

[Thursday, 24 June 1993.]

MR JOHNSON (Whitford) [12.22 pm]: I congratulate the Speaker on his election as the Presiding Officer of this House. His leadership of this House will be crucial in trying to ensure our conduct in this House earns the respect of Western Australians. It is a privilege to stand before this House as the member for Whitford. I sincerely thank the people of Whitford for placing their confidence in me by choosing me as their representative. I especially thank my wife, Susan, my family, my campaign director, Mr Alan Cadby, and my campaign committee, together with the many volunteers, for their toil and effort in ensuring the success of my campaign and in helping to deliver a coalition Government for Western Australia. I also commend my opponents, and particularly my predecessor, Mrs Pamela Beggs, for conducting an honourable campaign.

In speaking to the Address-in-Reply debate I will touch on issues that are of major concern to the people of Whitford and which are symptomatic of the concerns of the wider Western Australian community. The Whitford community is based within the northern coastal suburbs of Perth. A large number of residents in Whitford are, like me, relatively new citizens of Australia. It is an area that is still rapidly growing, with many young families choosing to settle in Whitford because of its unique coastal lifestyle. Despite this idyllic lifestyle, it became very evident during my campaign that the issue of overriding concern to people is that of security. Whether it be security of person, security of the family or security for a way of life that is the envy of many around the world, it was communicated to me that Western Australians are increasingly despairing about their future. Allied with this concern is the feeling of powerlessness. Many people feel that no matter how much they object to government and minority groups trampling on their sovereignty, it means nothing as they have no sanctions to make anyone accountable.

No issue symbolises this more in Whitford than the development of Hepburn Heights against the will of the overwhelming majority of residents living in surrounding areas. The area known as Hepburn Heights was 53 hectares of virgin bushland between Hepburn Avenue and Pinnaroo Memorial Park in Padbury, set aside for the posterity of future generations of residents of the northern suburbs. Hepburn Heights was the largest coastal bushland in the metropolitan area after Kings Park. It was an area with unique flora and fauna. Nevertheless, development proceeded, despite a 15 000 signature petition signed by many Whitford residents and resolutions of the Wanneroo City Council and in another place requesting that development not proceed. As with any cause, a number of individuals bore the burden of the struggle to preserve Hepburn Heights. I commend those people in particular, as they sacrificed enormous personal resources in pursuing a campaign which has prevented the complete destruction of Hepburn Heights.

Since the appointment of the present Government, further clearing of Hepburn Heights has ceased. In accordance with the community's wishes, the remaining 40 per cent of Hepburn Heights will be permanently preserved in its pristine state. I am hopeful that there will be as much as a 30 per cent increase in the land already set aside for public open space, much of which can be revegetated. Hepburn Heights was another example of how the reputation and public morality of Western Australia has suffered. It is my earnest hope that all Western Australians learn the important lessons from the past. No matter what system is put in place, in the final analysis public morality will depend upon the calibre of the private morality of the citizens of this State and particularly of those who hold positions of significant responsibility. As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said, we judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing; others judge us by what we have done.

As someone who has only been resident in Australia and Western Australia for just over five years, I am still in awe at the sheer natural beauty of this country. This country is the envy of many in the world, for the richness of its resources and the friendly and stable nature of its people. Given the great natural advantages that Western Australia has, I can only conclude that the future of Western Australia is very much in the hands of Western Australians.

I am a native born Englishman who has had the opportunity to serve as a mayor in both the United Kingdom and Western Australia. I have been privileged to witness from local government the common ancestry, language, culture and heritage that these two countries share. As Australians, we should feel justly proud of our heritage as it has produced a system of law, government, and society

that is more just and tolerant than any other, despite its faults. When Western Australia was settled, our founding fathers did not find the laws and customs that bind and govern a society lying on the shores of King George Sound or the banks of the Swan River. They brought with them the laws, customs, and hard lessons of history learnt over centuries of civilisation, to build our State of Western Australia. Of course the fount of law and government was then and is still vested in the Crown. The Crown exists to uphold and protect the rights and freedoms of all Western Australians, the very thing our Queen swore to do before Almighty God in her coronation oath.

I am very proud to be a subject of the Queen of Western Australia. Had history given Western Australia a different monarchy I would be a faithful subject of that monarchy. However, because of the unique heritage that we share with the other Australian States and a number of other countries, our Queen is also the monarch of these sovereign States. Monarchs are symbols of unity. They command respect as hereditary succession has placed them above the passions and errors of men scrambling for power. No president of a republic could ever aspire to this, as a president's election or appointment is the product of exploiting partisan differences in the community. Many who advocate that Australia must become a republic claim that we must adopt an Asian identity, as our future lies with our Asian neighbours. It is critical to note that Japan, Malaysia and Thailand have living monarchies. Who will ever forget the scenes of the events of last year which saw the leaders of the opposing factions struggling for power in Thailand prostrate before their king, who had intervened in his nation's struggle in order to put an end to the violence. Japan has the world's oldest monarchical House as the cornerstone of its stable and prosperous society.

Australia and Western Australia are independent states with their own identity under the Crown, having elected Parliaments advising the Crown on the will of the people. Australia is recognised as a sovereign nation by the world. No-one seriously suggests that Australia's identity in the world is subsumed under that of the United Kingdom, or that we are subjected to interference from the British Crown in the formation of Government policy at a State or Federal level. If that honestly were the case, the British Crown would never have allowed Western Australia to establish this Parliament.

As the future of Western Australia is very much in the hands of Western Australians we must, in every endeavour of Government, ensure that we are building a community always capable not only of standing up for itself but also of providing leadership for Australia and the world. This cannot be done by surrendering to the agendas of international treaties signed by partisan Commonwealth Ministers, who have usurped both the consent of the Western Australian Parliament and the assent of the Crown. Nor can this be done by allowing unlimited ownership of Australian companies and real estate, presiding over an explosion of our foreign debt or allowing assaults on the powers and existence of the Senate.

The Commonwealth is a creation of the States, and it should serve the States; however, the Commonwealth is not following this principle. For example, its agenda with the Mabo case includes an attempt to control the issue of land titles, which is the rightful domain of the States. This is an area in which Western Australia is showing much needed leadership in defending the rights and responsibilities of the States, which serve the interests of all Australians, and by averting deep divisions within the community. True leaders dedicated to service do not resile from what is right - because we are right, we will prosper, and it may eventuate that we will prosper alone.

I know from my experience in the United Kingdom, and more recently in Western Australia, that government must be close to the people. This is the underlying principle on which any civilisation should be built. This State has the opportunity to show leadership by giving back to the people the responsibility for their future. Let us not forget that the most important tier of government in Australia is the family. The family is under assault from the economic, education and social programs of Governments which intervene in affairs which are the domain of the family. Many children today are either in families in which neither parent is employed, or both parents are forced to work to support the family. Therefore, the time and resources parents can devote to nurturing their families has been depleted by an economic system which is inimical to serving the family. In Western Australia this is epitomised by exploding crime, and it returns to the issue of security. People do not feel safe in the street, or even in their homes. Murder, assault, theft and vandalism are the product of ignoring traditional values which uphold individual rights, give genuine liberties and result in a stable society. Years of so-called "progressive" Government education programs have not only undermined the

pursuit of excellence, but more importantly attacked the authority of parents by obscuring the distinction between right and wrong.

Much criticism has been made of our legal system, which has dispensed law but not justice in allowing bail bandits to go through a revolving door to commit more crimes. We reap what we sow. We have a major juvenile crime problem, but I am looking forward to the necessary legislation that will rectify this problem. With this in mind, my electorate needs facilities to occupy and interest our youth. With the help of the Wanneroo City Council, we have many sporting facilities for all those residents who seek to utilise their spare time in that area. However, young people who are not sports orientated need youth centres in which they can constructively spend their leisure time. This will reduce acts of vandalism and petty crime, so often motivated by sheer boredom. I will use every endeavour to bring these facilities to the youth of my electorate. Also, youth employment must be an important priority, particularly in areas like Whitford. Youth facilities will certainly not eliminate but will reduce the level of juvenile crime. Sadly, juvenile criminals often become adult criminals. Ensuring that criminals suffer a punishment commensurate with the time of victims' suffering will be a start in solving our many crime problems. However, our pursuit of justice must not be born out of revenge, but motivated by charity.

Charity extends to those less fortunate than ourselves. In both the United Kingdom and Western Australia I have used my position in public life to support children with disabilities and children spending time in hospital. These children deserve a special place in our hearts, and as a Government we must do everything not only to make their life more bearable but also to assist them in the provision of facilities to help them enjoy their lives to the fullest extent. Families taking care of children with severe disabilities face enormous strains and tremendous pressures on the family environment. Such families live in my electorate, and I will work to ensure that these children and their families receive the assistance they need. Parallel to this objective is the upgrading of the children's facility at the Wanneroo Hospital so that children may be treated closer to their homes and families.

I was privileged to serve as Mayor of the London Borough of Sutton which had 56 councillors - by a happy coincidence, the same number of members with whom I serve in this House. In Sutton I was honoured to persuade Cliff Richard to star in a charity variety show I produced to help children in need. Cliff is a shining example of someone in the public eye who gives so much of his time to help those less fortunate. I was also privileged to serve as Mayor of the City of Wanneroo. I was honoured to have been able to persuade many businesses to sponsor two charity balls, the proceeds of which have helped so many children with severe disabilities. Also, I have been invited by the international chairman of Radio Lollipop to head a task force to raise much needed funds for children's facilities in WA hospitals. On this occasion Radio Lollipop is the only charity to be sponsored by the Whitbread round the world yacht race, and these events will take place in December and January when the fleet stays over at Fremantle. I urge my fellow members to support this worthy cause at that time.

I will heed the words of Sir Winston Churchill when he said, "a speech does not have to be eternal to be immortal". I thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, and members for their indulgence, and I look forward to your guidance and assistance, and to learning from other members in this House, in making a worthwhile contribution in serving the people of Whitford in Western Australia.

[Applause.]