

them does. Only the Minister for Education - the minister for red herrings - spoke, and he spoke about a photograph I had taken of an Aborigine's house. Let me demonstrate the difference between the Liberal-National coalition Government and the Australian Labor Party. I did have a photograph taken of an Aborigine's house. Members of the Labor Party were concerned about that and brought me before a disputes committee to get to the bottom of the matter. Will the Liberal Party ask Hon Roger Nicholls to come before it and explain his advertisement? That is the difference.

Hon Roger Nicholls says he does not want his wife and children to be exposed to obscene language. Does the Minister for Education not know that obscene language is part of the English language but that Aboriginal language does not contain obscene language? Let us ignore the red herrings about the Labor Party's reaction to something the Liberals might consider racist and consider an action by a member of the Liberal Party that is clearly racist. The Minister for Education spoke about efforts to save Aboriginal culture and overcome Aboriginal concerns in this State. However, why has the Minister presided over a department that has withdrawn funds and classes from Aboriginal communities?

Hon N.F. Moore: Rubbish.

Hon TOM HELM: Why is he making it harder for teachers to teach in Aboriginal communities? If he says education is the answer, why does he not provide the education? He is the Minister for Education. We get all sorts of answers except the answer that it is because of the racists he has in his party.

[Motion lapsed, pursuant to Standing Order No 72.]

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION - HOUSE COMMITTEE

Member for Bunbury, Discharged; Member for Mitchell, Appointed

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the following motion -

That the member for Bunbury be discharged from the House Committee and the member for Mitchell be appointed in his place.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 30 March.

THE PRESIDENT: I remind members that this is the honourable member's maiden speech and therefore the usual courtesies should be extended to her. I would also like to repair an omission of mine earlier. When I saw the member in, I should have congratulated her and welcomed her to the Legislative Council. I do that now on behalf of all members and hope that she has a fruitful and satisfying term in this Chamber.

HON VAL FERGUSON (East Metropolitan) [4.31 pm]: I support the motion. In so doing, I thank all members of this House who have congratulated me on my election. In rising to make my inaugural speech, I am aware of the responsibility entrusted to me by the electors in East Metropolitan Region. I have mixed feelings about becoming the member for East Metropolitan Region. Firstly, I have a feeling of sadness about the resignation from Parliament of my dear friend of over 30 years, Hon Tom Butler. I also have a feeling of pride in representing all of the people of the region on behalf of the Australian Labor Party.

After 35 years involvement in the Labor movement, I see the turn in my career as a challenge that I intend to meet with enthusiasm and to reflect the dedication shown by my predecessor. I am proud to follow Lyla Elliott and my friend of long standing, Hon Cheryl Davenport who, like me, entered the Legislative Council after working in the administration office of the Labor Party early in our political careers. I also follow in the footsteps of other Labor women who entered Parliament including Wendy Fatin, Carolyn Jakobsen and the late Pam Buchanan who, like Cheryl and I, entered the parliamentary

arena after working for members of Parliament. Such experience leaves us with no illusions.

I would not be here today without the hard work and support of many people. With your indulgence, Mr President, I will take some time to thank these people. I thank my husband Ken, and my children Merryll, Darren and Nerine who have shown me unstinting love and support over my years of involvement in the political process. I thank my parents who have stood by me through everything. I thank the bag clan - they know to whom I refer. I thank Rosa Townsend who is affectionately known to me and others close to her as the conscience of the Labor Party. I thank all my friends and current and former staff members in the Labor Party's administration office. I thank the electorate officers and branch members who have worked with me and supported me, particularly those in East Metropolitan Region. I am eternally grateful to all my former colleagues who encouraged and supported me and who extended friendship to me during my service to the industrial and political wings of the Labor movement. They include Percy Norris, a former union secretary and member of the Workers' Compensation Board who was responsible for my first job in Trades Hall; the late Jim Coleman, former Secretary of the Trades and Labor Council; and the late Joe Chamberlain, Bob McMullan, Stephen Smith and Chris Evans, former secretaries of the Australian Labor Party. Senator Chris Evans, as my former employer, challenged me to accept my ability and my subsequent contribution to the political process. I thank Kim Beazley, a Minister in the Keating Government, who was instrumental in the change in my career path by offering me a position as a member of his electorate staff in 1980; and Hon John Cowdell, a member of this House, whom I again join as a colleague and who, when the chips were really down, talked me through and helped me to solve my personal dilemmas.

As previously mentioned, I have been involved in the Labor movement for more than 35 years. During that time, I came to understand our system often excluded those people who are unable to articulate their needs against the might of the bureaucracy. I have a strong belief in the importance of educating people about their rights. I was reminded recently, at the Highgate Primary School reunion, of my history of advocating for people. It began in grade 1 when I challenged a teacher for her unfair treatment of a classmate. It was fostered while working for the Australasian Society of Engineers and the Trades and Labor Council where, in the absence of officials, I assisted members of unions with queries regarding their industrial entitlements. While employed at the Trades and Labor Council, I instigated an industrial agreement for administrative workers, all women, in union offices who, until 1969, had no formal union coverage. I am proud that my efforts resulted in the enactment of the Trades Hall clerical staff agreement.

While working for politicians during the last 14 years, I have had a range of experiences working with and for people. I have shared the joy of reuniting family members; the fear and frustration of talking a person through a suicide attempt; shared my children's wardrobe with another who needed clothes and shoes for her children to attend school; worked with young people at the Belmont and the Swan community youth support schemes; assisted senior citizens with their issues and joined in their social gatherings; and been invited to a Baha'i wedding by a grateful constituent. The majority of this work took place in East Metropolitan Region.

I acknowledge the work being performed in the region by my colleagues, Hon Alannah MacTiernan and Hon Nick Griffiths. I look forward to working with them in my new role. As members of the Labor Party, we bring to this Chamber certain principles of social justice. These encompass issues which include the protection of the environment; fostering of communities through participation in decision making; the provision of affordable housing for all; caring for seniors; and defending the rights of Aboriginal people.

East Metropolitan Region is, geographically, a very large and diverse area. Industries in the region include the manufacturing industrial areas of Bayswater; grape growing and wine producing in the unique Swan Valley; the orchards of the Darling Range; horse racing in the Belmont and Forrestfield areas; and the great historical tourist areas in Guildford, Midland, Bassendean, Maylands and right through to Mundaring and

Armada. The Swan and Canning Rivers flow through East Metropolitan Region. The pollution and environmental problems currently being experienced in these two major waterways are of great concern to me. The state of those rivers has been well documented in recent times. I believe that all members of Parliament have a responsibility to protect our unique waterways. It is not sufficient to simply legislate and then close our eyes, block our ears and hope everything will be all right. I acknowledge and thank most sincerely the volunteers who contribute so generously of their time and effort to halt the devastation of our river system. One such group is the Bayswater Integrated Catchment Management Group, which was chaired from its inception until 1994 by the member for Maylands, Judy Edwards. The Bassendean Preservation Group, of which I am a member, has worked tirelessly for 10 years to prevent the erosion of river banks in our suburb. The Swan River Trust is an excellent organisation, doing a wonderful job with limited resources. My memories of our rivers are beautiful memories. I learnt to swim at Crawley baths and my children learnt to swim in the river at the Point Reserve in Bassendean. Today our rivers are filled with nutrients that feed the red tide and blue-green algae that kills the normal flora and fauna. We must find the way to protect these rivers before it is too late. The Court Government must allocate sufficient funding to the Swan River Trust to guarantee the protection of our waterways for future generations.

I will take this opportunity to acknowledge the many other volunteers in the community, such as the people who deliver meals on wheels and provide transport to senior citizens for appointments and shopping visits, and the parents who dedicate many hours to school committees, sporting clubs etc. These volunteers add value to communities throughout the region. Without the untiring efforts of this dedicated band of hard workers, the community would not be able to enjoy the many and varied services now available.

I take this opportunity to make reference to the Lockridge community. My association with the people of Lockridge began nearly 20 years ago, when my son, Darren, played football for the Swan Districts Junior Football Council. From that time I became aware of the sense of pride that the majority of Lockridge residents have in their local community. Lockridge was one of the first local housing areas developed under the auspices of the old state housing commission. The suburb was developed by a Liberal Government to provide low income families with low rental accommodation or homes they could purchase at affordable prices. There was no comprehensive planning of housing, industry, commerce and services, other than schools and recreation facilities. Fortunately, a Labor Government had the good sense to reject this type of public housing policy. In 1983 the newly elected Labor Government introduced a public housing mix of one rental home to every six private owner-occupier homes in new suburbs. In 1992 the Lawrence Labor Government moved to address the negative images of the Lockridge area. The present Leader of the Opposition, Jim McGinty, as Minister for Housing, announced the reconstruction of residential units in the area. Since that time, Lockridge has been undergoing a major redevelopment program. To all those responsible I offer my heartiest congratulations. I also commit myself to ensuring that the social needs of all groups in the Lockridge area continue to be met, and that action is taken to develop a positive image for the suburb. Labor, in government, also began to address the lack of services for young people in the area. One of the early achievements of Hon Tom Butler was to assist in establishing the Lockridge Youth Service in 1986. He was the inaugural chairperson and continues in that position today.

Other organisations I wish to mention are the Lockridge Senior Citizens Association and the West Swan Pensioners League. These groups originally operated from a flat in Lockridge, and now share the Alice Davoren Senior Citizens Centre. This centre was built as a result of strong community support by dedicated people. Over the years user groups have raised a considerable amount of money towards the building and for extensions and equipment. I appreciate the friendship shown to me by Val, Margaret, Lawley, Norma and Brian. I look forward to working together with the member for Morley, Clive Brown, and the people of Lockridge to change the perceptions non-residents have of the suburb of Lockridge.

Recognition is also due to the Culunga Aboriginal Community School, another vibrant organisation located in the East Metropolitan Region. This school caters for children from preprimary through to high school. It offers education to young Aboriginal people who have difficulty fitting into the mainstream education system. It also provides programs for young Aboriginal people on parole from juvenile detention centres. This causes some problems for staff who are trained school teachers, not social workers or psychologists. A comprehensive plan is needed which embodies programs to address the social inadequacies of the environment of these young people. However, the old story of "where is the money coming from?" prevents effective change occurring in this area. I congratulate the principal of the Culunga school, Tracey Gosling, and the staff, parents and volunteers who have worked so hard to make the school the success it is today.

A number of schools in the East Metropolitan Region are feeling the effect of the cutbacks of the Court Government. Some areas of concern to these schools include the urgent need to replace asbestos roofs, cuts in school budgets and the need to upgrade existing facilities. There are also many concerned parents within the region with special needs children who are being treated badly by the education system. I intend to assist all I can to obtain a satisfactory solution for all concerned.

At this time I pay tribute to the unsung heroes of the parliamentary process. I refer to electorate officers, particularly those in the state arena who in most cases work on their own in the absence of their members. They must be prepared to run the electorate office single-handedly, be multiskilled, work with community groups and deal with constituents. This quite often involves families in financial and emotional crisis. These tasks are just a few confronted daily by electorate staff. For some time now more resources for state electorate offices have been an issue. I firmly believe we should endeavour to provide extra staff where necessary to ease the ever increasing workload of this group of diligent people. We should also be conscious of the fact that some are at risk of physical threat, and consideration should be given to their safety. It is interesting to note that former electorate officers have moved into diverse and significant occupations. However, only a few have gone on to further their careers by becoming members of Parliament.

It is widely recognised that there is a need to increase the number of women in Parliament. I believe that one of the reasons more women do not become members of Parliament is the demands made on politicians' time. The subsequent challenges created for members and their families makes it more difficult for a woman to balance the work role with the role of wife and mother. Women have proved their relevance in both Houses of State and Federal Parliaments. However, because women have been socialised to nurture, social conventions now impede their progress. Traditionally most successful male members have an extremely supportive spouse. I have often heard the lament of my female colleagues when they say, "What I really need is a wife." I acknowledge that I am one of the lucky ones because I am fortunate in having a very supportive partner in Ken. I was also able to continue to work in the 1960s while raising a family because of the vision of the late Jim Coleman, the first Secretary of the Trades and Labor Council. Jim gave me the opportunity to develop a career path in the Labor movement by introducing the concept of flexitime, long before it became the norm in public sector awards. However, Mr President and honourable members of this Chamber, I contend that women in the 1990s should not have to seek the support of any one individual to represent people in this place.

Structural barriers impeding participation of larger numbers of women should be removed or addressed. I refer particularly to hours of sittings, the lack of child care facilities, and the party preselection process. I could go on. The untenable hours of parliamentary sittings have been discussed on numerous occasions in the past. As long ago as 1975, the women's movement addressed the inappropriateness of meetings scheduled during the evening meal period. They recognised the negative impact it could have on families and the subsequent reluctance of women to participate in any number of public forums. The Australian electors have indicated they want more women representing them in Parliament. They must be listened to, and changes must be made to

accommodate such wishes. If more women are to take their place in Parliament, the way Parliament operates needs to be reformed. For instance, the hours of sittings must be changed. Parliament needs to sit more during the day rather than working late nights and early mornings. All members of Parliament with young families are affected. They should not be forced to work this way, if we really believe in and are committed to family life. It is ludicrous that this tradition of the 1890s still exists when the twenty-first century arrives in five short years!

Young children need both parents. If the sitting hours were changed the families of all members would benefit. Sitting hours impact not only on members of Parliament. The staff of Parliament House should receive due consideration with regard to this issue. This is only one of a number on the list of detrimental working conditions for employees in this place. For instance, Hansard reporters work in cramped spaces which have been likened to dog boxes. I am told that in the summer it is like working in a sauna. People are surprised and astounded when told there is no air-conditioning in Parliament House other than in the dining room and in the strangers' bar. People cannot believe that in this day and age these workers have such antiquated conditions.

A legacy of my history in the Labor movement is my interest in workers. The push to privatise at all costs concerns me because many people are hurting badly. Privatisation has been promoted as a panacea to our changing economy but there is a social consequence to this requirement for economic change. In Westrail, a large number of jobs have been lost and now there is a threat to another 1 000 jobs. Jobs have gone from the Western Australian Water Authority. Employees and their families are distressed because they fear further dismissals. Men employed by the Water Authority have visited some of my colleagues. The employees have been reduced to tears when talking about their future. The contribution they made to the Western Australian community throughout their working life is of enormous importance to them and their families.

The effect of privatisation is often detrimental to the family unit. Redeployment as an option gives limited opportunities. Consider the impact on families when the worker is transferred to a country area because it is the only job available. Consider the impact of his leaving the family home and the upheaval to children's schooling, which can have devastating results. Further burdens are placed on families by the current lack of opportunities for young people in rural areas. Rhetoric about the creation of jobs in the private sector is deceptive. Take the case of the Department of State Services in Welshpool, which was privatised late last year. Workers who were already on short term contracts with the Government were assured of ongoing employment. However, early last month 15 people were told they were no longer needed. Many of those people are blue collar workers in their fifties, and they are fearful of their future prospects. We should consider the repercussions on the families if a parent is not working. We are not able to build role models for young people in our society.

Who is reaping the benefit of the productivity savings? It seems to me to be only the privileged. I believe that taxes should be levied in proportion to a person's capacity to pay. Charges and levies introduced by this high taxing Government continue to hurt families. Take the \$50 levy, for instance, which was supposedly introduced to help get the State Government Insurance Commission out of trouble. This has been achieved, so why are we still paying the levy? Some people are selling their second car owing to the extra costs incurred by the levy and the 4¢ a litre rise in petrol costs. This is often the car used to take children to school, sporting events, and so on. Many such vehicles are used by volunteers to help senior citizens with their shopping, outings, and doctors' visits. The recipients of the service will suffer and so will the community.

We are told that these taxes are to pay for the unfortunate excesses of the 1980s, but is it really the case? Labor in government did not levy Western Australians for the Liberal-incurred waste on the gas pipeline. One might be forgiven for wondering how this Court Government intends to pay for the Premier's personal indulgence on his ill-conceived challenge to the Federal Government's native title legislation. If the Legislative Council had performed its duty as a House of Review the debt incurred by the High Court challenge may never have occurred. The Legislative Council was established to be a

watchdog over the other place, not a rubber stamp. The tragedy is that whenever the conservatives hold government this Chamber is a rubber stamp. However, when Labor holds the Treasury benches this Chamber is obstructionist. One need only look at the statistics. If the Legislative Council is not positively reformed through the Commission on Government process, I believe - like others before me - that it should be abolished.

I have outlined my interest in people. People, particularly young people of this wonderful State, are our wealth. As a member representing the East Metropolitan Region I intend to work with individuals and the community to ensure that the region continues to grow and prosper. I take this opportunity to thank you, Mr President, and Parliament House staff for the courtesies extended to me, and to wish my predecessor, Hon Tom Butler, a long, happy and healthy retirement. I support the motion.

Amendment to Motion

Hon VAL FERGUSON: I move -

To add the following words -

I regret to inform His Excellency that the Court Government has not honoured its commitment to provide open and accountable government and has demonstrated an ability to mouth platitudes about accountability while doing the complete opposite.

[Questions without notice taken.]

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Val Ferguson moved an amendment and I am bending over backwards to assist her. The member made a maiden speech one hour after she had been sworn in, and that must be a world record. I congratulate her on the way she delivered her speech. She was gracious enough to include me in the very long list of people she thanked for assisting her. I feel very humble about being included on that list, but I do not know that I really helped that much. However, I will now give her the help which generated that thanks. One of the pieces of assistance I will give her is to suggest that in future, when she is preparing a speech and wants to move an amendment, she seeks advice on how to do it. There are several areas of advice she can seek. She can go to her more learned members -

Hon E.J. Charlton: She could not find any.

The PRESIDENT: - who no doubt would be capable of helping her. More particularly, she can go to the Clerks whose task is to assist members in wording motions and amendments. Obviously, she did not go to anybody in her organisation because they would have known what to do. I am sure she did not go to the Clerks because I am sure they would have known what to do. Whoever the member went to obviously did not know what to do. The member wants to add some words to the motion. In consultation with one of her colleagues I have added the following words to the motion, which is that a message be sent to his Excellency the Governor -

To add after the word "Parliament" in the last line the following words -

However, we regret to inform Your Excellency that the Court Government has not honoured its commitment to provide open and accountable government and has demonstrated an ability to mouth platitudes about accountability whilst doing the complete opposite.

I ask the honourable member whether that is the amendment she wishes to move.

Hon VAL FERGUSON: Yes.

HON J.A. SCOTT (South Metropolitan) [5.38 pm]: I second the amendment and welcome Hon Val Ferguson to this Chamber. I am pleased there has been a small shift in gender balance and I noticed a Greens glow coming from her speech which I was pleased about.

Hon Kim Chance: When will the Greens shift its gender balance, which is 100 per cent male?