

**Wednesday 19 June 1991**

**Legislative Council**

Mr PRESIDENT - The question is that the bill be now read the second time. The honourable member for Westmorland, with his maiden speech.

Members - Hear, hear.

Mr BROOKES (Westmorland) - Mr President, with your leave I would like to take a few minutes initially to acknowledge some compliments that were paid to me yesterday. I would like to thank the honourable members of this Council, first of all for the welcome they have given me and also for the very kind remarks that were made about me yesterday. I would like also to take a few minutes, Sir, to say thank you to the constituents of Westmorland for giving me the privilege of representing them for the next six years.

Many people have said publicly and in this Chamber that it has taken me a long, long time finally to take my seat in this House of parliament. I have been in public life a very long time and I have always had the view that one of the problems that has prevented me from getting here has been a very adverse press in Northern Tasmania.

Mr Hope - You wouldn't worry about that today.

Mr BROOKES - While the former proprietor of the local press –

Mr McKay - He's been taken out of the game.

Mr PRESIDENT - Order. I would remind honourable members of the accepted convention.

Mr BROOKES - is no longer in circulation, I am in the very happy position of being able to take my place in this Chamber. Although over a period of years the northern press has been very uncomplimentary to me, on this occasion it was not able to keep me out of a seat on the Launceston City Council and it was not able to keep me out of a seat in the Legislative Council.

Members - Hear, hear.

Mr BROOKES - One of the pleasant things I am able to say to these people is that, although the northern press no longer controls Launceston as it did for some twenty-odd years and although the former proprietor is no longer the owner of the Examiner, there is no doubt at all in my mind that he still runs that newspaper. The reason he does that is that his system for promotion - advancement - over the years was always based not on one's standard of ability but his standard of obedience. While the people he put in place remain in control of that newspaper he will always be the man pulling the strings, irrespective of what anyone tells us. I have had a clear example of that since the new proprietors took over. I tried very desperately to obtain an opportunity to talk to the new managing director, to make clear to him some of the things that have been done to me by that organisation over the years. He promised that he would contact me when he came to Launceston and although he has been in Launceston several times since then I have not received a telephone call.

To address myself to the supply bill before the House, first of all I would like to say that I believe that, under adverse circumstances, the present Government is attempting to take the difficult

decisions needed to try to right the ship and under those circumstances, and with the unsavoury bedfellows it has obtained for itself, I think it behoves us all to attempt to assist in any way possible.

One of the things that I have noticed has been given quite a deal of publicity over the past few days is the decision to undertake retrenchments within the public service. The only thing I find fault with there is that the service is starting at the wrong end. There is a great feeling in the community that the fat cats within the public service who make little contribution to what goes on in this State are safe in their ivory towers, while at the bottom of the scale the \$20 000 to \$25 000-a-year public servant is likely to face the axe. The three areas about which the public are most concerned are education, police and health.

The honourable member for Gordon has already told us about the financing which has been made available to the Greens. We also have the iniquitous situation whereby for some strange reason over the past few years premiers have taken it on themselves to support themselves with very highly paid advisers. It never used to happen in the days of past premiers - we have one in this Chamber - and it did not happen in the days of probably Tasmania's finest Premier, the Honourable Eric Reece. They did not find it necessary to appoint \$60 000 and \$70 000-a-year advisers because from my understanding, as a layman, it has always been the responsibility of the public service to advise the politicians of this State. That was its function and if the public service cannot do it, we should get rid of those people who are supposed to be advising. If it can do it, why do we need these highly paid advisers? In most instances, if one has a look at them, they are either the party faithful or failed politicians. If they are failed politicians, how on earth do they have the expertise to be able to advise premiers? It simply does not make sense, and it does not make sense to the average man and woman in the street either.

If there are to be cuts in this State, the axe ought to fall first of all on the advisers, and politicians ought to revert to allowing the public service to provide advice for them, and it ought to fall on the very highly paid members of the public service whose production is limited compared with the production of those further down the scale.

There is another area of concern, certainly to me and I know to the public as well, and that is the 11 per cent unemployment we are currently looking at in this State. That means 11 per cent of the population who do not make a contribution to the tax system and the tax system, although it is a Federal government province, finds its way back into the States in other areas. Although I do not want to appear to be an advocate of any type of consumer tax, I call on the Government to have a look at the situation where, although a person is no longer a taxpayer, he is always a consumer. Where we have a sudden rush towards the user-pays system - and I find no fault with that sort of system - here is a situation where, although a person is no longer a taxpayer, he will always be a consumer. In my view, that is where a consumer tax has some merit. If one is going to buy any type of article at all and it is going to cost slightly more, that fact will not deter one from buying it. But the revenue raised from that will then be able to be put back into the system, back into the coffers of government, and funding which has been eroded by the fact that we now have fewer taxpayers than we did some years ago can then be supplemented. During these times of stress and of huge retrenchments in industry and even in the public service within this State, we must turn our attention to alternative forms of taxation and maybe, to be able to right the ship, this is an area we ought to be looking at.

Finally I would like to add my endorsement to the comments by the honourable member for Gordon about the unsavoury situation of the huge funding that is made available to an organisation of Greens, bearing in mind that when those members were elected to parliament they vowed and

declared to their electors that they were independent. They have since then formed themselves into a pseudo-political party and are receiving funding accordingly, and on behalf of the taxpayers of this State I wish to voice my protest.

Members - Hear, hear.