

[28 February 1985.]

MR CASH (Mt. Lawley) [3.06 p.m.]: It is indeed an honour to have been chosen by the people of the electorate of Mt. Lawley to be their representative in the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia.

My success in winning the seat of Mt. Lawley at the by-election held on 17 November 1984 was part of a team effort in which many strong Liberal supporters worked together to achieve a common goal. I take this opportunity of paying tribute to some of the many members of our team.

One of my strongest supporters was Hon. R.J. O'Connor, Premier of Western Australia during 1982-83, and the member for the seat of Mt. Lawley for more than 22 of his 26 years as a member of this House.

My association with Ray O'Connor goes back some 25 years to the time he first stood for the Legislative Assembly seat of North Perth in 1958. At that time my brother and I were active in the local scouting movement and we called on the business premises of Mr O'Connor to seek jobs to raise funds for the scouts. Being community minded, Mr O'Connor readily agreed to hire both my brother and myself and this "bob a job" arrangement became the basis for regular Saturday morning employment at the O'Connor business for a number of years.

During the past 25 years, Ray O'Connor has always remained a close friend of my family, and we were proud to follow his distinguished political career which saw him attain 18 senior portfolios in this Parliament, and later, the highest political office in Western Australia, the position of Premier. I am proud to be able to call Ray O'Connor my friend, but more than that, I am indebted to him and his family for their strong support over many years.

On the day of the by-election, I was fortunate in having tremendous support from a large number of dedicated people who worked extremely hard to ensure a successful result. To all members of our team, I extend sincere thanks.

I am also indebted to Mrs Ethel Douglas and her wonderful team of ladies who worked so hard in arranging the many social and fundraising functions which made our campaign a success. I extend special thanks to my wife, Ursula Cash, and to Mrs Joy Nicholas, Mrs Dallas Burdett, Mrs Ada Loverock, Mrs Thelma Baker, and Mrs Thelma Lazar for the magnificent task which they performed with both enthusiasm and dedication.

Ethel Douglas was, in fact, a tower of strength to my father and our family after the sudden death of my mother in 1959 when I was 12 years of age. Like Ray O'Connor, Ethel Douglas took a special interest in my life and there is no doubt in my mind that she was the person most responsible for my election to the City of Stirling as the councillor for Lawley Ward, and for my election some five years later to this House.

I extend my thanks to you, Mr Speaker, for your advice and guidance to me since I entered this House, and to the Clerk, officers and staff of the House for the courtesies they have extended to me since my election.

I also appreciate the good wishes offered to me by a large number of the long-serving members of the Labor Government, and the very strong support and encouragement I have received from both the Leader of the Opposition and my colleagues on this side of the House.

Members will be interested to know the general composition of the electorate of Mt. Lawley, which is a metropolitan electorate. It can be broken basically into six specific communities of interest, each having its own particular characteristics. The first area is that of Mt. Lawley, which is the area west of Beaufort Street and sometimes referred to as "old Mt. Lawley". The second area comprises the suburbs of Menora and Coolbinia. The third area is that part of Yokine east of Flinders Street to Morley Drive and up to the Western Australian Golf Club. The fourth area is the Dianella triangle, which is sometimes referred to as "Sutherland" and which is bounded by Cresswell Road and Alexander Drive. The fifth area is the original Dianella - that section of Dianella west of Walter Road. The final area is the Morley section of the electorate which is bounded by Walter Road, Wellington Road, and Morley Drive.

It is also interesting to note that the Mt. Lawley electorate has a demographic structure which shows that more than 50 per cent of the electors are older than 50 years of age. In this regard, members will find that I take a particular interest in the needs of our retired and elderly people. As members will appreciate, Western Australia has a population of 1.4 million people, of whom it is estimated that 8.74 per cent are over the age of 65 years. Population projections indicate that this percentage can be expected to increase to more than 10 per cent by the year 2001, and that is not taking into account the growing trend towards earlier retirement.

The special and varied concerns of such a large and growing section of the Western Australian community demand that we apply special and co-ordinated attention to this group. We in the Liberal Party defend the right

of free people to live their own lives as they choose; and we regard the traditional family unit as one of our great cornerstones. We support the principle of assisting people on a needs basis.

The combination of these fundamental principles is best exemplified by the Liberal Party's belief that the elderly and retired people - the people who have contributed so much to the development of this State and this nation - are entitled to enjoy their retirement and their latter years with dignity and security.

Just as employment and security offer the fundamental strengths of the family at one end of the spectrum, so retirement and security provide the complementary strengths at the other end. Just as it is the task of the Government to create the conditions in which employment and security can be created at the one end, so it is equally the task of the Government to create the conditions in which retirement and security can be developed at the other end. The key to both lies in the overall Liberal approach to less government, lower taxes, and incentives to private enterprise. It should be noted that the greater the success of private enterprise the greater the capacity to provide employment, and in the final analysis the easier it is for the Government to meet its greater responsibilities to the elderly and retired people.

Western Australia's senior citizens are entitled to know that the community of the future will enable them to live their lives free from worry, free from poverty, and free from neglect. To enable this to be achieved, and achieved with the maximum of Government efficiency, the Opposition recently announced the appointment of a shadow Minister with special responsibility for the elderly and the retired. It should also be noted that in fact that was the first such portfolio appointment anywhere in Australia.

I acknowledge that many of the policies affecting elderly and retired people are tied to the policies of the Federal Government. Accordingly, the Federal Parliamentary Liberal Party has been requested to ensure that a co-ordinated plan for the future of our elderly and retired people will be implemented on our return to office. The community of the future must be one in which our ageing population is encouraged, firstly, to participate at all levels; and the people who have retired must have the option of remaining in their own homes as long as they might wish. They also should have the option of living with their families in the environment that they prefer. Obviously, care by way of institutional facilities must also be available as an option for people to choose themselves.

Just as flexibility and freedom will be applied in so many areas of future Liberal activities, so flexibility and freedom will also be the bywords of my party's approach to elderly and retired people. The proposals contained in our recently announced discussion paper are designed to provide this very special flexibility and freedom, and also include the security demanded by people of all ages.

While it is a fact that the demography of the Mt. Lawley electorate indicates that more than 50 per cent of the electors are over the age of 50 years, I also recognise the plight of the unemployed people in the electorate. There is no doubt in my mind that the vast majority of the unemployed, many of whom I met on my doorknocking campaign, and many of whom I still meet as I go about the electorate, are all desperately keen to accept employment. I am absolutely convinced that full employment is not a myth, and the sooner we as responsible members recognise that full employment can in fact be achieved, and the sooner we start pursuing policies that will achieve it, the better off the community will be. The unemployed people in the Mt. Lawley electorate want a chance; they want an opportunity to work; they want an opportunity to improve their standard of living; but most of all they want a chance to secure their future.

We in the Liberal Party recognise that strong economic growth is the only way to solve the current unemployment crisis. Recently, the Leader of the Opposition, with the strong support of his Liberal team, released our party's policy on the economy and employment. The thrust of our economic policy is designed to give people greater freedom from taxation, arbitration, and regulation, so that we can generate the economic development that is necessary to improve our economic prospects.

Some of the positive measures which would enable us to stimulate employment, and which have been set out in the document I mentioned, include voluntary employment contracts where the employers and the employees have the freedom to negotiate their own agreements, and there is deregulation of award rates of pay for juniors as a means of creating employment; protection for the subcontracting system; work and production incentives as an alternative to holiday leave loadings; Government promotion of exports, especially in Asia and the Indian Ocean region which represent vast markets; a variety of measures to develop the tourism and hospitality industries and make them more competitive; the reform of the industrial relations system; lifting the burden of Government regulations and Government licensing procedures; and increasing the payroll tax exemption level in each successive Liberal State Budget.

Another area of concern in the electorate of Mt. Lawley is the proposed move by the Alcohol and Drug Authority into the former Royal Perth Hospital annexe in Field Street, Mt. Lawley. It has become quite obvious

to the residents in the affected area, to the local authority - the City of Stirling - and to me that the Government does not recognise the fact that the former Royal Perth Hospital site is totally unsuitable as an ADA annexe.

It is absolutely important for members to note that the people of Mt. Lawley recognise very clearly the need to treat alcoholics and drug addicts. What the residents and the local authority are saying to the Government is that the site is in a residential area and it is an area where the surrounding institutional uses of land are in oversupply. We believe that the ADA, the patients, and the residents of Mt. Lawley would be better served if the former Royal Perth Hospital annexe were sold to a private operator and used as an aged persons' home. This was the purpose for which it was originally built. The Government should use the proceeds from the sale to erect a purpose-built centre on Government land in East Perth near the existing Royal Perth Hospital. In fact, the Opposition when in Government supported that move and as recently as three weeks ago the Leader of the Opposition advised the President of the Mt. Lawley Society that the Opposition still held the view that the ADA annexe should be located in East Perth and certainly not in the Mt. Lawley residential area.

There is no doubt that the residents of the south-eastern portion of the Mt. Lawley electorate are making a plea to the Government to recognise that alternative sites are available to the ADA. They urge and call on the Government not to allow the residential amenity of this area to be destroyed by allowing the ADA to shift into Mt. Lawley. I mentioned that the Field-Rookwood Street portion of Mt. Lawley is already an area which the local authority recognises as being saturated by institutions. It is also important to note that a high proportion of elderly and retired people live adjacent to the Royal Perth Hospital annexe. On many occasions they have complained to me, as a ward councillor for that area, to the local authority, and to the police of antisocial behaviour which emanates from an alcoholic treatment centre already located directly opposite the proposed ADA site. The antisocial behaviour complained of includes: Abusive conduct, offensive language, technical assault, trespass, and, regrettably, rape and murder. It is quite inconceivable that the Government is considering locating a dry treatment facility - the ADA centre - directly opposite a wet treatment facility, namely ACRAH.

The problem of drug and alcohol abuse is growing on a daily basis and in view of the detrimental effect it would have on the residential amenity and the lifestyle of the residents in the immediate area, I call on the Government to reconsider its decision to allow the ADA to occupy the former RPH annexe site in Field Street, Mt Lawley.

I turn now to another area of concern within the electorate of Mt. Lawley. A number of residents have expressed their concern to me at the continually rising suburban crime rate. This is especially evident with the elderly, many of whom shelter behind heavy security doors to protect themselves from the incidents of vandalism and violence. There is no question that the citizens of this State expect, and are entitled to, adequate police protection.

Fortunately the Western Australian Police Force enjoys very good public support, notwithstanding the usual vocal minority who in the main are not only anti-police but anti-establishment. It should always be remembered that support for the police comes from the silent majority who do not generally surface until the critics of the police become too unfair or go beyond a reasonable line.

Just as it is important to have a police presence, there is no question that we as representatives of the people have an obligation to provide suitable buildings and equipment with adequate working conditions for the members of the Police Force to allow them to promote efficiency in the discharge of their duties.

The question has also been raised of the level of cleanliness and protection that we currently afford our police in the handling of the people with whom they are required to come in contact. The central police station and lockup are examples of the great need to improve and provide up-to-date facilities. Few respectable members of the public or this Parliament would ever know exactly what goes on behind the scenes.

For instance, the Perth lockup is completely inadequate to cope with the large number of persons to be processed through this limited area. Staff facilities for police officers are virtually non-existent and would not be tolerated in a normal factory or industrial situation.

Members of the Police Force have advised me that they are required to handle and process people who are suspected of having, or in fact have, various health and hygiene problems. However, there are no real or adequate facilities to allow them to take the necessary precautions which are generally accepted in other areas where similar health hazards exist. The recent medical revelations in regard to AIDS only add to the problems faced by police officers.

Mr Speaker, I thank the House for its indulgence. I look forward to serving the people of my electorate and making a positive contribution to the affairs of this Parliament and our great State of Western Australia.

[Applause.]