



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr Shane Hill MLA

(Member for Geraldton)

Address-in-Reply Debate

Legislative Assembly, Wednesday 2 May 2001

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MR HILL (Geraldton) [6.31 pm]: I stand here today feeling honoured to be the representative for Geraldton. An individual - especially me - cannot claim all the success in the recent election. Consequently, I use this occasion to publicly give thanks to Hon Fred McKenzie, Ian Patterson, Veronica and Graeme Whitehorn, Margaret and Garry Ghockson, Lyn Jager, Graeme Burkett and my family, without whose support I would not have nominated for preselection for the Australian Labor Party. I also thank the many volunteers who tirelessly folded letters, and pamphlets, delivered material and doorknocked on my behalf. I thank Patricia Hodges and the local Geraldton branch of the Australian Labor Party for working tirelessly on my campaign for some 15 months. Many thanks must also go to Mrs Roberts and Hon Kim Chance for providing me with unfailing support and encouragement. Similarly, my partner and my family also endured a sometimes stressful campaign but they never let me down. I also thank the constituents of Geraldton for electing me to Parliament on my first attempt. I believe I was elected because the State and the people of Geraldton wanted a change. They wanted a new direction and, most of all, they wanted a Government that listened and cared. Running for State Parliament is a lot of hard work. The recent campaign revealed a degree of cynicism in the electorate about the future direction in the areas of health, education and law and order issues. People in a position of leadership must include people who assist and facilitate their needs. The constituents of Geraldton have spoken loudly and clearly that the time has come for Geraldton to move forward.

FAMILIES

I have also come to realise that Geraldton has major social problems to resolve. As a community, we cannot continue to hide from these problems and I am pleased to inform members that the people of Geraldton are working towards positive solutions to many of these problems. Geraldton's social problems are no different from other similar size centres across Australia. It is important to deal with the causes and not the symptoms of these problems. It is easy to patch things up and say, "She'll be right". However, we must deal with the causes because if we cease to deal with them, the problems become more inflated. It is easy, for example, to scream about parents' rights and scream for harsher penalties when reading the newspaper. However, the solution lies in better parenting skills and family support. Families must be given opportunities to obtain those skills. On

the other hand, some issues will not be easily resolved. Unfortunately, many issues will be with us for a long time. With the increased tendency of the Government to withdraw services and to withdraw from the broader economic picture because of the process of privatisation, the resources available to government to remedy these problems will be reduced.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Every person has the right to live with dignity. The rich are getting richer and the poor are finding it harder to make ends meet. These problems will not be solved overnight, but community support groups will play a major part in this process. One of these groups is the Yamatji street patrol. It has won several awards around Australia but is under-funded. The previous Government did not realise the true value of the organisation. I was pleased during the election campaign to announce that the patrol would receive an additional \$70 000 a year for the next four years to provide a seven-day service to Geraldton. Another community group in which I have been involved is Geraldton Personnel. Its role in the community is to place disabled workers in the work force. I recently attended an awards afternoon at which employers in Geraldton and the mid west were recognised for their commitment to this program. I am also proud to advise that my research officer is employed through this program and I encourage other members to employ someone with a disability.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Another organisation with which I have been associated for a long time is the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. That organisation provides a valuable support to the community in combating cruelty to animals. I was pleased that during the previous Parliament, Mr McGowan highlighted the need for animal welfare to be addressed as a priority for this Government. The RSPCA owes its origins to the Ladies of St. George's Reading Society and was founded in Western Australia in 1892. In 1920, the WA Parliament passed its first Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, making it a crime to mistreat animals. It is interesting to note that no major amendments have been made to that Act since 1920. I hope the new Animal Welfare Act will be passed by Parliament by the end of the year.

EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

I ran for Parliament because I wanted to participate in the quest to make a difference. We all come from different backgrounds, some poor, some rich, others middle class. We all have different motivations. Some are motivated by prestige, others by power. I applied for the job because I like to work with people. Underlying this is the belief that I can make a difference for Geraldton and this State. If people had said to me many years ago upon leaving the Eastern Goldfields Senior High School that I would one day be a member of this Chamber, I would have told them they had been in the sun for too long.

I began my application for this position as a supermarket employee. I started work pushing trolleys at Woolworths, Kalgoorlie and became a supermarket manager at Woolworths. After that I joined the state Public Service and the importance of the public sector became clear to me. I worked with dedicated public servants for many years. We were all well aware that the services that we provided made a big difference to the lives of individuals and to the community. Then, as now, public servants often must fight to defend the services they provide. They must also speak up when they are worn out by the lack of resources that stop them from being able to give their clients the standards of service they deserve.

People require an active focus on job creation, skills development and building a sense of confidence in the future. They need proper health care, safe homes and streets, a justice system they can rely on and an ability to make ends meet. People do not want to feel useless, redundant or

feared because they are old, young, sick, injured or different in some aspect of their lives. People do not deserve to be blamed for ruining the economy because they are poor or sick, and they do not deserve to be told that they should do community or volunteer work because they have nothing better to do. The volunteers of Geraldton and the mid west do volunteer work because they care about their community. They care enough about themselves to want to continue to contribute to society and to their own skills development, no matter how limited their opportunities may be.

SMALL BUSINESS

After my election, I spoke to many business people in Geraldton about many issues. A large amount of skills are available in Geraldton and the mid west. It is important for us to support those people. We must look within our region before we look outside.

Geraldton's greatest asset is its people. Small business in Geraldton is doing it tough. We must remember that small business is still the biggest employer in Australia. However, we need to focus on not only employers but also workers. After all, they are the people who carry out the work. We must not forget their right to a fair day's pay for their services.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Geraldton is on the verge of commencing some major infrastructure projects in the redevelopment of the Geraldton foreshore area. This multi-million dollar project is aimed at reshaping the foreshore adjacent to the Geraldton central business district. The project will also enhance the redevelopment of the Geraldton port. The Gallop Labor Government has already announced a regional investment fund that will support these projects. This fund is a clear sign that regional centres such as Geraldton are a high priority for this Government.

VOLUNTEERS

This being the International Year of Volunteers I will refer briefly to the involvement of volunteers in our community. There are many volunteers in Geraldton and, as I have had the opportunity to attend a wide range of activities, I have been able to appreciate the contribution they make to our community. Indeed, we frequently rely on them to fill many gaps in the publicity and community service areas. Volunteers play a large part in our life in Geraldton and in the mid west. However, too often today they are asked to do things that should rightly be the role of government and employers. They run financial counselling services, health care programs, crisis care and parent support schemes, employment skills development programs, child care to allow others to study, and community centres.

COMMUNITY

Most of the people in Geraldton have good lives. They live in a great area and have a sense of community; nonetheless, they all fear for our education and health systems. They also worry that the services to which they are accustomed will not exist when they need them next. Too many people are struggling too much. They need our attention. I see my role here primarily to focus on those people because the community, not the economy, must come first. For me, the community of Geraldton will come first.

HMAS SYDNEY MEMORIAL

In closing I draw to the attention of members a major event that Geraldton will host in 2001. I refer to the 60th anniversary of the loss of HMAS *Sydney* off the Batavia coast. On the evening of 19 November 1941 HMAS *Sydney* was off the coast of Geraldton when it disappeared with the loss of 645 lives. The Geraldton Rotary Club is coordinating the erection of a memorial to honour the men who lost their lives, and to give closure to some of the families. The monument will include a waiting woman and a wall of remembrance. This event has been granted the status of a significant

federation anniversary event. The Rotary Club is striving to complete the project in time for its dedication in November, with many relatives planning to travel to Geraldton for the ceremony, as will the Prime Minister. The Premier has viewed the plans for the memorial, and I understand he will also attend the dedication. The project is on track but, as occurs with similar projects, more funding is required.

CONCLUSION

My final words to you today, Madam Deputy Speaker, are in the form of a plea to all of us: Let us get on with the job. Let us prove to all Western Australians that we are serious about making a positive change for the future. I know that I am.

[Applause.]
