



Bryan Green MP

House of Assembly

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Electorate: Braddon

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Mr GREEN (Braddon - Inaugural) - I second the motion, Mr Speaker, and in doing so I want to take the opportunity to thank the people who assisted me in getting to this place. I first of all want to say that I am acutely aware that without the support of the Australian Labor Party I would not be a member of parliament. The fact is that none of us on this side would be and it is with a great sense of pride that I stand here and make this speech as a member of the ALP in a Labor majority government - the first one for eighteen years.

I want to mention and acknowledge in the most public way the tremendous support that I have had from my union, the AMWU. I have been a member of the union since 1974 and I am quite sure without the collective efforts of the organisation as a whole I would not be standing here today. I am proud to say, Mr Speaker, that to my knowledge I am the first member of the AMWU to be elected to the Tasmanian Parliament. It is my sincere hope that members and officials of the AMWU feel the same sense of achievement and pride that I do now because in every sense my involvement with the AMWU has carried me to this spot at this time and I want to say thank you to them.

Under the Hare-Clark system, Mr Speaker, as you are well aware, you have to campaign hard to convey your message and to make yourself known. The only way you can really do that effectively is to have a supportive group around you who are competent and committed and I have to say that I have been very lucky in that regard.

The majority of the House would be aware that I stood for Parliament on the last occasion in 1996 and was narrowly defeated. I count both my campaigns as one and I want to acknowledge the people who assisted me. First of all, Mr Speaker, I want to acknowledge the fact that my parents are here in the Gallery today. They have come down from New South Wales and I am extremely proud and pleased to have them here. I know that most people get a lucky break in life but I have had one big lucky break in the fact that my parents have been extremely supportive of me over my whole life. I have often thought to myself when I have taken decisions or stepped out and said something and I have thought, 'My God, that's going to get me into strife or make my life more difficult' that it has perhaps been the support that my parents have given me over that time that has allowed me to make decisions along the way that I know that they will be behind. It has given me great strength through my whole life really and no more evident than through these last two campaigns when they have come down and supported me wholeheartedly through that process. I want to say thank you to them publicly here today.

I also want to take the opportunity to tell the Parliament that my wife and children are also here in the Gallery today. Without their support - especially my wife, Mary. In 1992 during the APPM dispute, I found out what a rock she was in terms of supporting me in my working life and my ideals, together with my children who have found it a little tough - as I suppose most members' families do from time to time, especially with the way the campaign was handled on the last occasion. I want to thank you for your support as well - the support you have given me and the help you have given me through the campaign process. Thank you very much.

Mr Jim Bacon - Hear, hear.

Mr GREEN - To my campaign team, I had a fellow by the name of Wayne McCarthy help me in my first campaign. He was a great assistance to me. We doorknocked for about six months to get my profile up and he was out there every weekend prior to my doorknocking, handing out leaflets and getting the various streets that I was going to doorknock ready for me to embark upon my doorknocking. So I want to thank him very much. A fellow by the name of Ray Grundy is a great personality in the Burnie area, a great storyteller and always great for a joke. He helped me on my first campaign. He could not on this last occasion because he was travelling around Australia, but I want to acknowledge and thank him very much for the efforts he made. I also want to thank my campaign manager on this occasion, a bloke by the name of John Dowling, who is a wizard when it comes to fundraising and general assistance around the campaign. He has been of great assistance to me. He is not here today but I want to acknowledge the fact that he helped me a great deal. A lady by the name of Muriel Owens also helped me a great deal during the campaign and provided a sort of maternal arc over the whole campaign. She was extremely good and I want to thank her for her assistance and kind words from time to time. Together with Anne Urquhart who was on my campaign committee as well - thank you, Anne, for your doorknocking and your general assistance in my working career with the AMWU. Together with George Robinson who also assisted me; Rex Bramich; Peter

Robinson, Guy Nicholson and Norm Britton, as well as all those who assisted me doorknocking and had my posters in their yard and all the rest.

I also want to acknowledge publicly, Mr Speaker, the great assistance that Michael Field gave me in both campaigns. He assisted me in the first campaign and after I was narrowly beaten he rang - given that he had rung just after the election and said, 'You're in. You're in', and we faced the great disappointment of not being in at all. He pledged at that time that he would assist me in my next campaign and he honoured that pledge. He came to the north-west coast and doorknocked for me for a week solid, together with giving me ideas and assistance with the campaign generally. He was extremely good to me and I want to thank him very much for that.

Last but of course not least, David Price, who I have worked with for a number of years. He was the organiser responsible for the pulp and paper industry when I was a convener of the AMWU at Burnie. He came there, we got to know one another - I was a member of the party before I knew him but he was the person who expanded my horizons in terms of the party. He has been a great mentor for me and of great assistance to me over the last few years, and I want to acknowledge his help and assistance.

Of course I also want to acknowledge the people of Braddon who have given me their support. I said this at the declaration of the poll, but I can safely say, Mr Speaker, that on the day of the declaration when my name was read out I felt extremely humbled at the amount of support and the degree of support that I got from the people of Braddon. It hammered home to me the responsibility one has as an elected member, and I pledged to work as hard as I can to honour the trust and responsibility they have put in me.

Mr Speaker, I just want to give you a little bit of history about myself and my family. My father reminded me prior to writing this speech that in fact our origins begin here in Tasmania with a fellow by the name of Mr Thomas Green. Thomas came to Tasmania as a free man in 1823. He was a whaler, which is not a tradition I plan on upholding.

Members laughing.

Mr Patmore - Perhaps after Parliament.

Mr GREEN - The records show that he married Sarah Anne Gunn in St David's Church on 10 October 1827, he raised a family here and he had a property in Campbell Street here in Hobart. The records also show that unfortunately he died in 1881 at that residence. And, Mr Speaker, I hope that tempers the fact when I tell you that I was not actually born here in Tasmania. In fact, Mr Speaker, I was born in Wollongong, New South Wales, in 1957. I am the oldest of three children. I have a brother David and a sister Angela; Angela Parker is her married name.

My father started his working life as a fitter and machinist, or fitter and turner, at the Port Kembla steelworks. He eventually went to work for British Petroleum, which meant that we were transferred as a result of that work transfer to Tasmania in 1967. My father travelled down earlier but my mother and my brother and sister and our faithful hound at the time travelled down on the *Empress of Australia* to Bell Bay and George Town, which was our new home.

I will never forget, Mr Speaker, till my dying breath the day that we arrived in George Town. It was one of those very memorable occasions for me. I was just on ten at the time, and I woke after being at sea I think for two and a half or three days as it was with the *Empress of Australia* in those days, coming down from Sydney. I noticed that the ship was still so I rushed out up through the various corridors and stairwells, up to the deck of the *Empress of Australia*, and was met with just a full shroud of the surrounding districts. You could not see your hand in front of you; it was one of those pea-soup fogs that you often get in the Tamar Valley there. It was quiet and eerie and you could just make out some of the structures on the wharf. It was quite a strange feeling. And as I stood there dumbfounded at it all I could hear in the distance this bellow of what I later found out was the foghorn out there at Low Head. So I could remember thinking to myself, 'Well, I'd love to issue instructions to the captain of the *Empress* to turn it around and head straight back to Sydney' because I was a little mystified at what I had been presented with as we arrived here in George Town.

Members laughing.

Mr GREEN - And I can remember the look on my mum's face as well. She was a little worried about it, to say the least. But we came to love George Town. It was a great place to explore and live one's early life. It was a town that had - and still does - a lot of history associated with it in terms of the pilot station, the lighthouse and other old homes in the area. It had that great mining town feel to it at the time, given that there was a lot of construction going on with I think the thermal power station; the Batman Bridge at that stage was being constructed, so there was a lot of work going on. So it had a big mining town feel to it where people basically worked hard but they also partied hard. I can remember sitting down on the wharf there cod fishing with a few of the boys and people

spilling out onto the street from the Pier Hotel. It certainly had a wild west feel to it, but it was a great place to live and explore. And of course we had our sporting heroes in those days - Danny Clark and others.

From there we were transferred to Burnie. It was hand in glove for me in Burnie. I loved the place; I fitted in straightaway. I finished my last year of high school there and was fortunate enough to get an apprenticeship as a fitter and machinist at APPM, or 'The Pulp' as it is affectionately known, at Burnie. I worked there for nineteen years and my life through that time was consumed with my family, my passion for the outdoors, my circle of friends, and my involvement with the union, which brings me to why I stood for Parliament.

Of course like most young people I thought upon starting work that my wages were handed to me on a platter - but I was soon to work out, Mr Speaker, that they were not. I can vividly remember in those days people retiring from The Pulp who had been there for 20 and 30 years with \$2 500 or \$1 800 in their back pocket to build their retirement on. And I can remember at that same time the bosses, as they were so called - the people who were up the tree - leaving with \$45 000 and that sort of thing. I can remember thinking of the inequity associated with that and just how that was not fair. I can also remember how difficult it was in those days to get safety gear and equipment like that; I thought that we needed to have decent and safe working conditions and I found it fairly difficult to get those. I can remember personally being labelled as a troublemaker for refusing to machine asbestos when it started to emerge just how dangerous asbestos was and is and we found it in the union journals. There was no safety information from the company at that stage telling us how dangerous asbestos was, and if it had not been for the union journal we would never have known. And I can also remember looking upon the convenors of the union at that time as having tremendous fighting qualities when they stood before us and said that we had rights.

Mr Speaker, I do not want to bore the House with the detail of how we achieved superannuation or reasonable working hours or how we kept pace with the reduction in tariffs by negotiating efficiencies, suffice to say that it was done. However I do want to say, Mr Speaker, that there was one main event that changed my life and that was the APPM dispute. It put the fire in my belly, it made me see that there were forces mustered against us and those forces wanted to take away our rights and we literally had to fight to retain them. We wanted to be represented by our union collectively and we saw it as a principle stand. Mr Speaker, at the risk of sounding a little melodramatic I do not think anything comes close to the reliance that you have on your friends and workmates at a time like that.

I watched our returned servicemen and women and listened to their stories of their camaraderie. I do not ever want to fight a war nor do I want my children or their children to ever experience war, I am a peaceful person. I know that the experience of war compared to the APPM dispute is not a comparison at all, but it taught me the feeling of total reliance on some occasions of total strangers based on a common cause. We were in it together, there were hundreds of us but we were tight knit. The odds at times seemed overwhelming but we knew we were right to fight it out based on principle and we won it together. We walked back through those gates with our heads held up high and I felt the camaraderie. When people say to me 'You campaign hard, Bryan' I say, 'Because I enjoy it'. But, Mr Speaker, it was the 1992 experience which is the reason. I do enjoy campaigning but not letting workers' fundamental rights slip is what drives me.

Mr Speaker, work as an organiser or being a union leader comes with a stigma often quite wrongly promoted by the other side. That is an issue I will take up at some stage in the future but not today. I know my work in the union movement has allowed me to meet and work with some very competent and committed people. They are quite low paid based on the hours they work but they have a common thread to assist to ensure equity together with assuring the State moves ahead. It is an egalitarian profession and you need to have a social conscience.

Industrial relations in Tasmania is played out on an uneven field in my view. I know from experience that the labour market is overflowing with 11.5 per cent unemployment and you have an industrial system that still allows for secret agreements. If some of the legislators of the recent past could just experience for a couple of days how workers can be manipulated and exploited under this system away from the eyes of the arbitrator they would hang their heads in shame. Mr Speaker, I want to address this situation and I will work towards it.

It never ceases to amaze me how completely callous some industrial exponents can be and on the other hand how perfectly reasonable the majority are. From experience I know who prospers. In the recent past, Mr Speaker, I have had experience in both areas. The Emu Bay dispute or sale is a classic example. We had a company there that had enormous history - a hundred years of history - and those people who worked in that industry felt as though they were absolutely part of it, in fact they almost owned it. Those train drivers would take school groups out, work closely with the community, rail groups - they felt that they were absolutely part of that company. They were making a good profit, they were working as efficiently as any rail operators in the country - in the world for that matter - single only driver, top maintenance set ups, a really topnotch order in terms of the business and they were working hard. The company made a decision to sell them, to sell the company and without even considering the future of their workers. They said to them, 'You can go with the new mob on individual contracts; your service will not be maintained; the good service that you have given us will not be recognised'. Those people had to fight the fight of their lives to maintain their conditions, and we won that dispute based on that principle that in the end the community were coming on side and saying that it was not fair the way that these workers were being treated; the system allowed for it, the company trotted out their QCs. It was one of those classic examples where they were

going to fight it in the courts but we won it in the public arena because those people were treated badly. The company ended up recognising it, we knew it and so did they. So there was that.

There was the question of the MUA dispute recently but particularly how it affected the workers at Burnie. Those workers were treated very harshly by Patrick's. They are a topnotch work force. The people of Burnie, and especially those people, did not need to be put through what those people were put through. They went for weeks and weeks without decent wages. The unions collectively had to prop them up to fight that fight and I would say by any reasonable assessment, Mr Speaker, we also won that dispute.

Last but not least I want to mention a good company that I notice the Premier announced just the other day had won the Exporter of the Year Award, ACL Bearing Company, which has worked in partnership with the unions. They have done their best to upskill their work force in a way that allows them to go ahead out into the world market and sell their goods at competitive prices and be an example to Tasmania. They are not going out buying companies overseas to make heroes of themselves, they are going out buying companies overseas so that they market their goods to overseas markets and bring wealth back to Tasmania which, I think, is a great example. So you have the two ends of the spectrum in the way it is handled and that is why, I think, we need to be so diligent in ensuring that workers are represented in the best possible way.

So you have successful companies working together where the work force is as I have described and you have employer representatives working to casualise so the workers have no entitlements other than their wages without job security to boot. They should learn because while they persist with their ideology, the union movement is moving, progressing along developing strategies to create and promote job and business growth.

For example, there is a document that was endorsed by the Leader of the Opposition when he was Premier that is called, 'Meeting the challenge by going for growth', it was a document produced by the Australian Metal Workers Union and it was tabled this year. I would like to read, Mr Speaker, some parts of the foreword of that document. What it says is:

'The Report demonstrates that unless action is taken now Tasmania's unemployment rate will remain above 10% and the living standards and job security of Tasmanians will continue to be threatened. Tasmania faces two challenges:

The need to implement a short term action program to put Tasmanians back in work now.

The need to develop and implement a long term development strategy to create a larger and stronger group of Tasmanian based businesses who can create jobs and wealth by exporting and competing with imports. Such companies make up what is called the tradeables sector.

The Report concentrates on the second challenge and shows how a substantial expansion of manufacturing in Tasmania can:

Create 7 000 more jobs.

Reduce official unemployment by almost 4 000 as well as reducing hidden unemployment by 3 000.

Provide the Tasmanian Government with an additional \$55 million in Tax revenue each year to reduce debt and implement those programs that would improve the wellbeing of all Tasmanians.

However, the Report also shows that building a stronger and larger tradeables section in Tasmania will take at least a decade. We can't wait that long for solutions and that is why we need a short term action program to put Tasmanians back to work now.

The Report demonstrates that 80% of the task of expanding our manufacturing industries depends on management, workers and their unions working together to build better businesses. Based on interviews with Chief Executive of 15 Tasmanian manufacturers we identify the five key success factors that are helping these companies go for growth with 7 of the 15 expecting to double the size of their businesses over the next 5 to 6 years.

However the Report also shows that the Commonwealth and State Governments must play their part by introducing more effective trade and industry development policies. Practical recommendations are made and a range of questions raised to facilitate more debate about the future of the manufacturing industry in Tasmania.'

Mr Speaker, that foreword was written by Geoff Adams as secretary of the Australian Metal Workers Union and that compares to how the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry have been carrying on in recent times,

inward-looking. As far as I am concerned, they have had no vision in the recent past. When I have been around the various traps talking to businesses about working conditions and how they are going, the story comes back to me that the TCCI - when I say to them, 'What about your employer representatives?' they say, 'Well, when I get back from the moon I'll have a talk to them'. They are not in touch, they have not been in recent times. They talk about the union movement having a ring through their nose and being pulled along by ideology - I would say it is the employer representatives who have that ideological ring through their noses and are being pulled along and I am pleased that in recent times their leadership has said that they are prepared to work with this Labor Government because if they do they might learn something.

Mr Speaker, we need to have a vision to pull ourselves out of the mess in which we find ourselves. We need industry policies similar to the Button car plan to ensure we build on our industrial base.

I hear some say that new generation jobs and a change in direction - I say, 'Yes, let us go forward with new technology but let us make sure that we use what we have much better as well'.

Mr Speaker, prior to the election campaign I was working to highlight the lack of consultation and vision associated with the closure of the Burnie pulpmill. This was a devastating blow to our region and I firmly believe it should not happen still.

Mr Speaker, I want to run through a few statistics to bring the House up to speed with my thoughts. First of all I want to make it clear that pulp can be produced in Burnie at prices comparable or under the cost of imports and that is a fact. I fully appreciate it requires investment to ensure the mill operates into the next century and that, Mr Speaker, is just the point.

An industry plan setting out incentives for downstreaming and disincentives for those who do not may well change the whole scenario. The situation at Burnie is that the company made a decision to write off nearly \$60 million in assets; they paid \$110 million for the pulpmill and they are prepared to write off nearly \$60 million of it. They needed to invest about \$15 million to ensure that the operation expanded and even though it was proven that that would increase the reliability of the mill dramatically they would not do it.

I say that on the basis that the world spot price for bleached eucalypt pulp in June 1998 was \$879 per tonne. Burnie produces the same for \$740 per tonne. The owners will import in the future 120 000 tonnes of pulp into Australia each year given their new machine in Victoria. That will add to the balance of trade about \$93.24 million and about \$59 million of that will come to Burnie. For an investment of \$50 million to \$60 million we could produce the same amount of pulp at very competitive prices here in Australia. To shut the mill, the company had to spend \$5.5 million on the introduction of a new slusher, plus \$12 million in redundancies.

That scandal is enough but in the Amcor annual report for 1998 all the company could say after all the years of effort that had gone into maintaining that pulpmill was:

'In June the decision was made to close the ageing, unreliable and uneconomic Burnie pulp mill. The mill is small by world standards and further investment could not be justified.'

That was after they told the workers there that the new parameters for investment were that you had to have a 15 per cent return on the investment.

Now that is like saying to an Olympic high-jumper that we are going to start the bar two inches higher than the world record. It is an impossible task for those people there to actually get that sort of return on investment and you have a situation where the company, when they were making money, were prepared to shut it down. I thought that was a disgrace and what annoyed me most about that whole situation was that the company was not even prepared to sit down and negotiate with the Premier of the day, the Prime Minister of the day or anybody in relation to industry policy that might draw the pulpmill out of the problems it had and continue to employ Tasmanians and continue to stop those levels of imports coming into the country.

People say that we need to look to new generation jobs. As I have said, I agree with that but I also think that we need to look at what we have. There is no doubt when you have a look at the figures and I have had a look at the statistics in relation to imports into this country of forest-based products. In the first three-quarters of this year we have actually imported \$2.016 billion worth of forest-based products including sawn wood, pulp and paper and plyboard, plus a whole range of other things that I will not go into. By the end of the financial year the estimation is that there will be \$2.6 billion worth come in.

The total exports of our forest-based products is \$932 million to date and by the end of the financial year there should be \$1.2 billion worth exported from the country. So that is a \$1.4 billion deficit in terms of the amount we import compared to what we export.

What are the contributors? The woodchips have exceeded the 1 million tonne mark in March 1998 and have done for the last three-quarters and they are 37 per cent higher now than they were in the 1997 March quarter. That is, \$462 million out of the \$932 million worth of exports this year from Australia have been in woodchips which, to me, is an absolute shame.

Sawn wood: in the March quarter of this year Australia exported 7 600 cubic metres of sawn wood. At the same time, in the same quarter we imported from New Zealand alone 82 500 cubic metres of sawn wood. Now at the same time as we are importing that sawn wood from New Zealand we exported in two quarters 136 000 cubic metres of round wood - that is round logs that have gone out of the State - at the same time as we are importing 83 000 cubic metres worth of sawn timber from a place like New Zealand, let alone all the rest. People have said to me that the speed of harvest is such that when you go down and have a look at the stacks of logs on the wharf down there, Mr Speaker, the birds are still singing in them. They have hit the ground, they are on the trucks, they are into the hulls in the boat and away they go to be sawn up by somebody else and not a job in it for us Tasmanians. I think that is a disgrace.

The other point is, Mr Speaker, that when you have a look at the March quarter we imported \$355.7 million worth of paper into Australia. And I thought it was interesting looking at the statistics; it was the first time I had. From this point of view it was interesting to note that newsprint imports from New Zealand had gone up fairly significantly, and I think that is something we need to watch.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion I want to say that I would summarise what I hope to achieve in this term of parliament as this: I want to represent the people of the north-west coast of Tasmania and be available to deal with the issues that concern them, not only as a core function of being a member of parliament but also keeping in touch. The second point - and you would acknowledge this from the body of my speech - is that I will work in advocating and pursuing an active role of government in intervening in the economy where necessary to create jobs. Unless Tasmania does this then jobs will not be created. I will advocate the recreational aspirations of those Tasmanians who are fishers and hunters and, Mr Speaker, I will be advocating a tolerant society where differences are celebrated and not condemned.

I said at the beginning that I was extremely proud to be standing here as a new member of parliament in a Labor government, and I can tell you, Sir, that there is no one prouder than me to be here.

Members - Hear, hear.