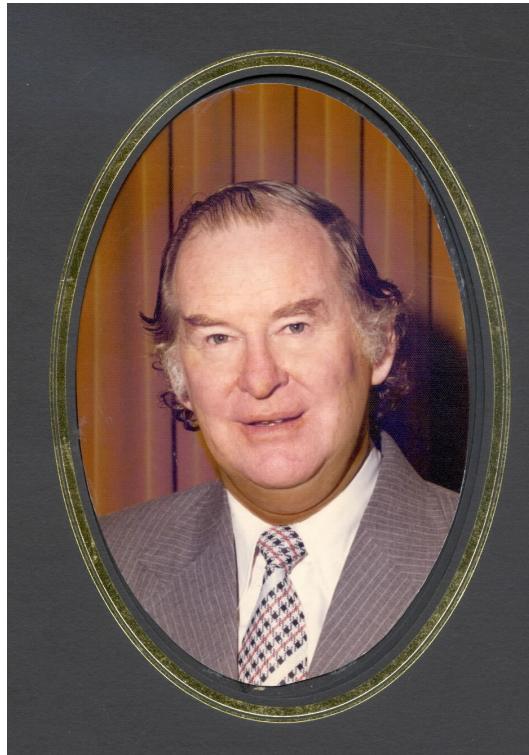




PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

VALEDICTORY SPEECH



Mr Alexander Donald Taylor, MLA
(Member for Cockburn)

Legislative Assembly
Thursday, 23 August 1984

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Legislative Assembly

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MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT: RETIREMENT

Motion

MR A. D. TAYLOR (Cockburn) [4.43 p.m.]: It is with some diffidence that I rise on this occasion—not having spoken for quite some time—and address my thoughts to the members of this Chamber. I had some comments prepared and they were, in fact, somewhat scathing. Unfortunately, this is to be my last opportunity on which to get out of my system some of the things that have been building up over the years. However, after listening to the very kind comments of the Acting Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Leader of the Country Party, my thoughts have changed.

I must admit that for a while, after listening to the thoughts expressed from members on the other side I realised why I may not have done as well as I could have. Perhaps I would have done better if I had not had so many friends on that side of the House. On the other hand, half way through the Acting Premier's speech—which impressed me very much and for which I am most grateful to him—a fleeting thought came to me that I should run to him, drop to my knees in front of him and say, "Mal, you win. I will stay for another term or two". However, that thought was very fleeting.

It gives me extra pleasure to be leaving Parliament on the same day as is the member for Mt. Lawley, Ray O'Connor. As I indicated to some members outside the Chamber, after leaving school in 1944, I began my career with a company called Southern Cross Machinery in Maylands as a junior office boy. The senior office boy at the time was the present member for Mt. Lawley. He does not seem to remember very much about it, but as it was my first job, I can recall it well. He was very kind, helpful, and most considerate to me, and did all he could make my life in that place a comfortable one. In fact, the Chamber will appreciate it when I say that he showed such qualities that, with hindsight, I think he would have made an excellent socialist. His qualities have not changed.

I appreciate the opportunity to be able to introduce the subject of the newspaper report last Sunday and to say that the comments were not correct. He was the toughest guy I had to face as Minister for Labour and he seemed to relish raising one issue after another against me personally each week. However, no matter what went on in the Chamber, outside it Ray O'Connor has always been a most sincere man to whom I could always speak, and a man who could be regarded as a friend.

I have been asked through an intermediary from the Premier, Brian Burke, to pass on his best wishes to the member for Mt. Lawley and to indicate that his last request as a member, for some flags, has been rushed through and they are all under way.

I am not quite sure how one should finish a final speech. Perhaps I could round off with some general comments and a couple of disappointments. I would not have missed the parliamentary process for anything; it is one of the greatest experiences one could have. It is not the sort of thing one would say outside Parliament, but those who are present will understand. There is some pleasure in being selected in the first place; having the confidence of one's party to stand as a candidate is also worthwhile. Then to have the continual support of people in the electorate and the opportunity to make an ever-widening circle of friends is a great thing. It has been a great pleasure for me and I have absolutely no regrets about having gone into politics. However, I repeat the comment made by John Tonkin on his final night in Parliament; that is, that at this stage I have no regrets about leaving politics.

I came into the Chamber feeling that the world could be a better place and perhaps I could play a part in improving it. I have a lesson for some of the new members: During the first five minutes of my first day in the Chamber, which was also opening day, I sought leave to introduce a motion of no confidence. It was perhaps the height of temerity, but it indicated the mood I was in at the time.

I crossed the Chamber twice on matters of principle during my first two or three years. I and a few others moved from behind my leader on the front bench to vote with the then Premier, Sir David Brand, his Deputy Premier, Sir Crawford David Nalder, and with Sir Charles Court as he was later to become. On both these occasions I lost the vote. The two issues involved were: The termination of the pregnancy Bill in which you, Mr Speaker, had a part to play; and secondly, the removal of the Barracks Arch, which the member for Welshpool, you, Mr Speaker, and I supported.

Instead of moving into the strength, I saw the member for South Perth rallying backbench members from the Government to go to the other side, leaving us ruined in a minority. There have been occasions like that and some problems on the way.

Soon after becoming Minister for Housing my greatest concerns were to be able to make a grand gesture to allow elderly men to be included in accommodation listings with those of elderly women, and also to allocate a very substantial proportion of the first year's Budget to Aboriginal housing. Both of these issues were very worthwhile and gave me great pleasure. I could almost feel the power I had in those early decisions aimed at changing the world.

When I approached the Premier, he told me that there was no more money available for housing and all I had done was to increase the waiting list for elderly women by two years and for my constituents from three years to 4½ years. So much for power! That was only the first of many lessons I learnt in Government.

There were also some areas of disappointment. One would be a belief espoused long before I came into Parliament and held by Sir Charles Court, the late Herb Graham, me, and Ministers since, that somehow this State must get past the stage of simply processing minerals; that our industrial base must be extended wherever possible to increase employment opportunities in Western Australia. It is something which all Governments which I have known have tried very hard to achieve. It is one of my real regrets that, after 16 years here and after watching the position for 20 years, no matter what we do as a State we are still battling to improve employment opportunities while developing our primary industries and mineral processing. We do not seem to be advancing with respect to manufacturing.

Another aspect worries me and it is an area in which I intend to become involved when I leave the Parliament. After I arrived in this Chamber initially, I spoke frequently about the problems of the people in Kwinana. We had 31 nationalities which were brought together by the Government; encouraged to come here by that Government; and housed in a town established by the Government. The housing problems experienced in that area were very real. Despite all the talk about Kwinana, that community is very happy and contented. However, it was disappointing to see it grow and then decline to the stage where now the unemployment rate has increased from nil in 1968, when I came into the Parliament, to approximately 27 per cent for 15 to 19-year-olds, and 30 per cent for 19 to 24-year-olds. It is not a record with which one would want to leave the Parliament. Those are the two aspects I would like to have seen remedied.

Overall, my time in Parliament has been very enjoyable. I know the State has progressed. Despite the fact that we argue over all sorts of matters, such as education, health, and transport, things are getting better. Whether that is occurring because of politicians or despite them, I am not sure. I do not know whether we should take credit for it. However, in my personal experiences, all I see are the disappointments; but there is no doubt that if one steps back and looks in from outside, collectively, during the terms of various Governments, one knows that things have improved.

I express my real appreciation to the staff and members of Parliament House. That may sound trite, but from the time I came into this place, I have felt a real warmth and friendship with everyone. That goes for the attendants, the Clerks, the stewards, and the people who work on the switchboard. This was more than just a casual association; it was something that I looked forward to. It has been a very heartwarming experience and I appreciated it.

I also extend my appreciation to *Hansard*, and particularly to Mrs Jessie Bussola whom I knew before I came here. In the early days, she was a tremendous help to me and a great friend.

I thank all of you gentlemen. I knew some of the members who preceded you, and I have greatly appreciated my association with you.

Once again, I extend a great "Thank you" to my party and to my electorate.

In conclusion, I use again one of these trite expressions, but I mean it more sincerely than anything else I have said: I thank my wife, mother, and family for the help they have given me. While it could be said that I have made many sacrifices of my time and energy during my years in Parliament, my family have certainly made more sacrifices than I have.

Mr Speaker and members, I thank you very much for giving me this last opportunity to speak in this place and I thank you all for the kind remarks you have made.

[Applause.]