemployment and small population, has the ideal situation for an Australian experiment.

I know by looking through the Standing Orders that one can speak for 40 minutes. I certainly will not be putting members through a 40 minute speech today. At a later date I hope to be able to perform in a much better manner than I have today - I am very nervous, I think mainly because I have been expecting to deliver this speech for the last two or three weeks. I have written it three or four times; thrown it away; looked at it again - and, as members can hear, the result is not so very brilliant.

I would like to thank all members of this House for making me feel so welcome here.

There is one other thing I would like to say before I finish. I suppose the thing that has been said to me most often since I entered public life is that I, as an individual, cannot achieve anything. I disagree with this. I know that I can contribute, not necessarily in the short term as a debater in this House, but as a representative of the people - and that is what I was chosen to be. I thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr HOLTGATE (Bass - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - I recommit my allegiance to the Crown. I also congratulate the member on his maiden speech. I think that he certainly provided a lesson to some of us here about brevity being the soul of wit. I am pleased that he raised what we think is the great issue in Tasmania today, and will be for some time - unemployment. I am sure the member will make some valuable contributions. If he thinks he was alone in being nervous during his maiden speech, he should have seen many of us when we came into this House and the traumas we went through, not only during our maiden speeches but also in the first few months of parliamentary life. In the cut and thrust of debate here it is quite often very difficult to keep a continuity in a debate in Parliament - and so it should be.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - I shall endeavour to help.

Mr HOLTGATE - Sir, that is not to say that we do not observe the Chair. I think some of the things you have said today, Mr Deputy Speaker, have opened the way and we hope we will be able to continue within the Standing Orders of this House and still preserve the cut and thrust of the debate which has always been part and parcel of the way this Chamber works.

Having said that, I would like to turn to three themes I have in my speech on the Address-in-Reply. I think it is very important to elaborate on the 45 days of the operation of this Government. The first theme is the slow and untimely death of open government in Tasmania as we have seen it during the first 45 days of the Gray Liberal Government - and I will elaborate on that in a moment. The second theme is the Gray Liberal Government's attempts to destroy effective parliamentary democracy in this State - and I will elaborate on that in relation to the last 45 days. I would like also to get on to the budget and financial strategy of the Government and elaborate on the \$13.56 million worth of decisions which have been made in the last three weeks which affect this Budget. In many ways, so far as I can see, these decisions unnecessarily affect this Budget, if the Premier is to be believed that this Government can effectively manage the finances of this State.

Let me start on the theme of the death of open government in Tasmania. It has been quite obvious, from the way this Government has operated in this State and from the decisions that have been made up to now, that a series of events have occurred which will change the whole style of operation of government in this State as we have known it.

Let me start with the first one: the centralisation of authority in the Premier's Department - under the guise of cutting back people and practising economy but in fact to increase the numbers. When I was Premier, there were six people working for me. That number is to be doubled under this centralisation by a person who has quite obviously come from outside the Public Service. The Ministry operates as a puppet to the people running this particular department. It is rather interesting to watch in question time and to see the way ministers operate outside and how they communicate with the public and with the media - they are nothing but puppets to a central organisation which has usurped the powers of the Public Service. Ministers are frightened to make public utterances because they are being rigidly bound in the way they operate to this centralised control.

As the member for Macquarie, Mr Shaw, said in another place, it is a prime example of autocratic government in the making. Not only would we agree with those sentiments, we believe that this centralisation is inappropriate for a democratic style of government in this State. It is something new but interesting to see how the Government is operating. But not only that, it is the way that the Premier, in particular, and the Government is trying to cover up for its actions. Evidence of this is its open threat to