

party whose endorsement I have very proudly carried; and to my Caucus colleagues, who inevitably become a form of extended family, whether we like it or not, over so many years. I have no doubt I will miss my regular contact with them. I wish to thank the members of the ALP throughout Australia, with whom I have shared moments of great jubilation and great trauma. I also wish to thank the members of my ministerial staff, who have worked prodigious hours, and my four electorate office secretaries: Maxine Henderson, Betty Willmott, Merrilyn O'Sullivan and Judy Mathieson, who have courageously and reliably handled in my absence many tough constituency problems. I would like to thank finally the members of staff in the institution of Parliament.

In conclusion, when one is worn out in this job, like a maturing athlete, one knows it. It is of fundamental importance to the State, the electors, and the political party that we represent that when that realisation strikes, we should not reach out for the cruise button and seek to continue on for years on the basis of our own political capital or on the basis of the inertia of the system, which tends to work in the interests of the sitting member. In a healthy democracy there are always thousands of keen and competent people to take our place.

[Applause.]

PREMIER

Retirement: Statement

MR BRIAN BURKE (Balgownie -- Premier) [2.38 pm] -- by leave: I have been a particularly fortunate man. I had no ambition to be Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party or of the Government when first elected to this Parliament as the member for Balcatta in July 1983, but it has been my privilege to have held both positions, and I have been particularly fortunate because no-one achieves either office without the help and the love of many others, and the support of the community.

My wife, Sue, and I decided soon after the election in 1983 that, God and elections willing, five years would be the maximum I would spend as Premier. There were a number of reasons for our decision. First, five years was as long as we felt able to deliver the concentration and commitment required. Second, we feared the effect on our family of any decision to stay longer than five years. Third, I have always been conscious of my own shortcomings, of the ability of those about me in the Government, and of the need to fulfil the ambitions of young, able and energetic members. Fourth, my view that the proper and efficient management of change is a major requirement for success in any political party. In the past six months Sue and I have reviewed our decision strenuously. We have been complimented by those who have said that I should stay but have decided the reasons for first making our decision have remained valid.

Accordingly, I stand down as Premier on 25 February 1988, the Government's fifth anniversary. I make this decision believing Western Australia is being governed as well as it has since statehood, the Ministry is able and talented, and the backbench reflects a quality not previously seen in the Parliamentary Labor Party. In social and economic terms the management of our State is in good hands.

Though I am standing down as Premier and as a member of this Parliament I hope that I will still be able to render service to our community. It is the Commonwealth Government's intention to offer me the post of Australian Ambassador to Ireland -- a post which I intend to accept and expect to take up in June.

Mr Speaker, the next decade, while full of promise, will be marked by challenging and difficult economic times. Those challenging times will not be met successfully if political or other prejudice dictates our reactions. If I could be presumptuous enough to think that I might be remembered for anything, I hope it will be as a Premier who encouraged soft, rational debate, who served during a period in which there was a lessening of unkind ideological confrontation and a reduction in the blind, cruel prejudice that too often blights our society. If I have done anything to promote an atmosphere of accommodating genuine debate then that is something I am happy to be remembered for; that was the abiding desire of the man who has been the greatest single influence on my life, both personal and political -- my father, Tom. My achievements are to his credit and I hope I have brought some of his forbearance, humility and unselfishness to this Parliament.

It remains only for me to thank the other great influence in my life -- my wife, Sue. Simply

put, without her I would never have got here in the first place and in the absence of her continuing support would have been long gone.

[Applause.]

PREMIER AND DEPUTY PREMIER

Retirement: Statements

MR MacKINNON (Murdoch -- Leader of the Opposition) [2.42 pm] -- by leave: Today is an historic day in the Western Australian Parliament with the announcement of two retirements on the one day -- unprecedented I would think in Australian politics and certainly Western Australian politics -- that of the Premier and the Deputy Premier. It is an historic occasion also in that we have the involvement of electronic media in this House for the first time, to my knowledge. I intend to speak to the Speaker about that in due course; our party has in recent times supported that involvement.

In 1988 we will see the political landscape in Western Australia inexorably change, not only due to the departures of the Premier and the Deputy Premier but also because of the challenges ahead of us, some of which were commented on by both the Premier and the Deputy Premier. These issues will challenge all political parties in this House.

The Premier said that he was a fortunate man. Mr Speaker, I put it to all members that we are all fortunate people to be members of Parliament; indeed, I think the Premier has been a fortunate man to have achieved all that he has during his time. The record is there for all to see, and history will be the judge of that contribution -- as it has been for all who have preceded us in this Parliament and all others. History will also judge, as some of the most significant achievements of the Premier, his ability to unite the Australian Labor Party -- together with the Deputy Premier and many others in the ALP -- which was so disunited and in a state of disarray for many years; and to then achieve successive electoral victories -- an achievement which has to be admired even by political opponents, and perhaps more so by those opponents. The Premier has probably brought upon the Western Australian community significant change in the way the Government has handled its media relations. The Premier is well known for his expertise in that area, and his ability to handle difficult issues. I repeat, in terms of policy and achievements of Government, history will be the judge of that particular performance.

I extend our thanks to his wife Sue and to his family. We all know the price our families pay when we are in this business and I am sure that Sue and the family have paid just as big a price. Sue has been outstanding in the manner in which she has carried herself through the difficult times that the Premier in his chosen career has had to face. I know that all members from this side of the House join me in extending best wishes to the Premier, his wife Sue and the family for an enjoyable and productive retirement.

Turning now to the Deputy Premier, I do not think anyone could stand in this Parliament and say that there has been another member -- the Premier included -- who has served his party with equal distinction. The Deputy Premier has put aside his own ambitions in the interests of the party, which is not a common occurrence in politics. A testimony to that is the fact that he has been deputy leader of his party for 10 years, which must be some sort of record.

The Deputy Premier's commitment to his leader has ensured stability on his side of politics, which has been very necessary in terms of electoral victory. Again, history will be the judge of his contribution to technology; undoubtedly his recognition of the contribution technology will make was the correct one. The only discordant note I have to make is that I take issue with his comments about the Constitution, which has served us well and long. We will all enter that interesting debate during our bicentennial year.

I extend to Elizabeth and the Bryce family my thanks for the contribution they have made and acknowledge the price they have had to pay for the career which their husband and father has chosen to follow. All members are aware of the contribution made, and join me in extending to the Bryce family our best wishes for whatever the Deputy Premier chooses to undertake in retirement. We hope the family will now see more of him.

As I have said, 1988 will be a dynamic and challenging year, and one which we will all face with interest. The Opposition is well-prepared for the coming year; indeed, better than at any time since becoming the Opposition. Perhaps my only disappointment in entering 1988, and