



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr Peter Tinley MLA
(Member for Willagee)

Legislative Assembly

Premier's Statement

Tuesday, 23 February 2010

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PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Consideration

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

MR P.C. TINLEY (Willagee) [5.29 pm]: I am proud to rise this afternoon for the first time as the member for Willagee and present myself to this chamber. But in soaking up the atmosphere in this place and reflecting on my personal journey, I cannot help but feel like something of an accidental politician in comparison with the collective experience of all members in this place. I feel humbled, but similarly challenged, to be amongst the members.

Of course, we all occupy our seats by the good grace of our constituents, and I thank the electors of Willagee for their gift. It is to them that I affirm my sincere commitment to a full-throated advocacy on their behalf. I also acknowledge and thank my predecessor, Alan Carpenter, whose true worth to Willagee will be known most intimately by the scores of individuals, schools and community groups he worked for and helped over 13 years.

WILLAGEE AND ITS SOUL

The electorate of Willagee could be described as a pastiche of suburbs hemmed by bitumen ribbons in a neat box of working Australia. As an older area of Perth, Willagee has a large number of handsome parks not normally found in a modern subdivision. On any given weeknight or weekend these parks host a bewildering array of sporting and community events. The streetscape is decorated by wide verges and old peppermint trees. However, the built environment belies the soul of what Willagee has to offer to people of all backgrounds. The activity of Willagee is typical of suburban life, and its people are making their own way and improving their lot. With over 33 per cent of my constituents living in public housing, the challenges are not insignificant. While equity of access to the opportunities for self-improvement is a challenge to some in Willagee, the great advantage they all share is actually where they live. Willagee is not the sum of its parks and buildings; it is the invisible connections within it that form its soul.

I have had the great privilege of growing up around this district, and in campaigning for this seat have met and been influenced by the sense of community fostered by some seemingly invisible people. While it is grossly unjust to those unnamed, I think it worthy, by way of example, to honour a few people who create Willagee: the Hilton Residents Association led by Mary Barton and Dave Hume, who are tireless in their efforts to improve community; as are Senior Constables Ian Abercrombie and Ian Hill, who are leaders and examples for some of our most challenged youth

in the operation of the Hilton Police and Citizens Youth Centre. Similarly, Willagee Alive is a dynamic activist group exploring every opportunity to coordinate events and building community. Individuals such as Brenda Pittman and the committee of the Willagee Bears Rugby League Club have been quietly building the club and now have over 300 registered players. Brenda's efforts, I am pleased to report, have been recognised this Australia Day with the award of Melville's Australian of the Year. People like Brenda and local JP, Kathy Heath, who herself has been an activist for good community in Willagee for over 40 years, are emblematic of the invisible human "super highway" of our community.

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Apart from the constituents of Willagee, a number of people have assisted me on my path to this place today. I would like to thank Bill Johnston who, since I joined the party in 2001, spared little in the candour of his advice or support. The irony is not lost on me that I make this speech alongside him today as a colleague. I am also deeply thankful for the personal commitment and advice of Kim Beazley. Even with a punishing number of responsibilities, Kim found time for long chats in the white wicker chairs of his front veranda, where he provided context for me on many issues based on his long personal history in politics in this state and the nation. I consider him to be one of this state's great political exports. Similarly, I acknowledge and personally thank Joe Bullock and Dave Kelly who patiently assisted my education in the role of organised labour in the advocacy of workers' rights, and through them the tangible assistance of the trade union movement in support of my election.

I would also like to thank the very professional campaign team I had around me. It is a fact that while inconvenient to any party, by-elections are a great opportunity for the membership and the faithful to unify for a common cause. It was also my privilege to have the pick of some great campaign staff. None less than the state secretary of the ALP, Simon Mead, was available as director and, like his predecessor, he shows a capacity for focussed strategy that would be the envy of any candidate. The daily tactical battle was tirelessly managed by Charlene Farmer and Steve Dawson and supported by Alanna Clohesy, Liz Phillips and my good friends Chris Davis and David Michael, who found time after hours, at night and weekends to provide professional support. The hundreds of volunteers who worked on the campaign and are not mentioned today are no less thanked for their contribution. Together they form that unique constituent group called the Labor Party, and I will strive to meet their aspirations for our party.

PERSONAL SUPPORT

While this professional contribution provided an armchair ride, I am most indebted to my family for their support. I would like to acknowledge my father and stepmother, John and Lucy Tinley, who are here today, and record the great affection I have for them and the quiet, unstinting support they have provided. I would also like to recognise my wife's parents, Max and Judy Speedy, who have travelled from Victoria to witness this family occasion. Now, like all men in this chamber, I would like to think of myself as no man's fool, but given the grief we create for our families, perhaps the truth of the matter is that we are actually a good woman's folly. So with this in mind, I reserve my deepest thanks for my wife, Vicki, whose love for her family seems boundless. She not only provides routine to our family, but also leads her own businesses and even finds time to tend to the pretensions of her husband. My sons, Oliver and Elliott, who I am proud to say are here today without their iPods, and Angus, who cannot be with us today, are the true beneficiaries of her commitment. I am privileged to be able to have recorded for all time my deepest love for her support.

THE ACCIDENTAL POLITICIAN

I opened my speech this afternoon with the idea that I am something of an accidental politician. In the evolution of politics in this country we have seen the rise of what can be described as a separate professional class called politician. Long gone are the days when citizens occupied a seat in this place as an extracurricular activity to their daily life as a tradesman, merchant or pastoralist. This is not to suggest that those in this chamber who have come from a background of service to party or politics are less worthy of the honour of representation; in fact, the rise of the professional political stream aligns with the ever-growing body of statutes and their supervising departments. Those professionally versed in the negotiation of this bureaucratic labyrinth are essential for effective government. Clearly, I do not come from this heritage. At 47 years of age I have already enjoyed 25 years as a career soldier and several more in that adventure described as “business owner”. With this background some have suggested that I actually wandered into the wrong branch meeting 10 years ago. In fact, it has also been said that any self-respecting businessman who has also taken the Queen’s shilling could surely not throw his lot in with the socialists! Forgive me if I take this as an accusation of the depth of my conviction to Labor values. A cursory examination of my life may in fact provide some support to the charge. As a son of a company manager hailing from a riverside suburb with all the privilege afforded a middle-class lifestyle, there appears to be little Labor evidence. I do not hail from those heroic Labor backgrounds embodied in a Chifley or a Curtin. I am not the son of a train driver, nor a coalminer or a lumper; neither have I manned the picket lines for workers’ rights—yet.

So what was the accident? Uniformed service was one of my great privileges and the longer I served, the more I appreciated Donald Horne’s ironic descriptor for Australia, “the lucky country”. In my service I have witnessed the tenuous grip any individual or community has over its freedoms, in such places as Lebanon and Syria while seconded as a United Nations military observer. I have seen the utter desperation of life in Afghanistan and Iraq where the tools of freedoms such as health and education are an illusion reserved for the ruling classes. Although it is a long bow to draw any direct correlation between those experiences and the lucky country, what was not lost on me was that individual freedoms are always taken too lightly until they are lost. The right to feel secure, to grow personally through self-determined expression and the right to equal access to all of society’s opportunities are not an automatic gift of any people. Vigilance over these rights is in my estimation resident in only one political party in this country—the Labor Party. The advancement of all Australians is the very foundation of Labor and this tradition has not diminished in the modern ALP today. The challenges to equity are less obvious than past historic achievements such as wage entitlement, inclusion of the first Australians, universal free education and health care but are no less important. As we are constantly challenged by a dynamic world in areas such as population growth, climate change and finite resources, our way of life will require the careful stewardship of all sides of politics, but it is the equity of access that is in the DNA of the ALP and it is this above all else that allows me to find an easy home with Labor.

THE RESOURCE STATE AND A BROADER ECONOMY

Nothing supports equity of opportunity more than a strong steady economy. It is often remarked that the state must broaden its economic base and bridge the troughs buttressed by successive resource cycles. These economic troughs always just keep on giving even after we herald the end of the crisis and the advent of the new boom. The human expression of this lag between cycles is never more present than with the unemployed. The 2010 Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for January show that in the South Metropolitan Region alone there are 4 000 more unemployed people than this time last year. Given that the resource sector in this state accounts for over \$71 billion and employs directly and indirectly one in five Western Australians, any counter-cyclical economic activity will be a support act at best, but that does not mean we should give up and allow the rest of this country to ride on the back of every Western Australian until this particular boom is over. We have allowed the notion to develop on the east coast that we are just a quarry with a “rip it, dig it

and ship it” mentality, and when it gets tough to deliver services in Western Australia, such as health and education—the very symbol of any state’s prosperity—we simply revert to the golden goose to see if we can squeeze it one more time. When the party is over and the north west is a sea of empty donga camps surrounding derelict, rusting machinery at the bottom of some very big holes, where will we go? What will be the great driver that will offer opportunities to our children and grandchildren that we have enjoyed? Where is the vision?

At this point I should record that my comments are not an accusation levelled at the resource sector; they are not. In fact I refer to the resource base of this state and the companies that have pioneered its development as a pathfinder for a sustainable economic future. The entrepreneurial courage of the resource sector, from Paddy Hannan through to Lang Hancock and Andrew Forrest, along with institutional commitment from the Rio Tintos, the BHP Billitons and the Gorgon partners, are examples of what is possible. It is not Hobson’s choice when it comes to economic growth for Western Australia—a case of either the resource sector or nothing—but a case of the resource sector as well as anything and everything else that we want. To be clear: this is not a pollyanna view of the challenge. If it was easy to broaden the economic base, we would have done it by now. We are not in this chamber, in this place, on this day, to do the easy. We are guardians and drivers of this state and are expected to find ways to get the hard tasks done. I also know that we become what we say we want to be and if we do not speak the ambition, if we do not profess to be something more than we are imagined by others, if we do not plan and play in that vision, then we will never arrive at any destination. The statement for this ambition needs to be a comprehensive strategic plan for industry.

A GRAND PLAN FOR A GRAND STATE

What is clear about the size of the resource sector is that any economic broadening will not be the product of market forces. Any business in this state that does not covet a direct or indirect slice of the resource sector has no comprehension of market drivers. The majority of new capital is naturally drawn to the resource sector projects. Those projects have delivered handsomely, for some. At six times the size of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme, the Gorgon project is Australia’s largest ever; clearly an economic whale by any name but seemingly not so for fabricators in this state. The cost of importing 25 000 tonnes of steel fabrication to the Gorgon project alone will be about 2 000 jobs. Although that is an obscene slap in the face to the Western Australian manufacturing sector, it is fair warning that global shifts in traditional manufacturing continue at pace. We need to look beyond and create the “industry after next” to ensure we have a differential advantage for Western Australia. That is not to say traditional sectors should be abandoned; in fact the absence of a comprehensive industry strategy for our state should support local content in the first instance. As a sidebar, I find spurious at best the view expressed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade that any legislated remedy for preferential purchasing may contravene international trade treaties—they do not. The US seems to have no problem with their Buy American Act.

If we seek a self-determined future and say so, where is the plan? I looked for statements and policies on economic vision for Western Australia. Although a number of policies exist for industry sectors and key initiatives in innovation, Western Australia is bereft of any comprehensive industry policy. It is in this place, where vision is required, that we appear to be missing in action. The stark truth is that when it comes to a comprehensive industry policy much is said, some done, but little achieved. We can all point to great initiatives such as the Bentley Technology Park, the Australian Marine Complex and the newly-launched floating dock as examples of vision, and that they are, but they are not expressions of a wide ambition encompassing all that has made Western Australia the grand state and all that is possible for our future.

I come from a professional tradition that holds out strategic planning and tactical execution as the two greatest skills any individual can have. When well led, a strong strategic plan will provide any

complex organisation with the agility needed to react to threats and opportunities in the markets in which we choose to operate. Make no mistake, we are in clear competition with our own. In response to the declining traditional manufacturing sector, Victoria has gone a long way in the release of its plan called “Building Our Industries for the Future”. This plan, released in 2008, has been the product of many years of investigation and consultation but now provides the strategy under which operational initiatives can be executed. More directly comparable, Queensland’s Smart State Strategy, in operation since 2005, has the deliberate ambition to build industry away from the traditional resource sector. Both these plans identify a limited window in which to establish a presence in new and emerging industries. We either benefit from the returns available as an early mover—or at least as a fast follower—or risk being just one of the herd living off the scraps on the tracks made by others. The clock is well and truly ticking.

Where the spark of innovation meets the flinty determination of good leadership, opportunity will flow. For example, in terms of intensity and duration of sunlight, Tasmania’s darkest day is Germany’s brightest, yet Germany is the recognised world leader in solar technology. Why? Vision and leadership. Perth is the second-windiest city in the world, yet we have fewer wind turbines per head of population than any other OECD—Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development—country. We have the hottest stable rock formations and the most active tides, but we are just tinkering in the back shed when it comes to development of these industries.

The renewable energy sector is one in which we can create complementary advantage alongside the strength of the resources sector. What are the needs of this growing sector that can be leveraged for renewable energy? I do not pretend to know the answer but I do know the people who do. The momentum in the renewable energy sector is small but growing. The growth of the sector’s industry body, the Western Australian Sustainable Energy Association, from a membership of fewer than 50 businesses in 2002 to nearly 300 today, makes it Australia’s largest industry body and is evidence of the resident knowledge and ambition already available. All the industry needs is a government that has a vision and a plan to support it. The Australian Marine Complex is a good example of the value of a bricks and mortar expression around which industry can congregate. I suggest that the same needs to be done urgently for the renewable energy sector. A reasonably placed tract of land such as the Latitude 32 industrial estate in Naval Base with its access to transport infrastructure and heavy industry would be ideal for the exclusive use of the renewable energy sector. It would form the focal point for government and industry to come together to provide support to emergent industries, with particular emphasis on the resource sector. Of course this suggestion is only one requirement of a comprehensive industry strategy but it demonstrates the relationship and opportunity of integration across industry sectors. It is only a question of leadership.

AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

My comments about the absence of a strategy speak to the heart of what I believe is the essential requirement of any Parliament—that of leadership. As a long-term observer of leadership and politics, I have detected a decline in the prestige of Parliament and a loss of respect for parliamentarians, not because of the endless, sometimes petty, combat between the protagonists. In my estimation, adversarial tension is an expectation that the public has in order to truly represent a democratic outcome. The fading of prestige I speak of is not the “legislative sausage making” but the deeper concern for a collective leadership that provides relevance to their lives with a grand idea of who we are as a people.

Before the press gallery runs away with any whimsical notion around a challenge to the leadership of my party or a commentary on the leadership of any other party, my comments are directed at the collective leadership of the body corporate called Parliament. This is a leadership that is not defined by one person nor one party backed by this entire Parliament. I am speaking about the collective responsibility we all take for constructing a strong, confident society by leading and shaping

consensus, rather than continually playing to the populist base fears of our people. The continual claims of how bad things are in our community has as its price the creation of unreasonable fear. The harder road to follow is a path of authentic leadership that builds consensus on what is possible, not on what is wrong. Solution, not a problem; options, not fault; and hope, not fear—this is authentic leadership.

Authentic leadership is an academically recognised style best described by my very good friend Jim Phillipps in his thesis on leadership. Simply put, authentic leaders do not shy from the truth of a matter, and have the courage to align the spirit of their actions with the spirit of their words. Authentic leadership provides intellectual transparency for those we wish to influence, change and have follow us. If not, then we become the followers, or as the French revolutionary Ledru-Rollin more aptly said, “There go the people. I must follow them for I am their leader.”

One of the key issues that emerged during the Willagee campaign was that of community safety and the level of crime and antisocial behaviour. There was considerable anger at this government for closing down the Hilton Police Station at the beginning of the by-election in favour of a hub strategy for police services. While I disagree with the logic of centralised policing, I recognise the government’s prerogative to try it. What I cannot condone is the statement about how serious this government is about community safety, yet its only tool is the stick. Authentic leadership recognises the systemic contribution social disadvantage has on crime and does not shy from the harder task of redressing it. Community-based mentor programs for at-risk youth, stronger allocation of resources to youth sport, properly resourced prisoner rehabilitation programs and mandated organised sport in our public schools are long, slow fights, difficult to lead but with sustained dividend for all.

We are not authentic with our constituents if we do not explain that, even when the city is littered with metal detectors and we have built more prisons than schools, there will still be crime. Until we have the guts to really level with them and build consensus for deep and sustained programs that provide generational change, we have failed our people and diminished each and every one of us and the prestige of this place. I would not, myself, be authentic if I did not make myself clear on this particular topic, since I have singled it out. Extreme stop-and-search legislation and poorly executed anti-hoon laws are simply the toxic dividend of fear politics. I did not participate in two wars on the other side of the world to deliver democratic freedoms in those countries to see them whittled away in my own home.

Several opposition members: Hear, hear!

Mr P.C. TINLEY: The slow incremental denial of our freedoms, while innocent enough now, are simply inoculation against future privations. I caution us all now with the saying, “Evil prospers when good men do nothing”, and the victimisation of just one innocent person is a price too high, in my estimation, because it never stops at one.

In matters of leadership I simply say: leaders lead. If you call yourself a leader, then prove it. Every time the members of this place take the easy road of speaking to the ill-informed consensus, we are nothing more than followers. I prefer the adapted Christian saying, “If you were accused of being a leader, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” It is the opportunity to be part of the leadership of the grand and graceful state of Western Australia, my home, that I am most humbled by. Thank you.

[Applause.]
