

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The honourable member for Denison, Dr Brown. May I remind honourable members that this is Dr Brown's maiden speech. The customs of the House will be observed in that he will be heard in complete silence.

Dr BROWN (Denison) - Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I would like to preface my words with an expression of loyalty to this State, our country and Her Majesty the Queen and express pleasure at having His Royal Highness, Prince Charles, and Princess Diana visit Tasmania recently - particularly in view of the interest which His Highness takes in world events, including those taking place in Tasmania.

In my view Tasmania is the best place in the world. It is the lucky State in the lucky country with the best life-style and environment in Australia and we have long had a reputation for friendliness and hospitality as a people. To stay a happy prosperous place takes innovative government, new ideas and a continuing concern that the long-term assets we have are not lost through short-term grab-and-run developmental policies.

This State is, as the last speaker just said, at the crossroads. The controversy over its south-west wilderness has drawn unprecedented international attention to our island. There is also an almost equal fascination with the short-sighted, old and inflexible policies behind this Government's determination to flood the World Heritage wilderness as there is with the fabulous world-famous beauty and history of the area which the dam itself would destroy. It is inevitable that any comment on the state of our island in 1983 must centre on the Gordon below Franklin dam. I want to begin by reiterating some of the facts which are basic to the issue.

Firstly, the south west is one of only 38 places on this planet which has been given the status of World Heritage because of its extraordinary and fundamental natural and cultural attributes. This nation has taken the wild Franklin and Gordon rivers to its heart. Most Australians want the region kept as a national treasure and do not want to see it destroyed and most Tasmanians, given an assurance that their jobs and incomes will not be affected, want to keep that wilderness as well. It is a wild and scenic realm of singular stature. Let me mention some of the threatened places.

The Gordon Splits are two narrow, deep chasms with sheer rock walls plunging 100 metres into the most exciting and turbulent river reaches in Australia. When J.H. Sticht from Queenstown saw the Splits in 1928 he described them as Tasmania's foremost geological phenomena and predicted that in the years ahead thousands of people would flock to see them annually. A dam would drown the Splits if it were to go ahead and with them the pleasures of the thousands of people who will undoubtedly want to go there in the years ahead.

Downstream of the Splits are the Sunshine Falls in the Sunshine Gorge and beyond them the haunting beauty of Angel Cliffs beside the Gordon. Make no mistake, these would be lost forever beneath 70 metres of flood waters.

A little way up the Franklin is the world-renowned Kutikina Cave - formerly called Fraser Cave - the 20 000-year-old home of Tasmania's Aboriginal people during the great ice-age. This huge, domed cavern with its millions of flints and fire-blackened bits and pieces, its stalagmites and unimaginably rich history would be lost forever beneath millions, billions, trillions of tonnes of dark dam waters. So would all the other limestone cave Aboriginal sites in the south west. All of them. There will be no saving them. Even the scientists agree that there is no way in which the archaeology of this amazing place can be rescued.

Upstream of Kutikina Cave the Jane River joins the Franklin River. These mountain torrents, the Jane and Franklin, were named after Tasmania's adventurous vice-regal couple, Sir John and Lady Jane Franklin, who explored the area in 1842. Instead of commemorating that area by making it safe for all future generations to enjoy and commemorating that chapter in Australia's recent history this Government, oblivious of the Franklin party's exploits, is wanting to flood the scene forever.

On the Jane River is the colourful Humbaba Gorge with its hanging gardens. It will be drowned from end to end. In the gorge country upstream of the lower Franklin the solitary monument to millions of years of natural history - Rock Island Bend - would be beneath 40 metres of stark, sterile dam waters. The Newland Cascades, a kilometre of tumbling white water, would also lie beneath 40 metres of water if the scheme proceeded. The classic beauty of Glen Calder and the Propsting Gorge, which have the most challenging and exhilarating rapids of the whole Franklin River system, would be flooded.

I have listened, biting my lip many a time, as the Premier of this State and members of this Government have gone about in complete ignorance of the greatest region in their own home State. They have tried to explain their decision to destroy this region with spurious facts and figures which have no relevance, authority or responsibility. May I correct a few.

First it is often said that only 1 or 2 per cent of the region will be flooded. That is so wrong. To my mind, most of the Franklin wilderness and the Gordon wilderness area will be affected. The quantification and qualification of wilderness may be argued, but what cannot be disputed is that the grand beauty spots which I have mentioned - the Gordon Splits, Angel Cliffs, Sunshine Falls, Kutikina Cave, Humbaba Gorge, Glen Calder, Newland Cascades, Propsting Gorge and so many others - will be 100 per cent drowned; not 2 per cent, 100 per cent.

It is further said, and it has often been repeated by the Premier, that 25 per cent of Tasmania will be involved in the World Heritage listing. May I never hear that one again. The fact is - and it seems it is so often left to the conservation movement to bring the facts out in this issue - that 11.3 per cent of Tasmania is affected and it is of course that 11.3 per cent which by a long shot is Tasmania's premier natural tourist attraction.

Another deception should be put to rest here and now. The majority of film footage depicting the beauty of the Franklin and Gordon rivers on television is of these threatened places; places threatened by the Gordon below Franklin dam. The repeated contrary accusations by the Government, its officials and employees is wrong. I say that from the advantage of having seen the region and those places and from the honesty which comes of being properly informed.

Before moving to the wider economic employment issues, I want to put on record my dismay that, after so many years of dispute in this State about the fate of the wild rivers, not one member of this Government has visited any one of these magnificent sites which I have listed.

Mr Cornish - I beg your pardon, that is not right.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. The honourable member is to be heard in silence.

Dr BROWN - I repeat; I want to put on record my dismay that after so many years of dispute in this State about the fate of these wild rivers -

Mr Polley - All you get is silence.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order!

Dr BROWN - not one member of this Government has visited any one of the magnificent sites which I have mentioned. The irresponsibility of that is monumental. It is the first duty to the people of members of government that they be informed. Every member opposite must hang his head in shame that he has not seen these outstanding features of Tasmania, his own home State's territory. From such deliberate ignorance have come many of history's major tragedies. It is an unmitigated disgrace that in Tasmania in 1983 this Government has a total personal ignorance of the heritage places I have mentioned

which it is pledged to flood forever. Yet we are told the dam must be built. In this the Government has wilfully distanced itself from independent advice and is firmly under the thumb of the Hydro-Electric Commission. Its basic arguments for the dam, I submit, are wrong.

Firstly, there is the need for the electricity. In 1979 the Hydro-Electric Commission justified the dam by predicting an increase in power demand of 3 per cent per annum in the next decade; the reality has been half of that - 1.53 per cent. By last year power demand was actually falling by 0.5 per cent per annum, the growth rate was minus 0.4 per cent and in the 22 months until August 1982 in fact was minus 0.6 per cent per annum. Indeed electricity use in Tasmania is now 112 megawatts less than the HEC predictions of 1979 said it would be by the end of 1982 and the HEC's figures show that power use in January this year slumped to the lowest level for three years. Over the last four years average annual growth in demand for electricity has been 1.53 per cent - half the Hydro-Electric Commission's predictions. Study the HEC's annual report because there on page 9, in a deceptive little graph, members will find that demand has fallen below the lowest possible level predicted.

Meanwhile 198 megawatts is coming on line by 1986 from the huge Pieman scheme which, I might add, under Hydro-Electric Commission figures of 1971 had to be on line by 1979 or we would have black-outs and dismay in our industry. In 1971 the Hydro-Electric Commission's predictions for the following decade were 300 megawatts overstated; we are seeing more of that in the 1980s. I might add that the cost of the Pieman scheme - its overrunning cost, which is in the order of 100 per cent in real terms - is largely due to the fact that the predictions were wrong and the building of that scheme has been spun out to an extra seven years. Of the Pieman scheme power only 10 megawatts has been sold to industrial customers, according to the Premier. With this scheme and the third middle Gordon machine the total system for Tasmania will be able to deliver 1 245 megawatts average, yet the present yearly average generating output is just 908 megawatts.

The reality is that we do not need another 180 megawatt hydro, or any other, scheme beginning this year. The millions of dollars being spent in the Gordon Valley are being spent many years too soon. That means in effect they are being mismanaged by this Government; they should be boosting our industries elsewhere.

The Pieman scheme was frozen for two years in 1973-74 because it was realised it was being built too early. Surely the lesson of that should be heeded by this Government in 1983. The rush to increase spending on the Gordon below Franklin project may be politically expedient but it is an economic absurdity. The Premier's repeated claims in the media that we must have the dam for our prosperity are false and can stand no responsible scrutiny. It is no wonder he will not meet me in public debate under any conditions to debate the facts of this issue. Leave aside the wilderness - I am referring there to the economic and employment facts of this issue and the ramifications for Tasmania in the years ahead.

Regarding employment, the Government says that this scheme is vital for jobs - the Government says 3 600 jobs. That is another dishonesty. The Hydro-Electric Commission report states that the dam will provide fewer than 600 jobs during its construction period. If one uses a proper multiplier factor, which presumably the Premier has used in arriving at his figure, it is 1 320 jobs that the construction of Gordon below Franklin dam will provide for Tasmanians. Yet it will cost over \$500 million in 1983 dollars.

In the current year the Government says it has spent \$25 million on the scheme and it has 300 workers employed. Mr Gray recently returned from Canberra with \$9 million which he said would create 1 000 jobs. Compare the two investments. With \$25 million the Government should be able to employ 2 700 workers if jobs are the excuse for building the dam and spending the money in the south west. Put another way, the money spent on this needless dam is depriving 2 400 Tasmanians of jobs.

This of course is a simplistic analysis. I am quite happy to say that; it is a comment on these figures which one is very unlikely ever to hear from our Premier. But the fact remains that the huge capital expenditure on the dam is unwarranted and has in fact deprived hundreds of people of jobs in Hobart, Launceston, the north-west coast and indeed throughout Tasmania.

Hydro-industrialisation as a jobs policy for this State is a failure. Even though engaged on three major schemes at present, the Hydro-Electric Commission's work-force is 1 000 less than it was a decade ago. Automation in the Hydro-Electric Commission has made it a job loser for Tasmania. Down the line the heavy industries have also failed as job providers. None of these industries - the bulk consumers - is owned in this State. Nevertheless they guzzle over 60 per cent of our electricity to employ just 6 per cent of our work-force. What a failure! And yet this Government is trying for more.

Moreover the Hydro-Electric Commission's tariff policy is turning away new labour-intensive business. Tasmanian-owned businesses are penalised in the process. While the big users pay less than 1 per cent per unit for their power our home-owned industries are paying three, four or five times as much. Indeed our shopkeepers who create an enormous job force have to pay an extraordinary 14 cents per unit for their lighting - less than 1 cent per unit for the non-Tasmanians; up to 14 cents per unit for the Tasmanian-owned businesses. And this Government says it is fighting for Tasmania. It is selling out Tasmania. Worse, the bulk industries have all the cheap power tied up. They get it at less than 1 cent per unit. New business to the State, as we have heard earlier today, is offered marginal power prices - that is, power at more than 4 cents per unit from new schemes such as the Pieman - and, in the years ahead, if we go by the Premier's own referendum-endorsed pamphlet on the matter, 'Franklin power' - if that scheme is built - more than 4 cents per unit.

I refer members to the Federal Parliament's Senate select committee report on the matter. BHP says it can get cheap thermal power at 2.5 or 3 cents per unit in any mainland State. The HEC's tariff policy is turning away business from Tasmania and the HEC's debt, moreover, threatens this State with huge long-term indebtedness which will be passed on to the local businesses. Already the HEC debt stands at near \$1 billion for the people of this State - 420 000 of us. It was \$863 million a year ago. Add to that the \$453 million of the Franklin scheme and the \$186 million of the Henty-Anthony and other proposals, together with completion of the \$611 million Pieman project, and the HEC debt will approach \$2 billion as we move to the end of this decade.

Who will pay for this? We will; Tasmanian domestic and small businesses will. Tasmanian householders and small businesses are and will continue to face spiralling Hydro bills because no new major bulk consumers are coming to the State. Obviously domestic users will switch off or convert to other, cheaper power forms because, with a relatively decreasing market for electricity and a rapidly growing debt by the Hydro-Electric Commission, power bills will have to rise and rise faster and so on. It is a spiral which threatens economic insolvency to the Hydro-Electric Commission and therefore this State. In the past four years the Hydro-Electric Commission has paid just 12.5 per cent of its capital works program from internal revenue. The rest it has had to borrow. No other public instrumentality in this country is selling itself into such future insolvency.

The member for Braddon, Mr Smith, and indeed a member in another place, have used parliamentary privilege to blacken the name of the Tasmanian Wilderness Society. Unlike the Hydro-Electric Commission, that organisation gets no funding beyond a handful of petty donations from private individuals from overseas. Our books are open and indeed have been examined a number of times, including by the 'Mercury' newspaper. I challenge the member to open his.

Opposition members laughing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. The honourable member is allowed, under the comity of this House, to be heard in silence because of the fact that this is his maiden speech. But I would also point out to the honourable member that part of that privilege is that he is not provocative in what he says. I simply remind the honourable member of that.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. Order!

Dr AMOS - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - There is no point of order necessary; it is simply a reminder to the honourable member for Denison.

Dr AMOS - Of course there is a point of order; I have called on a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - I ask the honourable member for Denison to resume his seat. I call on the honourable member for Denison, Dr Brown.

Dr BROWN - I challenge the member to open his books, and I would remind the member that he was invited to see the Wilderness Society's books a week ago and he has failed to turn up to do so.

But, more important, I asked this Government to open the books of the Hydro-Electric Commission to public scrutiny. It uses public money and its accountancy secrecy would be illegal in the United States of America. Its books should be open to Tasmanians. We call ourself a free society; we should be a freely-informed society.

For Tasmania a new jobs policy must be tied to a new economic plan. The Leader of the Opposition has pointed the way with his excellent proposals for a State development bank and a State development authority. To get Tasmania going we should focus on growth industries, labour-intensive industries and those industries which will capitalise on Tasmania's assets and natural resources, scenic beauty and technological advantages without destroying them. Tourism is the obvious choice. Its potential is Statewide and concentrated in the most depressed areas: the west coast, Huon Valley and east coast. Yet our mainland tourist bureaux are short-staffed by the Government which is intent on wasting millions of dollars on an unneeded dam. They are so understaffed that they cannot meet inquiries and are losing business for Tasmania. Government-sponsored tourist facilities and publicity are abysmal. There is a stunning failure to sell our unique wild and scenic beauty, and even our unsurpassed colonial architectural heritage. Instead of dams, our capital works money should be aimed at better roads, scenic railways and more diverse attractions, such as the excellent proposal to reconstruct Duck Reach power station and boost the flow of water through Launceston's Cataract Gorge, as put forward by the honourable member for Cornwall in another place.

Our neglected National Parks and Wildlife Service needs proper recognition and investment for the tourist management authority it has the potential to be and deserves to be. Our fishing industry is depauperate. It should be heavily backed by the Government with an export-oriented policy and a fish processing industry. Fishing port facilities need upgrading as outlined in the Pitt and Sherry Report of May 1982 and should be upgraded. Speciality agriculture, the electronics and computer industries, the manufacture and installation of insulation, domestic heating equipment, industrial energy equipment and wind energy equipment are industries just made for Tasmania. They will remain neglected until the Government gets out from under the thumb of the Hydro-Electric Commission and the huge influential multinational companies which demand it stay faithful to the now un-Tasmanian policy of hydro-industrialisation.

These ideas are not new; they are simply being ignored and Tasmania is going down the drain as a result. Those thousands of Tasmanians who have made a stand for the State now find themselves the target of a shameful and orchestrated policy of abuse by the Premier and this Government.

A democracy is a society in which a government defends the right of all to their most strongly held devotion in life, to jobs and to a fair hearing. Before the last election the Premier promised he would heal Tasmania's divisions - he has worsened them. He said he would reduce unemployment - it is worse. And the very policy which has made it so bad - hydro-industrialisation - remains the cornerstone of Mr Gray's and the Government's policy. Instead of a fair hearing, Mr Gray has spearheaded an unprecedented abuse of those within this State who do not agree with him. It has not only soured the friendliness for which Tasmania was justly famous but has effectively drowned rational debate on the dams issue, which is the major problem of the day. For those who doubt this, I again point to the Premier's refusal to meet me in public debate of those facts.

I have a special word for the west coasters which I would like to place on record in this House. I believe they have been treated cruelly. This Government has filled them with fear for their livelihoods when it ought to have been securing those livelihoods with long-term planning involving tourism, forestry, fishing and light manufacturing industries. It has made them believe that the dam was their future when in fact the Hydro-Electric Commission says only 29 people will have long-term employment when the dam is finished. One can simply hope that the world heritage area on the doorstep of the west coast is saved and that, after the Federal moneys which can be brought into the west coast have been brought in, the long-term job prospects they deserve will be secured. Tasmania is a lucky State with its prospects blighted by a dull and lacklustre government.

I hope our future will not lie in repeating the failed policies of the past - bombast, xenophobia and an inferiority complex as exhibited so far by this Government. The ideas are there waiting. We need a government with flexibility and insight to take control of this State out of the hands of the bureaucrats and the non-Tasmanian corporations and to follow a planning strategy suited to our needs in the 1980s.

I look forward to a long and constructive participation in the affairs of this place.

Mr LOWE - Mr Speaker, may I raise a point of order before the honourable member speaks.

During your absence from the Chair and during the course of the member for Denison, Dr Brown's, maiden speech, your temporary stand-in, the assistant Deputy Chairman of Committees, chose to interrupt the member quite unnecessarily - and indeed quite improperly - at a crucial point of his contribution. Could I, with respect, request that you take appropriate action properly to inform that honourable person who stands in your stead on occasions about the proprieties and what is proper from the Chair in terms of interrupting contributions made by members, particularly when they are making their maiden speeches.

Opposition Members - Hear, hear.

Dr AMOS - Mr Speaker, on that point and simply to give some detail to the generality as outlined by the member for Franklin, Mr Lowe, the point was made to the member for Denison in his maiden speech - at what I agree was a fairly crucial point - that he was being unnecessarily provocative. It would seem to me, Sir, that every member, not only in his maiden speech but in any speech he wishes to make in this Chamber, can be as provocative as he likes or as calm, as quiet and as acquiescent as he likes, without need for any comment from the Chair - or even for that matter from the Chamber. But especially in a maiden speech a member makes his contribution as he sees fit. He can be as defamatory, as provocative or as acquiescent as he wishes in the comments he makes, and needs no direction from the Chair as to the way in which he is to make his speech.

I fully endorse, and I am sure this side of the House fully endorses, the comments made by the member for Franklin, Mr Lowe, that you ascertain the facts surrounding the matter, Sir, and talk with the assistant Deputy Chairman of Committees on this matter so that in future any maiden speech being made will have no interruption either from the Chamber or from the Chair.