



Terry Martin MLC

Legislative Council

Date: 18 May 2004

Electorate: Elwick

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### **FORMER PREMIER, JIM BACON**

Mr AIRD (Derwent - Leader of the Government in the Council - Motion) - Mr President, I move  
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That the Legislative Council places on record its deep appreciation to the former Premier, Jim Bacon, for his outstanding contribution to the Tasmanian people as a member of parliament from 1996 until 2004, as Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party from 1997 to 2004 and as Premier of the State from 1998 to 2004.

The Legislative Council pays tribute to a great Tasmanian, and wishes him and his wife Honey the very best for the future.

Mr PRESIDENT - The question is that the motion be agreed to. The honourable member for Elwick has the call and as this is the honourable member's inaugural speech, I know that all honourable members will extend to him the usual courtesies.

**Mr MARTIN** (Elwick - Inaugural) - Mr President, I do understand that it is normal practice for new members to give themselves at least a few days to settle in before making their inaugural speech and when they do so, it is quite normal to talk about what motivated them to stand for the Legislative Council and what they hope to achieve.

However, I have found myself in somewhat of a predicament for when I realised that this motion was before the Council I felt that I simply would not be able to sit there without commenting on this motion in order to place on record not only my enormous respect for Jim Bacon and my gratitude for the contribution he has made to the State but also to express the heartfelt respect and gratitude of the majority of my constituents.

Mr President, with the indulgence of the Council I would also like to briefly comment on why I stood for Parliament, as I think it is particularly relevant to this motion. The reality is that I would not be standing here today if it had not been for the strong encouragement of Jim Bacon. It was he who tipped the scales in favour of my standing and I am now really grateful as this move enables me to continue to do, in a slightly different way than in the past, what I like doing best and that is to represent the people of Glenorchy with the hope of being able to help, even in some small way, to facilitate an improvement in their quality of life.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of my predecessor, the former member for Elwick, David Crean. As I have said several times in the past few weeks, and I know it is a fairly strange thing for a new member to say, the honest reality is that I would prefer not to be standing here at all because my preference would have been for David Crean to have stood again and continued to be the Treasurer of this State, a job he performed with enormous distinction but, as you all know, he was unable to do so for health reasons. I certainly respect his decision to retire and I would take this opportunity to wish him well for the future. The legacy that David leaves is a fiscal development strategy which positions the State to enjoy a period of prolonged and sustainable growth. I know that David's strategy will be continued and in fact strengthened by Paul Lennon, and I am sure that this will become evident when Paul delivers his budget speech on Thursday.

Mr President, to turn to Jim Bacon and his legacy, I think the bottom line in any analysis of Jim Bacon's premiership is that today Tasmania is a vastly different place from what it was before Jim Bacon became Premier in 1998. To understand how much different, you have to put it in the context of the previous decade or so. From the late 1980s and then to the 1990s Tasmania had a slowing economy; Commonwealth funding had shrunk; the Gray Government had borrowed heavily to fund projects to try to encourage business growth on the grounds that more business meant more tax revenue and thus to fund the business of government. That strategy came unstuck for a number of reasons but principally because of high interest rates and sagging confidence in Tasmania as a place to live and invest. So Michael Field inherited a government heavily burdened with debt. At the same time Australia was going into recession, unemployment was rising and investors were further scared away from Tasmania by the uncertainty of minority government. Because of this the Field Labor Government was unable to meet public expectations and demands for better services. Michael Field had little choice but to address the long-term debt with fiscal strategies which included increasing taxes and cutting the size of the public sector. But there is no doubt that Field's fiscal strategy formed the foundation of all governments that have come since, and he should be given every credit for that, as well as for the social reforms he and his colleagues implemented.

The governments of Ray Groom and Tony Rundle tweaked the fiscal strategy set in place by Field and they were resolute in ensuring Tasmania did not slide back into debt, and they should receive credit for that. However, both governments did far too little at the same time to rejuvenate the Tasmanian economy. While Australia climbed out of recession from 1991 onwards, Tasmania's economy barely improved for most of the 1990s. Unemployment remained unacceptably high. Employment fell. The population went into a fall for the first time since World War II. Investors had little confidence in Tasmania and, worst of all, Tasmanians themselves had little confidence in their own State.

Mr President, I often remember a speech that I gave on 25 August 1997 when I was invited by the University of Tasmania to be one of five keynote speakers in the 2010 forum, which focussed on what was next following the receipt of the long-awaited and much-heralded Nixon Report. My speech was entitled 'Tasmania's Future - the Role of Small Business and the Human Element', two things that unfortunately did not rate very highly at all in Peter Nixon's thinking. I spoke that day from a number of perspectives: from the perspective of a small businessman first in real estate and then in tourism; from my experience as mayor with an interest in community needs and active involvement with the young, the unemployed, the homeless and the elderly; from my active statewide involvement in the tourism industry as President of the Tourism Council of Tasmania, representing and mixing in an industry consisting largely of decentralised small businesspeople and employers who were entirely exposed to the ups and downs of both seasonal and economic cycles; and also from my perspective as executive director of a Tasmanian accommodation chain which was part of the world's largest accommodation chain. In other words, I was out there at the time at the grassroots, dealing with ordinary Tasmanians and small businesspeople. I had seen, I had heard and I had experienced the nature of their frustrations and their problems and, let me tell you, the picture was a lot different to the reality as seen at that stage from Murray Street, from the Executive Office of the Treasury Building. I agreed with Nixon that I believed there was a community consensus to the serious problems Tasmania faced. But, unlike Nixon, who did not seem to take it into consideration, I also felt it was essential to see a community consensus as far as the solutions emerging as well.

I can remember speaking somewhat passionately and deliberately emotively about the role of the human element in the overall reform equation, an element that is always too easy to be overlooked by decision makers and by bureaucrats intent solely on a simplistic economic rationalist approach. As I said, and I quote from the speech on that day:

'For if we consider reform and change to better Tasmania, we are assuming the responsibility of action on behalf of all Tasmanians, not just those closest to our field of interest.

There are many thousands of Tasmanians for whom the driving forces of economic policy are meaningless. And as part of the community consensus and constituents in the body politic, they will not respond to the clarion call for the changes to be made to improve the economy and business environment which in turn will create jobs. This is because they have come to believe that they will probably not benefit from those jobs. The factors preventing that involve upbringing, social circumstances, education and age.

They already know that no matter how much the politicians and community leaders justify reform measures by saying they are setting the scene for job creation, there will in fact never be enough to go around.

These people legitimately ask: "We know about the pain but where is the gain?"

This raises two key issues: broad reform must somehow involve those people; and secondly, it cannot be allowed to increase the number - that is, the unemployed sector - without the most thorough consideration of the consequences. We are in danger of forgetting both.'

They were my words in 1997. I spoke about the need to balance economic and fiscal policy on the one hand, which is critically important and certainly was at that time, with the impact of these policies and the social and human side of the ledger. My solution was to involve all Tasmanians in a six-step process if we were ever to achieve successful reform for all Tasmanians.

First, we needed to establish agreement and consensus on the nature of the problems and the issues which must be addressed; second, we needed to develop a vision for the future; third, we needed to win acceptance of the vision from the stakeholders - and in the context we are talking about, this amounts to a consensus of all Tasmanians; fourth, we needed to obtain cooperative development for a range of options to achieve that vision; we then needed to reach agreement on the preferred option; and finally, we needed to implement the agreed option.

I concluded by saying that this could only be delivered by a strong visionary leader prepared to listen to the people of Tasmania and able to inspire them that the vision they articulated for the State was achievable. Twelve months later, Jim Bacon was elected and that is precisely what he set about doing and what he achieved brilliantly during his five-and-a-half years of government. What a different Tasmania we look at today.

As someone who has spent 30 years in small business, I had never thought that it would be possible to see such vibrancy, enthusiasm and optimism, not only through the business sector but in fact generally throughout the Tasmanian community. Today, Tasmanians believe in themselves and they believe in the future of the State. We have the best set of economic circumstances that most of us can ever recall. We have a record number of Tasmanians in employment. We have a population growing at the fastest rate since World War II. What a different picture of Tasmanian than that described by Peter Nixon only seven years ago, when it was all doom and gloom.

But it has not just happened. Jim Bacon, together with Paul Lennon and David Crean and their colleagues, deserve the credit for this achievement. Tasmania Together articulated the vision which Tasmanians had for their State. The key policies, such as the introduction of the industry development plans, the partnership agreements with local government and Tasmania Together itself, provided the tools to achieve that vision and Jim Bacon and his team provided the leadership. It was the implementation of these policies that united the people of Tasmania like they have not been united for a long time.

I can speak with some authority, Mr President, and some first-hand experience with two of these tools. From my 19 years' experience in local government, including 14 years as mayor, I have no hesitation in saying that the partnership agreements with local government have made a huge difference in local communities throughout the State. The first Glenorchy

partnership agreement has injected more than \$3 million into Glenorchy and the transfer of nearly \$2 million worth of property from the State to the council. It has set out 101 goals to be achieved and already, after three years, more than half of those goals set out in the agreement have already been achieved in a vast array of areas, from the environment, the economy, industry and social programs.

Just to pick a few, they have included the development of the Pulse youth health centre, a project to promote safe living options for older people in Glenorchy, a series of crime prevention projects, a raft of school and community partnership programs that are opening up the schools to the general public, and the development of a series of local area traffic management plans. I could go on and on. A major outcome of the agreement has been the commencement of the development of Wilkinsons Point into a recreational icon for Glenorchy, which has been made possible with the State Government's contribution of funding and the transfer of property.

This is just Glenorchy I am talking about. There are 26 similar partnership agreements in place all over the State with similar benefits coming forward. Contrast this to 1997, when the State Government was basically at war with local government. We wasted almost two years of bitter warfare when the Rundle Government sought to abolish many councils, including Glenorchy.

It also helps if key industries and the Government are also working together and if they can agree on major policy directions. The reason tourism is booming in Tasmania - and again I have a strong personal involvement in this - is that since 1997 successive governments have had agreements with the tourism industry to implement a long-term strategic plan. The Bacon Government's decision to buy Spirit s I , II and III is a direct result of the close working relationship between the tourism industry and the Government. No-one could deny the enormous positive impact that these ships have had on all areas in the Tasmanian economy.

It did not just happen; the tourism protocol agreement created the partnership between the Government and the industry. Tourism 21 articulated the vision and set the bold targets - and they were bold targets - of more than doubling the value of tourism within 10 years and also provided the road map to achieve it. The Bass Strait Visitor Access Study, which I had the pleasure of chairing, identified the biggest barrier to our growth and also identified the solutions, and they were ambitious solutions. I think most of us know that most governments would have filed the study in the 'too-hard basket', but not Jim Bacon and Paul Lennon. They had the courage to move forward and invest in the future and the result is that in only seven years we have turned a \$450 million industry into a billion-dollar industry. That is what can be achieved by bold vision, strong leadership and great teamwork.

The Bacon Government's Industry Development Plan extends the same approach to all key industries and is another major reason for the turnaround in the Tasmanian economy. In addition to that, Jim Bacon was also a magnificent ambassador for the State and its tourism industry. In my various positions I have listened to Jim speak on countless occasions, and whether he was speaking overseas or interstate to a group of industry leaders, or whether he was speaking to ordinary Tasmanians such as the many groups I have heard him address in Glenorchy, his message about the uniqueness and the beauty of Tasmania was always passionate and convincing. Jim's salesmanship of this State was truly magnificent.

Mr President, overall Tasmania has benefited from the economic recovery that we have experienced in the past few years. Indeed, Tasmania is now experiencing the best set of economic circumstances that we can recall. Unfortunately, though, not everyone benefits equally. One of my key motivations in my 14 years as Mayor of Glenorchy has been to initiate policies and programs to help spread the benefits of economic growth in our community to those people with the greatest needs. I know, from personal conversations that I have had with Jim, that he too is deeply concerned for those people who, through no fault of their own, are unable to take advantage of this economic recovery.

As someone who has represented working people all his life, Jim Bacon knows, as I do, that the best way to help people is to ensure the economy does well so as to provide the jobs that they need to take care of themselves. But he also knows that no matter how well the economy is going, there will always be those who for one reason or another are not able to benefit, and for that reason Jim oversaw the introduction of a range of policies and programs to address those inequities, such as the Affordable Housing Strategy.

I think Jim best articulated his view on social justice in his election launch speech in July 2002 - and I would like to quote him because these words were the main motivation why I joined the Labor Party. I quote Jim:

'We are committed to a civil society where we respect difference and not just tolerate it, where we demonstrate compassion in our actions, our words, our deeds in the business of government in our day-to-day encounters, in the way we live our lives, where we hold back from judging and excluding, where we recognise that things are not equal for everybody, that sometimes through no fault of their own people fall ill, they hit obstacles in their lives, and they do not get the opportunities like the rest of us.

At times they struggle to make ends meet and they are in danger of slipping behind. Labor's promise, as it has been in their first term, is to do something about making life better for all Tasmanians'.

As I say, as I was sitting there that day listening to Jim Bacon, those words were the reason I chose to join the ALP.

Mr President, in closing I would like to finish by talking about Jim Bacon, the person. As I have said, there is no doubt that Jim Bacon has made a huge contribution to the growth and development of this State during the past five-and-a-half years in his role as Leader of the State Government. But most of all he has been a man of the people. He has earned the deepest respect and the gratitude of Tasmanians for the way he has helped turn around the economy and the outlook for this State.

The news of his battle with lung cancer has been a deep shock for all of us. I know the people of Glenorchy join me in sending him our best wishes and the sincerest support for the fight that he will be continuing to undertake in the coming months. Mr President, I think it is only when faced with adversity that the real quality of the human being shines through, and there can be no doubt that Jim is an absolutely great leader. Since learning of his illness, Jim's strength of character has shone. He has demonstrated to us that he is simply an extraordinary human being. His farewell speech, his demeanour, his presence, and his love for his soulmate and wife, Honey, has touched the hearts of all of us.

It has been an absolute privilege for those who have had the opportunity to work with him, both on a professional and business basis. Jim's intelligence, vision and leadership have brought a new feeling of optimism to this State. It is a testament to the courage and dedication of this man that within hours of learning of his illness he still chose to carry out his scheduled duties, attending an official reception. The following day he kept his commitment to attend with Graeme Sturges and myself to watch a friendly soccer match between the Metro Claremont Soccer Club and the crew of a visiting cruise ship. Believe me, there is no way that anyone there that day could have known that this man had just been given that news the day before. It was extraordinary.

As a member of the Denison electorate, Jim has been a great friend to Glenorchy and its people. He has attended many official and unofficial functions in our city and always went out of his way to stop and talk to people and to listen to their stories and concerns. His remarkable memory for names and faces, his sense of humour and his enjoyment of life and work have won him many friends. Through his genuine interest in the city and its people, Jim Bacon has made a huge contribution to Glenorchy, as he has to all of Tasmania.

I know I speak on behalf of the people of Glenorchy when I wish him well and our hearts continue to go out to Jim and Honey in the battle they are currently fighting. It is with enormous gratitude, Mr President, that I support this motion of recording the Council's deep appreciation to Jim Bacon for his outstanding contribution to the Tasmanian people.

Members - Hear, hear.