



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr Ian Blayney MLA
(Member for Geraldton)

Address-in-Reply Debate

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 13 November 2008

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Motion

MR I.C. BLAYNEY (Geraldton) [11.54 am]: Firstly, I congratulate the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the Acting Speakers and all members on their election or re-election.

John Williamson was once asked why he had never written a song about the Wallabies. He simply replied that it was because he had never been asked. I find part of his song *A Number On My Back*, also known as *The Wallaby Anthem*, entirely appropriate for me at this time —

When I think of all the men that played,
That took the knocks and made the grade,
The legends that the game has made,
I can't believe I'm here.

...

Could it be a dream,
My father's son that's me,
Humbled by the truth I am,
A Golden Wallaby ...

If members substitute “bush MP” for “Golden Wallaby”, they will understand that is about how I feel!

For all of us here, I find Robert Frost's poem *The Road Not Taken* also quite appropriate —

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
 In leaves no step had trodden black.
 Oh, I marked the first for another day!
 Yet knowing how way leads on to way
 I doubted if I should ever come back.
 I shall be telling this with a sigh
 Somewhere ages and ages hence:
 Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
 I took the one less traveled by,
 And that has made all the difference.

I think all of us here have reached that fork in the road and I hope that we can all make a difference.

European contact with the region I come from started in 1629. The flagship of the Dutch East India Company, the *Batavia*, was wrecked on Half Moon Reef on the Abrolhos Islands on her maiden voyage. A group led by Commander Francisco Pelsaert took the longboat and set off for Batavia, now Jakarta. While they were gone, some 125 people were killed in a mutiny. Pelsaert returned and restored order, and the Dutch left again for Batavia, leaving behind a couple of small stone forts and little else except the remains of the *Batavia* and her many cannons.

The next European to pass through the mid-west was George Grey, who was wrecked at Gantheaume Bay, at the mouth of the Murchison River, in 1839. Grey followed well-defined pathways that, after development, grew into stock routes. Grey noticed groups of relatively well-built huts, some intense land use, things such as yams, and a relatively large population of Aboriginal people. Grey also found wells dug to a depth of 10 to 12 feet along the paths he followed.

We now know that the mid-west is home to many different Aboriginal groups: the Nanda people from the northern coastal part; the Ngadju people from the southern coastal part; the Amangu people located in Geraldton and the greater Geraldton region; the Wadjari people from the Murchison and Mullewa; the Badimia people from Yalgoo, Paynes Find and Mt Magnet; and the Western Desert people from Wiluna and the edge of the Gibson and Little Sandy Deserts. Collectively, the region's Indigenous people are known as the Yamatji people.

In 1846 Augustus Gregory explored north of the Avon Valley. In 1848 he travelled as far north as the coal seam at Mingenew and, later, further north again as far as the Murchison River. At the Murchison River he discovered galena, or lead ore. Lead mining started in 1848. Augustus Gregory was given the job of surveying the town of Geraldton, with 25 to 50 half-acre lots, on a townsite of 1 280 acres. Also included in his instructions was to find a suitable place adjoining a good landing space and a good site for a public jetty. Augustus Gregory then left WA and mounted two more expeditions—one went from the Victoria River to the Gulf of Carpentaria and thence to Rockhampton and Brisbane. It took 18 months and covered 8 000 kilometres. His last expedition was in search of Leichhardt, from west of Brisbane to Adelaide. In memory of this remarkable man, I have established the Augustus Gregory Awards, which are available to any of the 19 schools in my electorate to recognise the boy and girl students in their last year of primary and secondary school who have made the most improvement in their final year. In all his explorations, Gregory never lost a man or a horse. He was a superb organiser and planner and never came into conflict with the Indigenous people he encountered. I am pleased to say that Geraldton Secondary College has given these awards, and I personally congratulate Jordan Dalgety and Lot Tagive for winning them. Although these dry facts do not mention conflict, there must have been some. I think Geraldton can lead the country on achieving reconciliation between our peoples, and I will do my best to help bring this about.

My own family's history is similar to that of the region. The first member of my family, David Blayney, arrived from Wales in 1858, and over the generations my family have mostly been farmers. Both my parents served in the Australian Army in World War II. They belonged to a generation to whom we owe much. This generation stopped Australia from being invaded and rid the world of fascist governments that were among the most ugly and evil that the world has ever seen.

I had a simple, peaceful farm upbringing, from which I have developed a love of reading, a love of the bush and, I regret, a relative disinterest in sport, with the honourable exception of the Fremantle Football Club.

What drives me? Why am I here? Why am I on this side of the house? I will quote from the chapter written by Ian Hancock entitled "The Rise of the Liberal Party" in *The Australian Century*. It states —

The 1949 success of the Liberal Party as a party committed to anti-socialism, national development, the mixed economy and free enterprise, welfare and individual rights, created a revised agenda for Australian politics that would last well into the next decade.

I contend that it lasted significantly longer than that. Let us go forward to 1996, and I will quote from *The Longest Decade* by George Megalogenis. It states —

I have always believed in an Australia built on reward for individual effort with a special place of honour for small business as the engine room of our economy. I've always believed in a safety net for those amongst us who don't make it. I've always believed in the family as the stabilising and cohering unit of our society. And, I believe very passionately in an Australia drawn from the four corners of the earth, but united together behind a common set of Australian values.

The speaker he quoted was, of course, John Howard.

And so to what our colleague Hon Bruce Donaldson refers to as my "lovely little electorate". Geraldton is a different electorate now; it has collected half of the old seat of Greenough's population and has the same boundaries as the newly created City of Geraldton-Greenough, which are those of the old Shire of Greenough. The electorate is about 50 kilometres wide and 50 kilometres from north to south and includes the Abrolhos Islands.

Firstly, I would like to pay credit to the previous member for Geraldton, Mr Shane Hill. Shane was the member for two terms and was known in the area as an enthusiastic ambassador for the city. Before him was Mr Bob Bloffwitch, who had two terms and also worked hard for the city. Previous to Bob was Mr Jeff Carr, who is still liked and respected in the area for his hard work for us over many years. Likewise, the electorate of Greenough was served by our Speaker, Mr Grant Woodhams; Mr Jamie Edwards; Mr Kevin Minson; Mr Reg Tubby; and Sir David Brand. All were hard workers and all were liked and respected in the electorate and the wider region.

Of all the regions represented in this place, I think Geraldton, the surrounding area and the hinterland probably face one of the most exciting futures. The first challenge we face is building the new deepwater port of Oakajee and its associated railway and infrastructure. Initially, Oakajee will send out one 100 000-tonne ship of iron ore a day. Some projections are for a lot more. The ore will come in from Jack Hills, Wiluna West, Weld Range, Karara and other mines. Along with this will be needed new powerlines, more low-cost housing and all the other services that are needed as a population grows.

The single comment I make is that there is a desperate need for a simpler, faster approval process for mines and infrastructure, because our current processes seem to be in place to drive away investors, rather than to encourage them. I recently had in my office representatives from Gindalbie

Metals Ltd, which literally needs a couple of ticks to invest \$1.8 billion. Our miners are extremely valued community members. I recently visited Iluka Resources Ltd's plant at Narngulu, which processes mineral sands from Eneabba. The plant at Narngulu, just east of Geraldton, employs 180 people directly and many more indirectly. It has recently decided to upgrade its apprentice scheme and has increased expenditure in this area by \$600 000 per annum. It is an active participant in many community events. Iluka has recently decided to make Geraldton its base for processing sand from South Australia. This will mean an investment of \$60 million and will guarantee its operations locally for another 10 years.

Thankfully, grain farming is having a good season after two disasters in 2006 and 2007. Over the years, Geraldton has established itself as the second-largest grain port in Australia. Adaptation to climate change is vital for the future of farming, and the availability of well-paid mining jobs to the east of our marginal farming country will be a huge help. It is also critical that our plant breeders can use any technology available to them to speed adoption, and I ask our government to do as the governments in Victoria and New South Wales have done and remove all barriers to genetically modified crops.

The primary industry that is currently going through a hard time is our crayfishing industry. Many people have talked to me or rung me to discuss the pot reductions brought in by our government. Making these decisions can never be easy, but I consider that the industry has a good future. I look forward to working with it and its people to achieve this.

Most members probably do not know that Australia's first scheduled air service from Geraldton to Derby was operated by West Australian Airways Ltd. It was operated by Sir Norman Brearly, using Bristol Air Tourers, and started on 5 December 1921.

Our region once again looks to the sky, but this time with a very different purpose. The mid-west is competing with southern Africa for the square kilometre array project, which will be an absolutely awesome radio telescope. The forerunner of the square kilometre array is the Australian square kilometre array pathfinder, which will be built at Boolardy station, east of Murchison settlement. This area is truly radio quiet; it is one of the most radio quiet areas in the world. ASKAP will comprise up to 40 parabolic dishes, forming an array of antennas. Construction will start in 2009, with full operation by 2013. In its first six hours of operation, ASKAP will gather more information than that which has been gathered by radio astronomy in the past 50 years. In one week ASKAP will generate more information than that which is currently on the worldwide web. However, the successful operation of ASKAP will be merely a step towards hopefully gaining the full SKA. The SKA has been formed by a collaboration of 19 countries and will have an expected budget approaching \$2 billion. The area of the dishes will be around one million square metres. Half the dishes will be in the radio quiet zone, which has a radius of about 80 kilometres around the station, with the rest spread across Australia and New Zealand, up to 5 000 kilometres away. The five key science projects that have been identified for the SKA include extreme tests of general relativity from the study of pulsars and black holes; the evolution of galaxies, cosmology, dark matter and energy; probing the Dark Ages—the first black holes and stars; the cradle of life—searching for planets and life; and the origin and evolution of cosmic magnetism. Many of these developments are exciting.

Another important thing for Geraldton this year has been the discovery of the wreck of HMAS *Sydney*, which sank during World War II with the loss of all 645 men on board. The local Rotary club wishes to complete the fifth element of its deeply moving memorial on Mt Scott, which overlooks the city, to commemorate the discovery of HMAS *Sydney*. I am sure that all members would support it.

Finally, I would like to mention the Geraldton Universities Centre. Currently, it offers courses from the University of Western Australia, Curtin University and Edith Cowan University. The Geraldton

Universities Centre could grow into a solid local institution in its own right by researching via the Square Kilometre Array, studying the impact of climate change and developing exchanges with our new mineral customers in northern Asia.

The first function I attended as a member was to celebrate the one-hundred and tenth anniversary of the independence of the Philippines, which was held by the Mabuhay Club. Recently, I attended the local mosque to celebrate Eid, the end of Ramadan. These events demonstrate the kind of electorate I come from—diverse, open to the world and ready to take a leap forward. My electors are mindful of Geraldton’s history, but they are not overcome by it. I face the challenging time as their local member, but I look forward to it and I think we will do it well.

I take this opportunity to thank my wife, Barbara, my wider family and the people who helped me to get here. In particular, I thank my campaign chair, Len Carroll; treasurer, Rod O’Connor; and committee members Julie Boschetti and Graham Greenaway. I also thank Jackie Gill for her help in advertising and Gordon Thompson and Ruth Keamy for assisting with my campaign. Finally, I thank Zak Kirkup and Ben Morton from Menzies House for their help and advice.

[Applause.]
