

[Thursday, 24 June 1993]

MR BOARD (Jandakot) [2.33 pm]: I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your election to the high office of Speaker. I stand before members with a mixture of pride, enthusiasm, and excitement but also with an overriding sense of responsibility.

The trust that has been put in me by the electors of Jandakot cannot be taken lightly. I stand here with dreams and aspirations that I am sure are common to all newly elected members of Parliament. I am sure these are the same dreams and aspirations that Mr Barry MacKinnon had in 1976, or were the dreams and aspirations of John Tonkin in 1933, or Sir David Brand in 1945. When I look at the overall development of this State, I know they did their jobs well. If one looks at what has been achieved in the south west, the goldfields and the Pilbara, not to mention the overall advancement in major cities and country towns, one knows that the State has prospered very well from their involvement.

Many of the decisions they made were not easy. They had to weigh up the good of the State against sectionalised vested interests, and balance the need for development and infrastructure against the perennial lack of funds. I know many of the decisions in which I shall be involved will not be easy, but I go into this new position aware of my responsibilities and duties. I go into this position with my eyes open, hopefully not too naive of the pressures and influences that may be placed upon me.

It is more than appropriate at the outset of my address to recognise my predecessor, Mr Barry MacKinnon. He was elected the member for Murdoch in February 1977. He served this Parliament continuously for 16 years. Among his outstanding contributions to this House and to the people of Western Australia, and in particular to the Jandakot electorate, were his appointments as Minister for Tourism, and the North West from 1982 to 1983, as shadow Minister for Mines, Fuel and Energy from 1983 to 1984, and shadow Minister for Tourism, Employment and Training between 1984 and 1986. He was elected Leader of the Opposition in 1986 and held that position until 1992. He served as shadow Treasurer, and shadow Minister for Tourism, and Public Sector Management. I do not believe any member of this Assembly or of the Parliament would not acknowledge the contribution Barry MacKinnon has made to the State of Western Australia. His strength, leadership, integrity and persistence are an inspiration and example to us all. I acknowledge his many achievements, but none more than his contribution in convincing the previous Government of the need to hold a royal commission of inquiry into the commercial activities of Government. In doing so he did a great service to the Parliament and the people of Western Australia. His representation of the constituents in his electorate was outstanding and he has created for me a level of performance for which I must now aim. I am sure members of this House will join me in thanking Barry MacKinnon for his services, and wishing Barry and Pam MacKinnon and their young family the best for their future.

Members: Hear! Hear!

Mr BOARD: It is important that I acknowledge those who have supported and assisted me during my election. Firstly, I must thank the Liberal Party for its faith and trust in me to uphold our standards and policies. I thank my campaign committee. It is always a difficult task, particularly at a time such as this, to single out individuals, but I must mention Mr Peter Hollow, Mr Graham Darcy and Mr Gordon Gillaussey for their untiring support. I acknowledge the tremendous efforts of my many campaign workers who assisted me over a six month period, and a special acknowledgment to my wife, Anne, and my children, Becky and Alex, for their understanding and unselfish support.

I come from a background of small business. Having spent a few years in the Navy during the Vietnam war, I was then employed by the Commonwealth Public Service for 10 years. However, I do not feel I cut my teeth until I went into small business in 1982. For the past 11 years or so I have been involved in the clothing industry, at first as a retailer and then in partnership as a manufacturer and wholesaler. Within this industry I have seen both the benefits of being in Western Australia and, at the same time, the difficulties that confront us. I know what it is like to put everything on the line to create a business and enterprise, and to see an opportunity come to reality in the face of mounting pressures and obstructions. I know what it is like to develop and market a product in Western Australia, to employ people, to be frustrated by over-regulation and maintaining costs but at the same time to be fiercely proud that in some small way my business could add to the wealth of the Western Australian economy. These are some of the experiences that have, in part, equipped me to face the challenges that lie ahead.

Mr Speaker, one cannot help but be struck by the history and traditions of this place. However, I was soon brought back to reality when I read on a number of desks around the House what to do in regard to a bomb threat. This was reinforced the other day when a heavy laminate was being applied to our office windows to protect the glass from projectiles and possible explosions. I am not sure whether the idea was to keep the explosion in or out. However, having reflected on that, I was overcome by an incredible feeling of *deja vu*.

My first job after leaving the Navy was in 1972, when I was the junior clerk at the Commonwealth Employment Service at Mascot in Sydney. This was in the heady days of full employment, with an unemployment rate of less than three per cent.

We had a very small staff, and our main duty was to advertise vacancies and encourage people to come in and fill what was a large register of jobs. The manager at the time, who will remain nameless, mainly because I do not want to exploit my parliamentary privilege in my maiden speech, was two months off his 65th birthday and was due for retirement. The Vietnam war was still on and we were still in the midst of conscription in Australia. The role of the CES was to check its register for individuals who were avoiding the draft and to report that information to the appropriate authority. There were demonstrations against conscription at the time, and the Department of Labour and National Service, which was responsible for running the CES, was subject to a number of bomb threats. I well recall the day a circular came around to the office at Mascot and the manager called us into his office and read the memo from head office. It instructed us clearly about what we should do in the case of a bomb threat, and went on further to indicate what we should do if a bomb were thrown through the front door. It indicated that after going through a number of procedures similar to the notes that are currently sticky taped onto some of the desks here, we should all leave the building by the rear door in an orderly manner. Unfortunately I was silly enough to ask the manager how we should organise this orderly departure out the rear door, and he looked at me and said, "Board, in order of seniority". I am of course, Mr Speaker, cognizant of the fact that I am a newly elected member of Parliament, but I trust that you would deal with that dilemma in an entirely different manner.

The State seat of Jandakot, created at the redistribution in 1987, is still a rapidly expanding area, bounded to the north by Leach Highway and High Road, Willetton, to the east by Nicholson Road and Warton Road, to the west by Kwinana Freeway and to the south by Jandakot Airport and Forrest Road. The seat is a wonderful mix of residential, light industrial and commercial use, and is currently experiencing rapid expansion of residential areas in the Waratah, Livingston and Ranford Estates of Canning Vale. With 35 000 residents and approximately 24 000 voters, it is a blend of the old and the new. Bullcreek, named after Henry Bull, an early landholder, is in stark contrast with the ultra new area of Leeming.

The seat of Jandakot contains the large industrial area of Canning Vale, which at present is recommencing a strong growth period. The airport sits nearly geographically in the centre of the seat. The Roe Highway extension will cut through the centre of the seat, south of the main residential sector. Canning Vale Prison sits on the eastern boundary. The southern part of the electorate is a mixture of commercial, industrial and rural uses. The seat boasts four high schools and nine primary schools. Willetton High School, the biggest high school in the State, is approaching 1 900 students.

The seat overlaps four city boundaries, comprising primarily the City of Melville and the City of Canning, but also encompassing the City of Gosnells and the City of Cockburn. Jandakot, the Aboriginal word for "home of the whistling eagle", is indeed appropriately named. Jandakot Airport, run by the Federal Airports Corporation, is now the busiest airport in Western Australia and the third busiest airport in Australia, with some 330 000 movements last year. This has created its own problems in a developing residential area, but in the main the community accepts the airport's operations, notwithstanding some difficulties with the flight path from time to time.

The airport is one of the major pilot training airports in Australia and attracts pilots from Singapore, Malta, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Malaysia. The airport at present is losing in excess of \$1m a year and as a result a major development proposal for some of the land is envisaged to increase multiple usage of the airport and hence meet some of the shortfall. The proposal includes ongoing airport development, construction of new aviation facilities, and the extraction of silica sand for export, with some land allocated to commercial use. This area is also sensitive because it is situated close to the Jandakot water mound, which is currently subject to a number of studies by the Environmental Protection Authority and the Department of Planning and Urban Development, which are involved in drafting strategies for the protection of the water mound.

The whole area is expanding rapidly. The new residential developments in Waratah, Livingston and Ranford are coming on quickly. In the main it is a young and vibrant area. Nearly 60 per cent of the 35 000 residents are under the age of 35. The area is typical of the rapidly expanding areas of the Perth metropolitan region. While most of the residents are English-speaking, 23 other nationalities are represented, and outside of the United Kingdom, the majority come from Malaysia. Only approximately 50 per cent of the population is considered to be in the work force as some 38 per cent of the electorate comprises students. Of those who are working - as is general throughout the community - about 25 per cent work in the public sector and the remainder in the private sector. Approximately 70 per cent of the electorate earn less than \$35 000 per year.

The Swan Brewery, FAL, Arnotts Biscuits Limited, the Len Buckeridge group, Canning Vale Weaving Mills, Pepsi 7-up, Coles distribution centre, Tip Top Bakeries, Kailis Brothers, Blackwoods, ACI Glass, Canning Vale markets, Diahatsu automobiles, Toyota uplift, and Rothmans of Pall Mall are just some of the larger businesses in the electorate. I am pleased that many of those businesses are currently expanding their enterprise. They are looking for growth in Western Australia and are prepared to invest in it.

The problems confronting the constituents in my electorate are common to most electorates: Unemployment, crime, and the difficulties that families face in raising children in a society that has increasing pressures. As a young family area, people are concerned about the future. They want to be assured that there will be opportunities in education, employment and home ownership for their children. Of particular concern is the fact that there is no permanent police presence in my electorate. An area of nearly 58 square kilometres sees nothing more than police in motor vehicles. Consideration of this issue must be a high priority for this new Government.

Completion of the Roe Highway extension to at least the Kwinana Freeway is an urgent need for my electorate. Large trucks seeking to avoid highways behind Midland and the Kwinana strip are affecting the amenity of a great number of residents.

Land planning strategies for rural and special rural zones in the southern part of the electorate need to be given urgent consideration and determination. It seems to me that Western Australia right now is poised at the crossroads. It has reached a watershed in respect of do we take an accelerated path towards pro development, with the community working with Government and industry, for the long term benefit of the State, or do we take another path where we do not encourage development, continue borrowing and lose our competitive edge, not only in Australia but also on the world market? I suggest that if the latter is the path we take, our children and their children will see a position develop which may be impossible to turn around. Considerations of international competitiveness will not go away. The current recession has, if anything, intensified the pressures. The steady flow of reduction in tariff protection has accentuated the need for change.

Industrial relations will be an important component of the competitive edge that this State must seek to regain if it is to be a successful bidder against other States and on the world stage. The days of the bourgeois class, or a group of strong industrialists ripping out the heart of a suppressed, manually laboured work force, are over, yet this is the premise upon which current industrial relations are based. Trust and common objectives have not, in the main, been part of the process.

The first Western Australian Trades and Labour Congress held in 1899 agreed to a motion for compulsory conciliation and arbitration for the peaceful, non-disruptive settlement of industrial disputes. This resolution was endorsed by the second congress in 1900. I suggest that the industrial relations process has drifted a long way from the original resolution. Just last Thursday we saw ample evidence of this at Parliament House. Industrial conflict, particularly strikes, is for some people a first and not a last response. Industrial conflicts in Western Australia are running at a fairly high level. Since 1986 this State's record, measured in working days lost per 1 000 employees, was the second worst in Australia.

On average 100 000 working days were lost per year in WA. Also, the industrial dispute statistics relate only to stoppages of more than 10 working days at an establishment where the dispute occurs. However, these disputes have effects on other establishments such as stand-downs due to a lack of materials, disruptions of transport services, and power cuts which are not included in the statistics. Therefore, we do not have a clear indication of the total effect of strike action.

The development of a work culture based on the expansion and advancement of the State, something in which we can all share, must be our highest priority. It always seems that we reach our greatest potential when we work together.

History has shown that people have achieved these objectives during times of crisis. Much can be achieved with a common approach and a common goal. One need only look at the postwar reconstruction in Germany and Japan to see what can be achieved in the short term through a consensus on objectives.

In early 1974 the Conservative Government of Edward Heath in Britain proposed a three day working week as an emergency measure. This resulted from fuel shortages arising from the coal strike. Industry was expected to be brought to its knees with a general 40 per cent reduction in its output. However, that did not happen. Not only did industry survive, but some organisations matched their five day week production in the three days. Efficiencies were achieved through a change in attitude. At that time workers and employers combined their energies, and this can be a lesson to us all.

The survival and welfare of this State clearly depends upon the efficiencies with which wealth is created by business enterprises. Wealth is not created by Government. As industry seeks a cost effective way to produce goods and services to make them competitive in the marketplace, and as the cost of labour increases the casualties in certain industries will of course be the work force.

As a Government we must set the agenda for the creation of new enterprises, new businesses and new frontiers. We must create the environment in which businesses can flourish and new opportunities can be created. We know that Western Australia has the potential to develop faster and stronger than any other State in Australia. However, this development will depend very much on how we use our resources, particularly human resources.

A debate which all in the community must face is whether employment should be recognised as a form of social welfare. Is it better to employ people primarily for the benefit of the individual, or should we continually seek cost effective means of production from which benefits will flow to the State? If business creates employment, we must introduce greater flexibility than is allowed under the current adversarial industrial relations system. The level of consultation between management and employees in reaching a consensus in decisions in the workplace is vital to industry.

Workers' confidence of continued employment is paramount. Workers must feel involved, and harmony must exist between employers and employees. Individual workplace agreements based on negotiation between workers and employers will create an ownership of the contract between the two. This will result in an understanding and commitment by both parties which will go far beyond that which can be achieved by pressure being applied by groups and associations to achieve objectives which often go far beyond the business concerned. The workplace must be the place of negotiation. The negotiation should be as direct as possible between the employer and employee. Workers must feel motivated to participate in the agreement based on the expectation of improved rewards while, at the same time, contributing to the growth of the business.

Of course, change is always a two-edged sword. Managers need greater responsibility to enable them to manage creatively and with skill. Trust by both parties must be a fundamental principle. We need consensus by all parties regarding common objectives, and businesses must be strongly competitive and profitable; without profitability businesses do not continue, employment ceases and the State does not advance.

Surely the role of the Government must not be to create employment, but to provide an environment in which the business sector, through expansion, will create jobs. In recent years we have seen that the expansion of any one business does not necessarily mean a greater number of jobs. As technology has improved and workplace efficiencies have taken place, we have seen businesses grow stronger with a reduced work force. We need new industry. We must create opportunities for people to get into business, as this is from where the new jobs will come. As a Government we must take a lead in encouraging business by reducing Government costs and charges. This must be done as the community expects leadership from Government. This is where the Government can set the agenda and give direction to industry.

Government must provide stimulus for growth and incentives for new enterprises; it must not provide barriers. I am sure we are all united in our wish to see prosperous industry in this State.

If we are to measure our success as a State and as a civilised society, we must provide opportunities, particularly for our young. These opportunities may not be in the same format as we envisaged when at that age. Unfortunately, at a Government level we have never planned for unemployment of the scale we are now experiencing. Previously the manpower thinking, as it existed, was short term with programs such as relocation and work retraining rather than the creation of new industry. The unemployment rate among youth in Western Australia - namely, the 15 to 19 years group - is currently around 23 per cent. This is a significant improvement on the peak rate of in excess of 34 per cent in September of last year. However, the figure is still uncomfortably and dangerously high.

In Western Australia 130 000 people are in the 15 to 19 years age group, of whom 50 000 are either at school or in tertiary education. Although we know that 60 000 of this group is employed, the fact is that only half of that number, 30 000, are employed full time. The other half are employed only part time. The remaining 20 000 people are unemployed. Therefore, the statistics are misleading. A different set of selection criteria and a change of emphasis would show the situation to be much worse.

The reality is that of the 80 000 people in Western Australia in the 15 to 19 years age group who are not studying, only 37.5 per cent have a full time job. Put another way, 62.5 per cent of this group do not have a full time job. Currently the Australian Bureau of Statistics criteria stipulate that if a person works for one hour a week and is paid, or works for one or more hours a week unpaid in a family business, that person is regarded as being employed. If a 19 year old helped his dad in his business for an hour last week because he cannot get a job, he is not regarded as being unemployed. Therefore, the problem is far worse than most of us believe. I remind members that the unemployment rate for the 15 to 19 years group in 1989- just four years ago - was 9.5 per cent. Among the problems linked to long-term unemployment are drug taking, poor health, marital breakdown, domestic violence, homicide and suicide. An Australian Medical Association forum on health and unemployment this year was told that the death rate for unemployed Australian men was 17 times higher than that for men in work. A high proportion of these are young men.

Although there is a growing debate about the continuing need for a work ethic in our community, the fact remains that people need work to live with pride and dignity. I do not see that in 1993 we should accept the extent of welfare dependency, particularly among our young. We clearly will have failed as a Government if we do not put the highest priority on measures to reverse this trend. Employment does not mean continuing to employ people in unprofitable or Government subsidised jobs. They are not real jobs and have no value to the individual or to the community. Government for far too long has poked around the edge of the problem with only bandaid problems. The answer must be for Government to create a dynamic incentive based industry program with a flexible, harmonious industrial relations system at its heart. The key will be to allow commerce and industry to get on and expand its creation of goods and services without undue penalties.

One of the greatest restrictions has been a rigid, outdated award structure which has not allowed for the changing needs of industry. The need to be more flexible in our working hours to meet the demands of the consumer and consideration of what are now harsh penalties for employers wishing to produce goods or services outside of what are traditional working hours must be addressed. Many employers have not been able to cope with these restrictions and choose not to produce additional goods. When this happens we all pay a surcharge for inefficiency. If we let industry get on and do what it does best, it will create jobs. These are the challenges which face us right now. These are the decisions that will continue this State's sliding in its competitive edge or will catapult us into a position where we can all share in the benefits of a prosperous State. I am excited and honoured to be a member of a Government which is prepared to make these decisions. I hope that my contribution will be worthy of the trust put in me by the Liberal Party and the electors of Jandakot.

I thank all members and the staff of Parliament House for the courtesy and support they have given me since my election.