



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Hon Robin Scott, MLC (Member for Mining and Pastoral)

Legislative Council

Address-in-Reply

Tuesday, 23 May 2017

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 18 May on the following motion moved by Hon Dr Sally Talbot —

That the following address be presented to Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson, Companion of the Order of Australia, Governor in and over the state of Western Australia and its dependencies in the commonwealth of Australia —

May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and thank Your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

HON ROBIN SCOTT (Mining and Pastoral) [8.46 pm]: Madam President, fellow members of the Legislative Council, I will take this opportunity to acknowledge the traditional landowners and offer my respects to the elders, both past and present. Thank you. May I congratulate you also, Madam President, on a very brave decision taking on this very important role. I am sure all members of this chamber will benefit from your experience and guidance. Thank you.

My name is Robin Scott, I am 64 years old, and Australia has been my home for 47 years. I was born in Scotland near Glasgow, where I had a wonderful childhood. From where I lived, it was a short walk to fresh, flowing rivers, rolling hills and old-growth forests, which you could get lost in for days. I was also lucky that both my parents worked. My mother was a private secretary and my father was a mobile crane driver. This meant that my two sisters and I went to school with good shoes on our feet and wore school uniforms. We also had annual holidays either in Scotland or, if we wanted some sunshine, we would go south into England. My father also owned a car. Even though we lived in a council house in a large housing estate, many of our friends thought we were millionaires, and looking back and comparing our lives with theirs, we were millionaires. All this luck changed when I left school aged 15. I had always wanted to be an electrician since receiving my first electric shock whilst fiddling with my electric train set. I wanted to know more about this invisible power that could throw me from one corner of the room to the other. But the three main industries in my home town, which were coal mining, steel mills and ship building, were all in decline due to the interference of governments and militant unions. It would have been easier for me to touch the stars or fly to the moon than get an electrical apprenticeship. Unemployment for 15 to 25-year-olds was very high, so after a brief period in the Royal Navy and then on the local farm, my parents decided to take us to Australia to give us a better opportunity at life.

We boarded a ship in Southampton in September 1970 and started a three-week voyage, headed for Fremantle via Las Palmas in the Canary Islands, where the family experienced temperatures around 30 degrees for the first time ever. We also called in to Cape Town in South Africa, where we witnessed the ugly, nasty and racist lifestyle of apartheid. Eventually, we arrived off the coast of Western Australia, slipping past Rottnest Island as the sun was rising in the east. We were docked in Fremantle Harbour by about eight o'clock and were disembarking by nine o'clock.

I still remember my first day in Australia as though it were yesterday. We were picked up by family members who had been in Australia for some years, who lived in Rossmoyne. We drove from Fremantle to Rossmoyne along High Road because Leach Highway was not yet constructed. The sun was shining and the sky was blue and I remember all the freestanding houses with nice gardens, and most had cars in the driveway—cars I had never seen or heard of before, like Holdens and Falcons. What stuck in my memory most were the roofs on the houses. In Scotland, all the roofs are slate so the choice of colours is limited. Here I was looking at red roofs, green roofs, white roofs, brown roofs and terracotta roofs. I was sure that everyone in Australia must be millionaires.

In my first week in Australia, I was offered five apprenticeships—as a mechanic, a plumber, a carpenter, a fibrous plasterer and an electrician. I did not take any of the job offers because in my first month in Australia, I had to adjust to a very different way of life. Here everything was so clean, everyone had a job, everyone was happy and everyone drove a car. There was no violence, not everyone locked their house when they went out and people parked their cars and left the keys in the ignition. You must understand that my home town in Scotland was once described as a place where you could run for 20 minutes and still be at the scene of the crime!

I was again lucky when I started a five-year apprenticeship near Fremantle with a company that had all the latest electrical equipment I wanted to learn to use, but I had double luck because I had a tradesman named Neville Riley, who really wanted to teach me all aspects of the trade. Neville and his wife, Wendy, also introduced me to the Australian way of life. They took me fishing down south to Bunker Bay every year for long weekends. They also took me roo shooting and feral pig shooting for pet food and their own meat. This was all done on private property. They also introduced me to mulesing on the family farm. My job was to put the lambs on the cradle and lift them off after the procedure. I thought it would have been kinder just to slit the throat of the wee lamb and be done! It was many years later whilst living and working in the Murchison that I saw my first fly-blown sheep. I then realised that mulesing was much kinder.

After finishing my five-year apprenticeship, I did what most young Aussies did in the 1970s—I left Australia to travel to Europe. Thanks to the skills I had learnt in Australia, I was able to work as an electrician in West Germany, Holland and Britain. After a few years travelling, I returned to Australia.

The year 1980 was a big year for me, as I got married, started a family and bought my first house. Shortly afterwards, my employer sent me to Meekatharra to my first goldmine, and for me it was love at first sight. After six weeks in Meeka, I was offered a full-time job at a goldmine in Mt Magnet. Because I had a huge mortgage of \$33 000, I thought it a good idea to try to reduce my debt by working in the bush and moving my young family to Magnet. After a few months in Mt Magnet, I saw the opportunity for an electrical contractor, so I took the plunge and started my own business, which I have operated for more than 30 years. After five years in business, I owed the banks \$500 000, but it was good debt. I had to buy premises, vehicles and equipment, because, once again, I was lucky; my business had grown like a mushroom.

I began to take an interest in politics in the 1980s. The favourite catchcry then was “I cannot recall.” It was very popular with our senior politicians and our high-flying entrepreneurs when asked difficult questions about what they may have said or done. This was their get-out-of-jail card, and for some it worked very well. Today’s catchcry is “an error of judgement”. This worked for a while, provided the person concerned kept smiling and made light of their crime. But today’s public, who, by the way, are our employers, which I am sure most members know, are paying more attention to state and federal politics. In the real world,

when a person makes an error of judgement, they have to pay it back and, in most cases, they lose their job, with the possibility of a jail term. I am hoping I can assist in removing this catchcry of “an error of judgement” and replacing it with “I am sorry for stealing from my employer and I am so embarrassed that I will resign from politics forever.”

Like me, the people are fed up with having to vote for the best of a bad bunch. Our politics is just a revolving door for the same bad politics, no matter who is in power. State and federal politicians seem to be more concerned with how we look overseas and what number we are in the pecking order of military and financial power. Let us concentrate on our own backyard and people before we worry about keeping up with the big players. We have every natural resource the world wants, such as iron ore, gold, copper, silver, gas, oil, diamonds and uranium, not to forget the huge financial contribution our agricultural and pastoral industries provide to the government. At the opening of Parliament on 11 May, the mining industry and agricultural industries were mentioned, but, sadly, there was no mention of the pastoral industry. I am sure this was only an oversight. Even with all these natural resources and industries, we still cannot make a quid. Why is that? My personal view is that it is just poor, poor management. I was once told that there are no bad businesses, only bad businesspeople. I feel the same applies to our politicians. We have allowed our manufacturing, agricultural and pastoral industries to be run into the ground. We hear promises from both sides of politics about what will be done to improve these industries, usually just before election time. They may as well promise us all a two-storey house with a swimming pool and a Mercedes Benz in the driveway, because that is how much I trust these promises. Much of our income has been squandered on self-indulgent projects, which I will not mention because they are now history. It is not that I am against such projects, but I feel that our priorities are all askew. Let us get people into their own homes and let us get the cost of utilities under control.

If I wanted to be a politician, I could have joined a major party 30 years ago and, with a bit of luck, been elected to Parliament before now, but none of the major parties appealed to me. Thanks to Pauline Hanson’s One Nation, I now have the privilege and opportunity, along with everyone in this chamber, to help change things and make improvements to assist the government of the day to make the right decisions and get us out of this mess we find ourselves in.

This is what I would like to see happen. I would like to see apprenticeships for our young people. One Nation proposes that the government pays 75 per cent of the wages of first-year apprentices, 50 per cent of the wages of second-year apprentices and 25 per cent of the wages of third-year apprentices. It would be a benefit to the government if the young were being trained rather than paying three years’ dole money for that person to sit at home watching television and having no prospects. The benefit would be that it would beef up our trades pool. Someone with a trade has a better chance of supporting themselves and their family. I am sure the rates of crime, vandalism and violence would drop, with young people having purpose in life and a senior tradesperson as a mentor to help keep them on track. To ensure that proper training is being given, we would reintroduce apprentice inspectors to make sure that unscrupulous employers are not abusing the system for cheap labour and that all aspects of their chosen trade are being taught correctly. I know for a fact that my life would have been so different if I had not been able to have an apprenticeship, and I know I would not be standing here today without the guidance and mentoring during that apprenticeship.

Our farmers have to be assisted to stay on the land. If a farmer has done all the right things to manage his farm but Mother Nature has dealt him a blow, the banks must wait for their money. Again, we could have farming inspectors employed through the banks to make sure that the farmer has done all the things possible to generate a crop and an income. The idea of

throwing a family off their property through no fault of their own is not how Australia operates. Many of our farmers have been pushed to the brink due to hardline banking regulations. I also believe that the banks no longer want to deal with the family farmer. They would much rather deal with big corporations that are slowly gobbling up our prime farm land. Australian farms belong in Australian hands. These measures should also apply to the pastoral industry, which is also struggling with not only the banks, but also the ridiculous restrictions imposed on them by the Environmental Protection Authority.

I now turn to schools. Some of our schools are being used as childminding centres while both parents go out to work. Since the abolishment of any type of effective punishment, the teachers of today have a very difficult job teaching in our government schools. The social engineers have created generations of young persons who have no respect for themselves, let alone anyone else. We must teach politics in our schools. We must teach the art of debating, which is not happening in government schools. People need to understand that they do not have to live in the western suburbs or go to a private school to enter politics. All that is required is the passion to improve life for all Australians and to make sure all decisions made are fair for everyone. Many politicians do not want politics taught in government schools; they would prefer to keep a closed shop and encourage only their own offspring to enter the public arena. Being a politician is not boring. For me so far it has been an exciting two-day experience, and I know it will only get better. Most of our young students do the right thing at school, but it needs only one disruptive student to create havoc in the classroom.

Referring to law and order, we need to return the police service to a police force and stop the courts hindering our hardworking police from doing their jobs properly. Our courts are dismissing criminals and putting them back on the streets to recommit violent crimes. I am very pleased to hear that the new Premier is going to increase the penalties for drug traffickers and has also introduced no body, no parole laws. This may prevent some families from having to experience the horror of not being able to put their loved ones to rest. It is reassuring when we hear that state and federal police have made big drug busts, but we could do better at the street distribution level. If we really want to stop the drug distribution trade, we should ask taxidriviers where they are being distributed from. More than one taxidriver has told me that police have been called to inform them of drug pick-up addresses but nothing has been done. There may be reasons nothing has been done that I know nothing about; however, I would expect some kind of action from police. We need to see our police on the beat and on the roads. At the moment, it appears the public are being used as revenue collectors.

We have to stop hiding the Aboriginal problem behind a pile of money. Aboriginal women are already showing the way to a better life for themselves and their children. Mothers all over the world want only the best for their children and our Aboriginal mothers are no different. They know the benefits of education and they will make sure their kids go to school, but they are hindered by the male influence in their culture. Some mothers in regional towns have already set up communities outside, away from the violence and grog that plagues many country towns. We have to take advice from these people—the ones at the coalface. We have to protect them from those who hinder progress and who encourage drunken and violent behaviour. We need only one generation of educated Aboriginals and the problem would start to take care of itself. I will be making contact with these women as soon as possible. I will take instructions from them and I will do my best to assist them with whatever they need. Too many non-Indigenous people are making decisions for our traditional landowners. Many have never been further east than Midland or further north than Joondalup. All people involved with Indigenous affairs could be expected to spend at least one week a year every year at an Aboriginal community to help them understand what the communities really need and want.

Turning to water, two desalination water plants now operate in this state. I have worked at both plants. They were very expensive to build and they are very expensive to maintain. The daily operating costs of electricity and chemicals are very high. I cannot understand why previous governments have not started building a pipeline from the Kimberley. The benefits are multiple. We could supply water to all the towns on the way south, which means all the water bores, electric and diesel, that supply regional towns could be decommissioned, saving millions of dollars. It would take years but eventually we could fill the dams in the metropolitan area and in the south west. The benefits include flushing out our polluted rivers the way nature intended. We could get rid of the oxygen plants dotted along the Swan and Canning Rivers. I remember swimming in the Canning River with my kids when they were growing up. I would not want to swim in the river now. I will find the correct people to advise me of costs and various ways to get water to the south of the state. This could mean using current water channels that flow south and linking them with pipelines and dams. Many people tell me that we should take the people to the water and create industries in the north. This is a really good idea. However, no matter how many people move to the north west, there will always be a water shortage in Perth, and it will only get worse. The people I have spoken to do not want to live in a harsh environment. They do not want their children growing up under a hot and violent sun. It is different if a person is born in the region—they grow up understanding the harsh weather conditions and loving the environment and all the beauty it beholds, but for southern Aussies it is a big ask to uproot and move north. Our desalination plants can be put on care and maintenance ready for any emergency that may occur.

I have touched on these six items only very briefly, but should anyone want me to elaborate or, even better, assist me with my quests, I would be very happy indeed.

I would like to thank certain people who have helped me get to this position in Parliament. Firstly, Her Excellency the Governor, who swore me in yesterday: I thank her for my first steps in Parliament. I thank Pauline Hanson, who never gave up her political ambitions even though some people spent years trying to wipe out the One Nation party. With her true grit and determination, she is now Senator Hanson and I am very proud to be part of her party. Marye Louise Daniels and her husband, Mr Ron McLean, have encouraged me for the past 19 years to hold on to my dream of joining Parliament. Thank you, Ron and Marye. My work colleague and friend Bob Hogkinson always made me feel 10 feet tall when he saw that I was under pressure. Thank you, Bob. To my oldest and longest friends in Australia, Neville and Wendy Riley, whom I met two months after arriving in Australia, I will always be grateful to these two wonderful people because my life would have been so different without their mentoring and advice. Thank you, Neville and Wendy. I thank my two sisters, Gillian and Sandra, and their families. My sisters never stop telling me that they love me and are proud of me. They should know that I am very lucky to have sisters like them and I also love them very much. My son, Tristan, and his wife, Ruby, have given me four grandchildren and my daughter, Cloe, is expecting her first child on 5 July. A father cannot be more proud or happy than I am.

I thank the Cinnani, Williams, Champtaloup and Mattarocchia families for welcoming me into their lives and homes. To all my work colleagues, I also thank them for the encouragement and support they gave me during the election campaign and of course all the Pauline Hanson's One Nation candidates who put in so much effort at the last election. I promise I will not let you down and ask all of you to start preparing for the next state election. Thanks also to a new friend whom I met during the election and who will be helping me for the next four years, Mr Michael Darby. Thank you, Michael.

The last person and most important on the thankyou list is my fellow expedition partner, my co-pilot, my bosun, my GPS in life, and the one who gently reels me in when my ideas and

plans start heading for the outer hemisphere. She is the only one I believe when she says, "Don't eat all that ice cream; it's bad for you"! The woman I love, Julia, thank you for the last eight years.

I will finish now by thanking you all for your patience and kindness during my first speech. I also want to say that everyone in this chamber is my new best friend! Where I come from, you can have more than one best friend. I am sure we are all here for the same reason, and that is to benefit Western Australia in general and all Western Australians in particular. We have all been granted four years to prove ourselves. This means working together to solve differences and to reach agreement. If we can do this, everyone benefits and our new Premier, Hon Mark McGowan, who is off to a great start, will have a better chance of guiding us out of this mess we are in. Thank you.

[Applause.]
