

tain the undoubted rights and privileges of this House to initiate legislation, I, move, without notice—

For leave to introduce a Bill for an Act to repeal the Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act, 1944-1964.

Question put and passed; leave granted.

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by The Hon. W. F. Willesee (Leader of the House), and read a first time.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Distribution of Copies

THE PRESIDENT (The Hon. L. C. Diver) [3.49 p.m.]: I have to announce that for the sake of accuracy I have obtained copies of His Excellency's Speech which will now be distributed to members.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: FIRST DAY

Motion

THE HON. L. D. ELLIOTT (North-East Metropolitan) [3.50 p.m.]: I move—

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency:—

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 to thank Your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

The Premier and members of the Cabinet have extended to me the privilege of speaking today at the opening of the Twenty-seventh Parliament of Western Australia, and I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to them for this honour.

There are many to whom I should express gratitude for the opportunity to stand here today as a Labor member of the Legislative Council; but, unfortunately, it is not possible to refer to them all in a speech such as this. However, I must thank the electors of the North-East Metropolitan Province for their confidence in me. I would also like to make special mention of my friend and predecessor, The Honourable Ruby Hutchison, who confounded everybody in 1954, when, by sheer hard work and determination she caused the very foundations of the Council Chamber to tremble by becoming its first woman member. Since that time she has made her presence well and truly felt both in the Council and in the community at large. Her activities and achievements in many fields are well known, particularly as they relate to mental health, consumer protection, child

welfare, and women's rights. However, I think she will be remembered most of all for her relentless fight for the reform of this Council and for its ultimate abolition.

It has been a long, hard battle to establish democratic government in this State. It took 132 years to establish adult franchise for the Legislative Council, and I hope it will not take another 132 years to replace our existing bicameral system with a unicameral Parliament, which is the policy of my party.

Although the people of Western Australia received two ballot papers when they went to the polls on the 20th February, I wonder how many of them knew they were voting for a legislative body with power to frustrate the efforts of the body from which the Government of the State would be formed. I feel that if a survey were taken the results may be rather surprising. It was my experience during the election that most people thought Upper House or Council candidates were standing for the Senate or the local shire council.

The election, I believe, again highlighted the tremendous imbalance in the voting power of the electors of this State. Although we now have adult franchise we can by no means claim that the votes have equal value. The province which I was elected to represent has 77,000 electors within it, whilst most country provinces contain only 18,000 or 19,000 electors. This means that the vote of a person living in the country has four times the value of the vote of a person living in my province. I submit that this is an anomalous position and it should be corrected.

His Excellency the Governor referred to proposed legislation to remove all remaining legal restrictions on the complete integration of Aborigines. I believe that one of the most urgent human problems confronting government in this country today is that of our Aboriginal people. The Oxford Dictionary defines "Aboriginal" as "indigenous, existing in a land at the dawn of history. . ."

The indigenous people who inhabited this country at the dawn of its history were a proud, self-supporting race, rich in culture and religion. They knew no squalor, no idleness, no alcoholism, and no degradation. They belonged to the land: they loved it; they were part of it, and it was part of them. Once it was taken from them the fabric of their society was destroyed. They became a disoriented, dependent race. European society introduced to them drunkenness, disease, and prostitution. It took away their children and their pride.

I think an old Aboriginal gentleman who lived on one of the reserves I visited expressed the situation very well when he

said that his people were down in a gully between two hills. In the early days they were at the top of one hill, but now they are down in the gully and they have to be helped to the top of the second hill. I do not believe we will help these people to the top of the hill by welfare payments and paternalism. This method has been tried for long enough and it does not work. The gap between the affluent white community and the Aboriginal community is widening.

I know that some Aborigines have made the grade and have become fully integrated, and that there have been some improvements in the fields of health, housing, and education; but we are just scratching the surface. The large majority of the Aboriginal people are imprisoned in what can be termed the sub-culture of poverty. The way of life in which they are trapped is not peculiar to our Aborigines. It cannot be attributed to any racial characteristics drawn from the past, but rather to the fact that they are a minority without political or economic power, unable to compete with the stronger elements in a rapidly changing and better educated society.

Studies will show that an estimated 10,000,000 people in the United States live in a culture of poverty. This figure includes Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, American Indians, and southern poor whites. There would also be non-Aboriginal families in this country who would come within this category.

Studies will also reveal that the behaviour patterns and life styles of these communities are very similar. Their way of life is characterised by chronic unemployment through lack of skills and education, ill health, delinquency, alienation from the wider society and its institutions, low self esteem, and it is self perpetuating. The values and behaviour patterns of the parents tend to be transmitted to their children unless something happens to break the cycle.

Oscar Lewis, in an article in the *Scientific American*, stated as follows:—

Once the culture of poverty has come into existence it tends to perpetuate itself. By the time the slum children are six or seven they have usually absorbed the basic attitudes and values of their sub-culture. Thereafter they are psychologically unready to take full advantage of changing conditions or improving opportunities that may develop in their lifetime.

It is estimated that over 45 per cent. of the Aboriginal population is under the age of 15 years, and with the high birth rate the potential for growth is tremendous. It is also estimated that by the end of the century their number will have doubled.

I believe that if we want the Aboriginal children born today to be healthy, well-educated citizens of the future, equipped to make a contribution to the economic and cultural life of this State, we must help them to bridge the gap that now exists. Instead of treating the symptoms resulting from the gap—bad health, unemployment, delinquency, etc.—I believe we must eradicate the causes, the seed bed from which these things emerge and grow.

From what I have seen, the most urgent requirement is decent, conventional housing. How can a mother be expected to bring up healthy children in a three-roomed, unlined tin house which has no water laid on—let alone hot water—no electricity with the exception of one light in the middle room, no bathroom or toilet, and is freezing cold in winter and unbearably hot in summer?

What equal opportunities does a child have in respect of education when it goes home to a cold, unlit, overcrowded hovel at nighttime? What incentive does a man have to work when he does not have a home to go to in which he can have pride? In the reserve house there is no comfortable lounge room in which to relax and read or watch television when a man comes home from a hard day's work labouring or doing some other unskilled and soul-destroying job. No wonder so many seek an outlet in alcohol.

However, although housing is vital, I believe education, employment, health, and housing cannot be treated as separate features of the overall problem because they are interacting. It is not sufficient to place an Aboriginal family in a home if it does not have the finance or ability to maintain that home. Houses must be built in areas where the husband will have job opportunities. There must be sufficient trained homemakers and social workers, preferably Aboriginal, to provide advice and to help the family adjust to its new environment.

There must be compensatory educational programmes to ensure the children have the motivation and financial ability to remain at school and receive adequate training for employment other than as labourers or unskilled workers.

The report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare for the year ended the 30th June, 1970, reveals that out of some 5,500 workers listed only about 5 per cent. could be claimed to be skilled or professional workers. The remainder were semi-skilled or unskilled.

At the University of Western Australia this year there are 8,355 students. Of these there is one Aboriginal, and there are 7,720 non-Aboriginal Australians and 634 from Asian and other countries. With an estimated Aboriginal population in this

State of 24,000, this means the ratio at university is one to 24,000 as against the non-Aboriginal ratio of one to every 126 citizens.

In a UNESCO publication of 1958 entitled *Race and Psychology*, the writer, Klineberg, in dealing with the question of intelligence related to race, said—

The net result of all the research that has been conducted in this field is to the effect that innate racial differences in intelligence have not been demonstrated; that the obtained differences in test results are best explained in terms of social and educational environment; that as the environmental opportunities of different racial or ethnic groups become more alike, the observed differences in test results also tend to disappear. The evidence is overwhelmingly against the view that race is a factor which determines level of intelligence.

I am not suggesting that all Aboriginal children would have the ability or the desire to go to university, any more than all children of European origin; but the ratio I quoted is ridiculous. It should at least be brought down to that of the rest of the community. I look forward to the day when we will have not only Aboriginal sportsmen, artists, and others of whom we are all extremely proud, but also Aboriginal doctors, lawyers, accountants, and architects, to mention just a few of the professions.

Up to this point I have been dealing mainly with those people who have the desire and the ability to integrate given the opportunity. However, I am not unmindful of the fact that there are probably quite a number who would not wish to integrate and some who would be unable to cope with the requirements of modern society. For these people I would like to see a kibbutz-type system investigated.

The kibbutzim I saw in Israel functioned extremely well and provided not only all the services required, but also complete security for the sick and the aged. There was housing and employment on the spot, education for the children, medical treatment, and social and cultural activities. When I was there, although Israel was a tiny country, there were 230 kibbutzim in existence with populations ranging from 60 to 2,000. They were mainly agricultural, but some had very successful industrial enterprises in operation.

If this type of village could be adapted for our Aboriginal people I believe a number of desirable features could be added to those I have already mentioned.

Firstly, and most importantly, would be the lifting of morale and the pride of

people working and making decisions for themselves.

Secondly, it would overcome much of the heartbreak we see today associated with children being taken from their parents, young people developing into social cripples through alcoholism, and elderly people dying in the bush through lack of adequate shelter and medical attention; and, thirdly, it could be a stepping-stone to integration.

Whenever one raises the question of Aboriginal advancement, one is always faced with: Where is the money coming from? Because of the limited resources of the States I believe the Commonwealth Government must assume a far greater responsibility in this field. Surely in a budget of some \$8,000,000,000, the Commonwealth could invest a few millions in one of this nation's most precious assets—its people! Only 1 per cent. of its budget would provide \$80,000,000, and it would be an investment. Over the past years the cost of neglect has been high—not only in bad health, delinquency, illiteracy, and loss of production, but also in Australia's reputation in the eyes of the world.

Money spent now on a comprehensive programme will produce rich dividends. The dividends will be independent, proud citizens playing their full part in the social, economic, and cultural life of this country.

THE HON. R. T. LEESON (South-East) [4.08 p.m.]: I formally second the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by The Hon. A. F. Griffith (Leader of the Opposition).

House adjourned at 4.09 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, the 15th July, 1971

MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY

The Legislative Assembly met at noon.

PROCLAMATION

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. J. C. Bartlett) read the proclamation of His Excellency the Governor (Major-General Sir Douglas Anthony Kendrew, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.) summoning the first session of the Twenty-seventh Parliament.