

RECOGNITION OF RETIRING MEMBERS' SERVICE

Motion

Resumed from 9 November on the following motion moved by Mr J.C. Kobelke (Leader of the House) -

That this House extends its appreciation to all retiring members both for their service to the people of Western Australia and their contributions to this House.

MR M.F. BOARD (Murdoch) [4.02 pm]: I rise to make my valedictory address on my leaving Parliament. As I reflect on the almost 12 years that I have served in this Parliament, I cast my eyes across the Chamber to where the member for Albany currently sits, which is in fact where I sat in my very first days in the Parliament in the first half of 1993 following the coalition's success in the state election. I remember very clearly that I made my maiden speech in May from that seat. I remember it was a very exciting time as a new member of Parliament. It was a very nervous time for me and my colleagues. Nine of us had come into the Parliament at that time. We sat in that part of the Chamber, which the Opposition called the cabbage patch, and contemplated what might be in years to come as a result of our contribution to the Parliament and to changing legislation - a lot of legislation was before us in 1993 - and who of us would go forward, if we were successful in upcoming elections, and take on ministerial portfolios. We contemplated what would become of us and our colleagues. As I stand here today, probably only one day from my leaving this place, I reflect that after the member for Dawesville and I leave, only two members of the team of 1993 will be left; namely, the member for Hillarys, who currently sits next to me, and the member for Darling Range. Those two gentlemen have served that time with distinction.

It was an exciting time. When I reflect on those 12 years, I think of a book by Albert Facey called *A Fortunate Life*. I believe that anybody who has been elected to this place and had the honour of serving the Western Australian community and this Parliament, with the great distinction it has had over the years, is a fortunate person. It is a job that provides amazing opportunities for individuals. There are not too many jobs in this world that provide the same exhilaration, the great highs and lows, the frustrations, the depression, the anxiety and the excitement; and that is all in one day! Then the next day can be either twice as good or twice as bad. On one day we can meet presidents and talk with visiting kings and queens, whether here or in their own country, and on the same day we can deal with the most disadvantaged people on this earth, and often in our own country. That is a rare privilege. Certainly, not many opportunities are given to individuals to represent the larger community in that sense. Therefore, we are fortunate.

I am indeed fortunate because I have the opportunity of making a valedictory address. When we think about that, it is really only people who are able to choose their departure who get that opportunity. Many fine and distinguished members who have made a great contribution to this place have not had that opportunity, because through the election process they were not able to return to the Parliament. Therefore, it is indeed an honour to have that opportunity. We should take that opportunity and use it wisely to reflect on our contribution and on the Parliament itself - the good things and the bad things. However, it has primarily been good. It has been a wonderful ride for me and a great honour. It is one that has been bestowed upon me by both the Liberal Party and the community, which I will have the opportunity during this address to thank.

I remember very early in my term I was advised that if a member wanted any chance of getting into the Cabinet, particularly since the coalition had been in opposition for 10 years and had a pretty packed and talented frontbench, he or she should get involved in lots of things, such as the Public Accounts Committee, which was prominent, and as many select committees as he or she could get involved in. I remember that between 1993 and 1996 there were a lot of select committees. In fact, our backbench was very active on select committees. I will mention one in particular. The then Minister for Planning, Richard Lewis, asked me whether I would chair a select committee inquiring into metropolitan development and ground water supplies. The reason for establishing that committee was that there was some controversy about development over ground water. It was believed that we could successfully develop over some of those ground water areas and that the protection of those ground water areas could go in harmony with that. Hence there was an expectation. We put together a terrifically balanced committee, which I was asked to chair.

Of course, because ground water is found all over the world, we needed to make sure that where jurisdictions had encouraged planning development over ground water supplies, we would examine that. I will never forget the day I was sitting in that seat opposite. The committee had made its application to go on an investigative tour. Peter McHugh, who was the Clerk, sent me a note. He had drawn by hand a map of the world, and on the bottom it said, "Could you please just tick where you are not going?" I wrote back to him and said, "There's water everywhere, and where there isn't, we want to know why." I remember that trip particularly well because it led to a large number of changes, and we did not go forward with what was the expectation of the Government. In fact, we reversed our thinking on that and went on to protect our ground water supplies very strictly.

I must thank the Deputy Clerk, John Mandy, who has been a tremendous support for me on a number of our trips overseas during the course of my 12 years in this place. I remember on one occasion we were flying into Washington from London. The plane was forced down in New York because there was a big storm and it had been hit by lightning. In fact, there were hundreds of jumbos on the tarmac at the same time. It took us about four or five hours to get off the aircraft, and then there were thousands of people in the airport. John was not going to see us sleep on a stretcher at LaGuardia Airport in New York. He was going to find us accommodation. However, the soccer world cup was on in New York, and it was a difficult time to find accommodation anywhere. Nonetheless, John was tenacious, and he would not give up. Eventually he found us this wonderful hotel in the Bronx, at which we arrived about midnight, only to find that it was a working hotel! In fact, there were people working very fervently to-and-fro, and a person could hire a room only by the hour!

Mr J.H.D. Day: I think there was actually a choice; you could either rent them by the hour or by the night!

Mr M.F. BOARD: Well, I know that it did not take credit cards, and there was a man in a glass cage with a shotgun, but John negotiated a deal. We could only get a few rooms, and one of the most memorable occasions in my entire parliamentary career was the night that I went to sleep in that hotel with the member for Peel! For those who do not know the member for Peel - he may read about this later - he is a little vertically challenged and quite a robust and tigerish person. However, he is not a person who would normally be considered a close bedfellow of mine. This particular bed dipped into the centre, because it was a very well-used bed. I remember my father telling me once that if a person ever gets into that situation, he should roll over, give the other fellow a big kiss and he will be watched all night! I could not bring myself to do that, but as the trip went on there is no doubt that the member for Peel and I did get closer. To my astonishment, he started asking if I wanted to share a room during the course of the trip!

Independence Day was held during that trip to the United States. On that particular day we were grounded and could not get to Washington, so we had a day off and went to Providence. I will never forget it because unbeknown to me, outside the Massachusetts area of Providence on this day all the gay and lesbian people from the United States came to celebrate together. I have never been more popular in my life. I remember that wherever the member for Peel and I went we were bought drinks and welcomed through the course of the day. It was just an amazing trip. I mention this because there are occasions on which we have the opportunity - not as often as people think - to travel together as members of Parliament in a bipartisan way looking at particular issues. I mention this in my speech now because it is a very important part of the parliamentary process and the bonding and understanding of the role of members of Parliament, and it is a time during which people can really get to know and understand each other's values. Although we might line up differently with our political views, and have different personalities and different strengths and weaknesses, we are all here for a common purpose; we are all trying to do the right thing for the people who have elected us. The opportunity to make significant change through these committee processes is very important. I call on Governments of any persuasion to use the committee process and to not be concerned about adverse media in terms of members travelling; it is a fantastic way of putting in place a fundamental change - as it turned out our committee was able to get protection for our ground water - and for members to work together in a constructive way, which I think all works well as part of the parliamentary process.

I want to thank the Leader of the National Party for his time as the head of the Public Accounts Committee in which I served for four years prior to the 1996 election. It was a great learning curve for me in terms of my understanding of the way in which Treasury, the Office of the Auditor General and departments are funded, and the comradeship that we had and the investigative travel that we needed to do as part of that committee. Max was a fantastic person to head up that committee, and I thank him for his contribution.

The 1996 election was good to our side of the Parliament. We came in with an increased majority, and I was lucky enough to be promoted to the Cabinet. I want to take this opportunity to thank the former Premier Richard Court for that. It was not an easy move for him to make. It was a congested and talented backbench, and we also had a strong frontbench. There were changes to be made and he gave me that opportunity, so I put on the record my sincere thanks for that because it changed my life in many ways. At the time, I was appointed the Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs and the Minister for Youth, as well as the Minister for Works and Services. A lot of things happened between 1996 and the 2001 election. It was a busy and passionate time. I remember many of those things. If anybody wants to see life in the raw, they need be only the Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, because that minister literally goes to thousands of functions a week and experiences everything. I remember one particular occasion that might sum up my portfolio. I went to a function at five o'clock in the afternoon at which I was welcomed. It was an outside affair and they wanted me to talk to some of the stall holders and so forth. At about 6.30 pm everyone moved inside for a concert. The concert was to go for about three or four hours. As it turned out, it went for about six or seven hours and not one word of English was spoken. At about 10 o'clock I said to the president that I was going to move on. I thanked him for his time and said that I had enjoyed the experience. However, he said that I must stay to present the

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awards to the winner. The concert continued and still not a word of English was spoken; I could not understand what was going on. At about one o'clock, somebody walked out onto the stage - everybody was asleep at the back of the room; they were falling off the stalls - and introduced me as the "horrible" Mike Board! That was dedication to the cause!

That was a wonderful portfolio in terms of experiencing life in Western Australia, and it was indeed a privilege. There are so many people who are dedicated to changing and helping their community, and so many people who add to the lifeblood of Western Australia. I think they go unrecognised, and that can be seen in portfolios such as this one. I would like to put on record the unique and wonderful experience I had and to thank all those groups with which I had the opportunity to be involved and who supported me in much of what we did. We managed to do a number of things such as promote Harmony Day, which became a national day. Not too many national days come out of Western Australia, but that is one of them, and Philip Ruddock took that on as a response to the promotion and the work that went on not only under my portfolio but also within other groups. That has been a successful promotion and an important message to get out to people in Western Australia.

On one occasion we were going to a function and, as ministers do, I usually tried to cover two or three functions a night. On that night one function required that I wear a normal suit, and another required black tie. The ministerial driver, Cheryl, was driving that night - Cheryl did not normally drive me.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Mr M.F. BOARD: I was throwing off my clothes in the back seat and putting on the winged collar and the black tie. I had to take off my dacks, so I said, "Cheryl, just don't look in the rear vision mirror for a moment." She said, "Baby, you ain't got nothing I haven't seen before!" Such is the life. It was a wonderful experience.

My time in the youth portfolio was also wonderful experience. The introduction of the cadets, which we took from both a statewide and non-military program into the Australian jurisdiction, was a great honour for me. The establishment of youth advisory committees was done very well - they continue - and was also a great honour. I remember walking into Paul Murray's office when he was the editor of *The West Australian* and virtually getting on the floor and asking him to print positive publicity about the young people of Western Australia. He said that I was the first minister to come into his office and ask him that. He told me that he would give me a positive page three colour story on young people every day. To his credit, he did, and that positive publicity has continued. I thank Paul Murray for his commitment to giving young people a positive profile, rather than just publishing negative headlines and stories.

I had the privilege of serving the arts portfolio for far too short a time - it was just over 14 or 15 months. It is an under-recognised portfolio. It is an important portfolio, and I urge Governments of whatever persuasion to get behind the arts, particularly in capital works, and to look at the passion and drive of the people involved and at the voluntary work that goes on. Without the efforts and support of those people, Western Australia would be a much poorer place culturally and economically. We have not given enough justice to understanding that. It is always difficult to promote these portfolios under the pressures of the health, education and law and order portfolios. However, we must take stock of the fact that it is an important area that needs continual recognition.

I loved the employment and training portfolio. Many changes that we initiated are being continued. I remember a trip to the United Arab Emirates. I had a wonderful feast with Sheik Neyan. I did not realise that we had to serve each other's food. I had to put my hand into the steaming camel and throw it onto his plate. It was not until he put his hand into the yoghurt and threw it on my plate that I realised how culturally difficult some situations can be. I have had some wonderful experiences. Thanks to the Premier, I have stood in the Oval Office. I have met Tony Blair and discussed issues with him. I have visited the Great Wall of China and I went through India with a former Deputy Premier. I did those things because of the issues that I was involved in. Although it might sound to some people like a travelogue, the reality is that in my 12 years, those trips did not dominate much time at all. However, they certainly added to the wealth of my experience and to the fabric of what we do as members of Parliament. It is important that we continue that and that we remember that.

There are so many people I need to thank for making this journey possible. Obviously, I want to thank the Liberal Party for its endorsement, trust and faith in me to follow Barry MacKinnon, the former leader, in what was considered a good seat for the Liberal Party. I thank the Liberal Party for the faith it put in me to take up that position. I thank the community of what was then the seat of Jandakot - it is now Murdoch - for its continued support through thick and thin, notwithstanding the swing against me at the last election. I was able to maintain a reasonable majority and hence fulfil my main position over the past four years as the shadow Minister for Health.

I thank the people who have worked with me and who have supported me in my various offices. I thank Lesley Gillaussey, who is a dedicated electorate secretary - indeed, she is one of the best - for her years of support and uncompromising effort to ensure that I looked good. I also thank her husband Gordon. I thank Julie Hanson and Maria Usedo who have done the same over the past four years. I also thank Dr Leith Bungy, who headed up my

ministerial office. I thank the ministerial staff I had when I was a minister for four years. I owe them a great deal of gratitude.

I thank my family, particularly Anne, and my children Becky and Alex, who have gone without a great deal of my time and commitment. Sometimes I was not there when I should have been. There have been ups and downs as a result. However, they have given me uncompromising and dedicated support, and I thank them dearly.

There are so many things that I could talk about, but there is so little time. I want to say a few words about the things that I would have liked to see happen but did not have the opportunity to do so. I reflect on the industrial relation debates in this House. I recall the incredibly packed galleries, the emotion of the debates and the things that were thrown into this place. Strength was needed by all members at the time to get through that difficult period. I reflect on the fact that more must be done to unite the community in the direction it takes towards industrial relations. I reflect on the fact that the Premier has announced that a referendum will be held at the forthcoming state election. Although that is an opportunity to gauge public opinion, I also recognise that some of the best debates we have ever had in this place were when we were given a free vote. I remember the abortion debate, which was incredibly soul-searching. We achieved a fantastic result for the community of Western Australia. Not everyone would agree, but it was a democratic result. I also remember the medical carer debate. Those debates are important. The Westminster system was designed to ensure that members are elected to represent their constituencies. They are elected to bring the thoughts of their constituents to the Parliament. I urge all Governments to give the opportunity for more free votes and to allow members to step outside the party platform if it is not too rigid. If the party platform is not too tight, uniform or unanimous, there should be more free votes in this place. It would be a wonderful opportunity to achieve the sort of decision making that we can all be proud of and in which the community has participated via the democratic process. We underutilised that process, and we underutilised the committee process, which also gives us those opportunities.

I started out by saying that being a member of Parliament has been a fortunate time for me. I leave politics through my own choosing. I leave not because I do not love the job - I am passionate about it - but because it is time for me to do other things and to pursue other interests, particularly business interests that I am also passionate about. One can become very involved in this place. As a member of Parliament, one becomes a part of the process and other things get left behind. All of us, even those who have been here a short time, reflect on the fact that we have probably lost contact with our friends and with the people who have genuinely been close to us. They would probably find that they have substituted those friends with thousands of people who wanted to talk to them as members of Parliament. They do not necessarily want us to be their close friends. As the years move on, what ends up happening is that those close people tend to drift away even further, particularly when one is a member of Cabinet and is very busy. Friends stop ringing because they do not want to annoy us and before we know it, we have one million friends, but not too many of them are close friends. That may even include family. As I depart this place, I say to members that they have to work hard to make sure that that does not happen. I did not do it. It is probably one of my regrets that a person puts a lot of time into the job and should get a better balance. We should not be ashamed of having more personal time.

I am honoured that so many of my colleagues are here in the Chamber. I thank them all; they are from both sides of the House. I particularly thank my colleagues on this side of the House, who have been generous to me and supportive. They have encouraged me and done nothing but help me over the years. Members opposite, who were once in opposition when I was a minister, have also been kind to me. Although I have had some ups and downs with the media and pressures because of difficult front page stories that have embarrassed and hurt me, my time here has been something of which I can be proud. I thank everyone for the support I received. I do not think there is anyone in this place I do not like. Obviously, one is closer to some members than others because of the time spent with them, especially when travelling. Everyone in this place is making a contribution. Members are here because they have already made a contribution. People do not get to this place unless people think well of them and at the end of the day the community supports them. Members should be proud of that; they should keep it up. I will be watching members and, hopefully, at some stage or other in another life that I pursue, I will be able to continue to add to what this Parliament achieves. I thank members for this opportunity.

[Applause.]

MR C.M. BROWN (Bassendean - Minister for State Development) [4.31 pm]: On an occasion like this it is important to reflect on all those who have made a contribution to our life, those who have assisted us, either directly or indirectly, with the things we have learnt and those who have helped shape our character. I will talk about those things today.

Perhaps the most important person who shapes anyone's character is the person he or she elects to live with. All members of this place know how difficult it is for partners; to convince them that when one is away for 10 days on a business mission that one is working all the time. We know how lonely it can be, particularly if children are

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grown up and partners are at home by themselves. I particularly put on record thanks to my wife, Dr Sally Cawley, for the many very lonely nights she had when I pursued a career that I enjoyed very much. I also put on record my thanks and love to my children and their partners as well as my grandchildren. I give thanks to my daughter, Naomi Kay Brown, and her partner, Wayne Rowlands, and to my grandchildren, Joshua and Steven John. I give thanks to my son, Darren Brown, and his partner, Sharon. I also give thanks to those whom I consider to be my adopted children, Adrienne and Simon, and their partners, Michael and Joanna. I give thanks to my adopted grandchildren Caitlin Ruby and Gracie. They are great children.

When I started my parliamentary career in 1993 both my parents were alive. When I finish my career in Parliament in 2004 both my parents are gone. I put on record my thanks to and great love for both my parents. I will also disclose a secret that some members do not know. My mother had a very difficult life. My mother, Kitty Eileen Alexandra Brown, was in London during the bombing during the Second World War and lost her father at a very young age. She spent most of her life with two “aunties”, because she was adopted out. Shortly after I was born, my natural father, whom I did not know, died suddenly. I was born Clive Morris Golding. Some members wonder at how I look after money so well. It is probably the Golding that has some continuing influence! Because my mother never really had parents, especially a father, she wanted to ensure that her son had a father. When I was four years of age she placed an advertisement in a newspaper seeking a husband and father. She eventually met Arthur William Brown, who was in the very finest sense an English gentleman. He was a respectful, decent, hard working and loyal person. He was a fantastic man. They were married in 1951 or 1952; I cannot recall exactly. Many years later when my father died, in 1995, the family was at my house in the evening talking about relationships. We talked about the time my mother met my father. She said that in her day everything was different. I asked her why that was. She said that everything was proper; there was no “plonking” before marriage. I was not sure what “plonking” was at first, but we worked it out!

I spent the first nine years of my life in England in pretty trying circumstances. We lived in what were euphemistically called “pre-fabs”, which were prefabricated houses that were put in place after the war when people did not have proper houses. We lived in one and it was our castle. At the age of five, when my new family came together, I got a new brother, Christopher Andrew Brown. As people say when one moves in with an adoptive or blended family, one gets to choose who are the members of one’s family. I got a new brother, who has been the best brother a person could possibly have. His wife is Sandy. I am not sure how my brother votes, but he told me many years before I ran for Parliament that when I did, he would be there for me. He said he would support me and hand out how-to-vote cards. He has done that.

This is also a time to reflect on other people who have had an influence on my life as I grew up. There are obviously many. A person outside the family who stands out was one of my teachers, John Cahill, who taught me at Scarborough Senior High School, which no longer exists. For the first time in his life John had a form that he taught three years in a row. He was enormously influential in my life. One also reflects on the fact that one has had great friends at school. I am still pleased to have a number of those friendships, which have lasted for many years. They are people I went to school and played soccer with. Some of those people have now been scattered by the four winds. I am talking about people like Geoff Lockyer, Terry Grigson, Terry Clark, Eddie Ensing, Larny Hurkmans and a number of others who I still have contact with after all these years. We now have a 40-odd year friendship, which is fantastic.

I left school aged 16 after gaining my junior certificate. I went to work because my family needed additional income. I went to work as an optical mechanic. I had a great teacher, a great tradesmen called Gus Ferguson. His son still works in the optical industry. I worked at a company called A.G. Thompson. It was always interesting to work at that company because it was in a very old building. The cockroaches used to rearrange the furniture overnight. It was always a challenge when one went to work the next day! Gus was one of the best tradesmen in Perth and taught me all the skills I needed.

At 18 I went to South Australia where I continued my apprenticeship at a place called Sola International, which is perhaps one of only two or three multinational optical companies in the world. It was started from very humble beginnings by a South Australian, and became a very successful company. While there I worked under the tutelage of a German gentleman called Helmut Holme, who was a master tradesman, as they are known in Germany. He was generous in passing on his various skills to me, which I very much appreciated. I learnt a great deal.

I returned to Perth and then returned to Adelaide and continued to work at Sola International for some time. I made some great friends, such as Jan Flis, Jack Winter and others, who are still my friends today, one of whom, Peter Howard, still works in the trade.

At the age of 22 life took a different turn. When the company I worked for had a change of management, things went from bad to worse. I became involved accidentally in the union movement. It was a time of great change in the Miscellaneous Workers Union in South Australia. Its former leadership was found to be corrupt; it was

removed by the general secretary and new officials had to be brought in. I, of course, gained a huge amount of experience all in about 15 minutes. I was asked to become an official of the Miscellaneous Workers Union and accepted that offer on 4 February 1970 at the considerable age of 23. I must say I knew very little of what was in store. I worked at the union with some great people, particularly a dear and loyal friend, Don Eglinton. We worked together as union organisers. I eventually left and came back to Western Australia and Don went on to become the secretary of the South Australian branch of the Miscellaneous Workers Union and eventually a commissioner in the South Australian Industrial Relations Commission. He is still a great friend.

On my return to Perth in 1974 I looked around for a position. I was offered one in the Western Australian Prison Officers Union. I am perhaps one of the few members of Parliament who can say I have been in most prisons in Western Australia! However, I am pleased to say that they let me out. I worked for and with some great people in the prison service. For those who do not know much about the prison service, a career which people often look down on, it is a very demanding and difficult job. I had enormous respect for many people who did that job. One who stands out is a chap called Bob McClelland, a long time retired gentleman. He was president of the union for many years prior to my becoming secretary. He was also the principal officer at Fremantle Prison, in charge of all the divisions. In those days that person controlled the officers and all the prisoners in those divisions, who, when they all lined up, numbered 600. The fact that he was voted in year after year as the president of the union while he was in charge of all the prisoners said enormous things about that man, who is still alive today, although not in the best of health.

In 1975, after a short time in the Prison Officers Union, the Secretary of the Miscellaneous Workers Union in Western Australia, a great man called Don Lippiatt, died suddenly and I was asked to become the Secretary of the Miscellaneous Workers Union in Western Australia, which role I filled for two and a half years. During that time I had the opportunity of working with perhaps one of the best union leaders there has ever been in Australia, an enormously respected person called Ray Geitzalt, who had a solid commitment to the union movement and the Australian Labor Party and to solid Labor principles. He gave his whole life to those principles. He took a moribund organisation in 1956 with 23 000 members and built it nationally to more than 80 000 members while I was there. It now has a membership of many more. He made an enormous contribution to the union movement.

After two and a half years I returned to the Prison Officers Union where I worked for another seven years. During that period there were many difficult days with the union, some planned, many unplanned; nevertheless, I had great respect for the men and women involved in that job, which is very important to the community. Many of them are now retired. I still know and enjoy the company of some of those people. Earlier this year we lost John MacColl, and I went to his funeral. He was a great friend, and he made an enormous contribution to the State.

In the 1980s I was asked to become involved in the Trades and Labor Council, and I did, first as the honorary president, later as the full-time president and later still as the secretary. I had the opportunity of working in the TLC with many great people, one of whom, Stephanie Mayman, is here today. Parliament recently debated the occupational health and safety laws in this State. I can tell members the history of those laws: they were pressed by the Trades and Labor Council. The new approach to occupational health and safety and the Robins principles were particularly pushed by one person in the gallery today; namely, Stephanie Mayman. She has never wavered in that crusade. I had the opportunity of working with many other great people during that time. Some of them are now not with us.

In 1991 I was preselected by the Australian Labor Party to run for the state seat of Morley. I was extraordinarily grateful to the party for selecting me. It was considered to be a safe Labor seat. There was no contest for that preselection and I was thus preselected unopposed. I consider that it was an enormous honour to be preselected in that way. In return for that I have endeavoured to work hard for the party, especially in the past three terms of the Parliament, as have other members.

My history with the Labor Party goes back to South Australia, where I had the privilege of knowing people like Don Dunstan, the then Premier; Clyde Cameron; and Jim Kavanagh, a senator and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the Whitlam Government. In South Australia preselections were run on the Queen's Birthday long weekend. When Jim was seeking preselection he had to make a speech, as was the party's wont. He made the following preselection speech -

I've been in the Senate for nine years and during that time I've found that, to be a Senator, you don't need to be particularly bright; you don't need to have any great oratory skills; you don't need to understand too much about the legislation; therefore, having all the basic skills, I ask for re-endorsement.

He was given re-endorsement!

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Mr C.M. BROWN: South Australia is the only State that has deposit legislation. One very articulate, independent gentleman, not factionalised in any way, moved that South Australia have bottle deposit legislation. He made a great speech at the conference. If members think back to the 1970s, bottles lay around everywhere among the litter. He made this great speech. All the ministers of the Dunstan Government had been lobbied by all involved companies not to introduce bottle deposit legislation. Minister after minister got up and talked about what the Government was going to do. The Minister for the Environment got up and said German beach cleaning machines would be introduced to create pristine beaches. Other ministers got up and talked about what they were doing in local government and how local government would introduce recycling. They said when it would happen. Other ministers spoke. At the end of that process, one person got up and said, "I've listened to all of these speeches. Do you know, Mr President, I am proud to be a member of the Labor Party. I am proud of all of these ministers, who are fantastic, but, of course, they are talking about some time in the future. I'm talking about now. I'm saying let's do it now!" There was thunderous applause. The Labor Party has since introduced bottle deposit legislation in South Australia, which indicates that one articulate, well-prepared person can win the day. That legislation is still in force 30 years later.

I was invited, as I said, in 1991 to stand for pre-selection for the Labor Party, and I met some great people. I will talk briefly about that aspect of my life. First, I am eternally grateful to a near and dear friend called John Madden. In the 18 months before the 1993 election, which was difficult for the Labor Party, we doorknocked 80 or 90 per cent of the electorate. My dear friend John Madden was with me every day that I doorknocked. I thought sometimes because of his enthusiasm that he was the candidate and I was his assistant. I thank him for that.

I also place on record my thanks to the many people involved in the Morley-Embleton branch, the Beechboro-Lockridge branch, the Bayswater branch and the Bassendean branch of the Labor Party, all of whom assisted me greatly. I particularly mention my great friend the late Noel "Kip" Steele, who worked tirelessly at a great age putting leaflets in letterboxes and doing other tasks. Another person who volunteered every day of the week, and still does, is Gordon Ward.

In 1993 Diana Warnock, the previous member for Perth, and I were elected into this place along with my colleague the member for Murdoch and a number of other new members. I remember that in 1993 there were few of us and lots of them. It was a pretty difficult election. After that election, I had the opportunity of meeting someone who has become a dear friend and a close confidante. I have had the privilege of working with this person for 12 years as an electorate officer, a friend, and now as the executive officer in my ministerial office. I refer to Merrilyn Ercegovich. Merrilyn has been great. Members know that when we are away from our electorate offices, which is most of the time, the person who deals with the angry phone calls and difficult letters is the electorate officer. A person is needed who is loyal, faithful and like a rock, and has all the administrative and political skills needed. Merrilyn has them all. I will be eternally grateful to her. When Merrilyn came up to the ministerial office, I was very pleased to have an excellent replacement in Barbara Inglis, who has worked for almost four years as my electorate officer. One is not often in the office as a member, but even less so as a minister. I have had some great research officers during that time as well, with Jai Wilson, Adrienne and a number of other colleagues and friends. I thank them all.

Perhaps the only life I had outside of Parliament was that for a period before coming into Parliament and some time after I was involved with a company called Phosphate Resources Ltd, which is on Christmas Island. Those members who have read my parliamentary returns will see that it is appropriately listed. That was a great opportunity to be involved with a very successful company - it still is. It was a great opportunity to work with two great friends, in Lai Ah Hong and David Lee. David works with me today and Lai is a great friend and colleague. I have learnt an enormous amount from them about the way of doing business in a highly ethical fashion and about ways of doing business in Asia.

During my time in this place I have also had the opportunity of working with members and ministerial colleagues. I thank all members on both sides of the House with whom I have had the opportunity of working over the past 12 years. I particularly thank my office colleague, Hon Ken Travers, who worked with me as parliamentary secretary. I also thank my ministerial colleagues, particularly the Premier, who showed enormous capacity in leading the party successfully to the 2001 election that many of us did not think was possible; nevertheless, he had an absolute commitment to win.

I thank all of my friends - I consider them to be friends - who work in the ministerial office with me. One realises when a minister that the job is made bearable - I do not say easier - when surrounded by people who can be trusted and relied upon. I refer to people who can bring good judgment and can be asked whether they are convinced that a decision is the right way to go. As minister, one asks them to say why they think is the right way to go, and they give those reasons. Neil Roberts, the chief of staff - I will not say my chief of staff - is a

good friend and colleague who has done an excellent job. Daniel Smith is the office media adviser and former policy officer. He has an artful and wicked mind at times that we enjoy immensely; I know he will not mind me saying that. We stole Juliet Gisbourne from the Small Business Development Corporation. As a permanent public servant, she came in and taught us a lot about the public service. I say to Chris Fitzhardinge, Carol Skipworth, Caitlin Sabotino, Stephanie Cocker, Dolly McGrath, Flora Woon and former members of staff that I appreciate their loyalty and friendship and their dedication to the task.

I also place on record my thanks to some parliamentary colleagues around the electorates. Stephen Smith, MHR, the federal member for Perth; the members for Maylands, Ballajura, Midland and Perth; and the former member for Perth have worked collaboratively in the local area to ensure that the Labor Party is well represented not only in the individual seats but also collectively in that area.

I have enjoyed the 12 years I have spent in this place. I began my career as a member by making my inaugural speech about equality before the law. I am not sure that we ever achieve all the things that we set out to do, or that I achieved all I wanted to in setting out the broad principles involved. They are indeed very difficult principles to achieve, but it is possible to make a contribution. To the extent that I have been able to work with community groups, industry groups, the trade union movement and various action groups to achieve jointly agreed objectives that have been seen as good public policy, I have ultimately been successful. I leave with one thought: I like the saying "the more you know, the more you know you do not know". That is something we can all reflect on in this place from time to time.

[Applause.]

MR M.G. HOUSE (Stirling) [5.00 pm]: Everything that goes around, comes around. I reflect on the fact that I stood in this very same place on 12 June 1986 to make my maiden speech. It is amazing that I have done a bit of a circle. I have been on the other side of the House and in other seats on this side, but now I am right back where I started 19 years ago. I have a funny feeling that, somehow, I am also at the same place in my career. I think I am also just about as nervous as I was when I made my maiden speech, funnily enough, despite the fact that I have been in this place for some time. I want to begin by paying tribute to my father, who had an enormous influence on my life. He was a member of this Parliament for some six years. He died in office on 1 January 1971 in the middle of an election campaign. He was a fighter pilot during the Second World War and flew some 350 missions into enemy territory as a Spitfire pilot. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Distinguished Flying Medal, and was regarded by his colleagues as a man of great courage. At one stage in the hectic days of 1943, No 450 Squadron, to which he was attached at the time, went from 38 pilots to seven, of which he was one. I met four of the others, who extolled his virtues and his character. I pay tribute to him as a great Western Australian.

I first came into this Parliament under rather unusual circumstances. The Country Party, which I had always supported, had been divided. It was then in two halves - the National Party and the Country Party. Some very foresighted people realise that there was no future in that division, and that the Country Party had to be put back together in some form. As a result, the National Party was born in November 1984 in a reconstituted form. The person I supported, and who represented me as a Country Party member, Dick Old, was then the leader of the party, and decided to leave the new party and join the Liberal Party. I say honestly that I had no designs about being a member of Parliament; it was not something to which I aspired. However, I did not feel that Dick Old should be allowed to get an easy ride back into the Parliament as a Liberal Party member, given that he had been elected as the Country Party member and had a lot of support from good Country Party people. I started casting around my area looking for someone who would stand against him and to whom I could offer my support. After a lot of circling, the finger kept being pointed back at me. When I made the decision to stand I did not think I had a hope in hell of beating the sitting member, but I thought I would give him a fair run for his money and make him at least earn his seat in the Parliament. As they say, the rest is history. I was very proud to be elected in February 1986.

I think that, along with the member for Avon, I am the second-longest serving member of this Chamber, after the father of the House, the member for Murray-Wellington, John Bradshaw. That is also not something that I had expected. The time in this place is an interesting journey, but being the second-longest serving member makes me realise how quickly the careers of all of us come and go, and how some of us probably do not enjoy the journey as much as we should because we are so busy working. However, the time has passed in a flash. I reflected yesterday by reading my maiden speech and wondering whether I had achieved all things that I set out to do. I realised that perhaps some of those journeys are never finished, and there is always more to be done. I pay tribute to John Patterson, who was the state president of the National Party, and to Hendy Cowan, who was the leader of the party. Without their encouragement and support I would never have nominated, and certainly would never have been a member of Parliament. A lot of local people, such as John O'Meahan, Ross Donald and Moira Jones, came to me and offered their support if I was prepared to put myself forward. I had worked my way, as most of us had, through public life in my little town of Gnowangerup. I am very proud of

Gnowangerup; it is wonderful little town with great community spirit. I aspired to be a shire councillor, and eventually became shire president in 1982 at the age of 34. It is still the time of my life that I cherish the most. In those days local government councillors were not paid, and it was something people did if they wanted their local community to prosper, and I think we did. I was fortunate to have a very good chief executive officer in Phil Anning and a very supportive and progressive group of councillors.

Having been elected to the Parliament, I was settling into my seat and working very hard as all new members do, and there was a redistribution. The seat of Katanning-Roe, to which I was elected, just disappeared. It simply did not exist any more. It was not a matter of half being included in one seat and half being included in another; it was divided into four, and bits were spread all over place. A part was attached to Esperance, another part to Stirling, as it was then, and another piece attached to the seat of Wagin. I thought I would be a oncer here, and that I would bring the average tenure of members down further by sitting for only three years, and that would be it. Matt Stephens, who by then had been the member for Stirling for 18 years, came to me after I had been through a couple of months of soul-searching and said that he intended to stand aside and, as part of the old seat of Katanning-Roe had been included in the electorate of Stirling, he would support me if I nominated for that seat, which I did, and I was elected to that seat. My old seat had extended right up to Lake King and Lake Varley, and out to Munglinup, and took in places such as Lake Grace and Newdegate. Members who know that area will realise that it is quite different territory from that contained in the seat of Stirling, which encompasses places such as Denmark and Walpole along the south coast. It is a very different area indeed. I have been privileged to represent a wide range of country people. The interesting thing is that it is a diverse population of people with different views, ideals, communities and values. It has been a huge experience to be able to represent those people in a positive way.

One of the most fortunate things that happened to me when I was re-elected to the Parliament after having served one term was to be elected to a couple of all-party parliamentary committees. Those committees taught me that all members of this Parliament are here to try to further the interests of Western Australians, and that all members come here with the right ideals and the right attitudes. Indeed, as somebody said in a speech either earlier today or yesterday, if we had all been mixed up, people could not have picked the National members from the Liberal members from the Labor members from the Independents. It was a great experience and something from which I learned a great deal. We were working towards particular objectives which I believe we achieved and which I thought were a good grounding in how a Parliament should work. It was a wonderful experience. I have good memories of the people with whom I served and the experiences we had. Like the member for Murdoch, I have some wonderful memories of some of the places we visited and the things we did. I and other members of those committees, such as Larry Graham, Bill McNee and Paul Omodei, formed terrific friendships, which allowed us, when we got back into this Parliament, to respect each other's points of views and debate issues in a much different way.

Since I was elected to this Parliament, much has changed in rural Western Australia. Farming is more corporatised now than it was before. Small business is very different from what it was. There are larger, more conglomerate organisations that deliver a very different service. The aggregation of farm businesses and many of our services has brought a changing face.

On the question of communications, I believe that one of the most frequent complaints I used to get, like all country members, was about the cost of telephone calls. That has not been raised with me for the past five or six years. Now it is whether the mobile phone works, and people do not talk about the cost, although mobile phone calls cost three or four times more than the cost of a landline call. However, it is fascinating how the issues and ideals change.

In my maiden speech I mentioned the work that women do in rural Western Australia. Women are now much more recognised for what they do. Many more of them now serve on shire councils and in community groups, and play a greater role in their farm and service businesses. In many cases, they are the better educated of the partners who run businesses and farms in rural Western Australia. That has been a huge change. The young people who now go back to live in rural Western Australia are certainly better educated and more travelled, and have a much better understanding than we ever had. I believe rural Western Australia is a better place for that. It is a great place to live. We hear a bit of complaining and whingeing about it sometimes. We are our own worst enemies in that sense, I think, because we tend to sell it short. However, the communities, the spirit and the people's sense of belonging are strong, and their will and desire to be there are very strong. It has really been a privilege to serve those people and be able to help them further their desires and interests, and to be part of that developing society.

I am sure that all other country members will share with me the view and understanding that it is a bit different being a country member of Parliament. Most of us know our constituents on a face-to-face basis, much more so than city members, I think. We tend to be around our small communities a lot more, and that gives us a better understanding of not only those communities, but also the people personally. We travel many miles. I averaged

about 80 000 kilometres a year on the road. That would not be unusual for most members of Parliament. I fly regularly as well, because I am able to use the service to Albany. Many of those 80 000 kilometres a year I drove in a motor car were late at night on lonely country roads. Our families dwell on the danger of kangaroos, falling asleep and accidents as much as we do. After 19-odd years, I guess that is one of the reasons that I felt it was time to leave and hand over this job to a younger person. However, perhaps it is only one of the reasons. Nevertheless, the Salary and Allowances Tribunal and future Governments need to take that into account. Members must be resourced appropriately and have good facilities and good backup to do our job properly, particularly as the electorates tend to get bigger.

I do not think we can judge much by looking back. I was privileged to become part of a Government in 1993, after spending two terms in opposition. That is nearly 12 years ago. So much has changed in that time that if we try to look back and make judgments about it, or think about the things we might, should or could have done, it is with the benefit of hindsight rather than looking forward. I would much prefer to look forward than look back because circumstances change.

Like a lot of other members, I intend to continue to do some community work when I leave this Parliament. I have a strong interest in mental health. I have been working as a volunteer in mental health for some time, and I intend to continue that work. It is a very rewarding experience to be able to put to use some of the knowledge and skills that I have to help people who do not perhaps have those abilities and are not recognised as they should be. I do not really want to dwell on that to any great degree. However, I will say that this country has made huge progress in the 150-odd years that we have had developed government. When members fly, as most of us do, they should look down, wherever they are in Australia, at the roads, the power supplies, the water supplies, the townships and the sporting facilities. They should look at the development that has taken place in a country that had absolutely no development approximately 150 years ago, and see what has been achieved under a succession of Governments, Administrations and people. Some of them were criticised at the time. However, our standard of living is much improved on what it was when I was a young person growing up in rural Western Australia, and I believe that is set to continue. The reason is that all of us come to these sorts of positions with the best of intentions and ideals. We are backed up by good people in the public service who give us good support. I believe that if people just look, they will see that the progress has been enormous, and it is a credit to those who have served in this place in the past, and I am sure people in the future will do the same.

Other members have mentioned some of the interesting things that have happened to them. As members of Parliament, we could relay those things and other things that have happened in our office ad nauseam. However, I will mention a couple because they fascinated me. On Christmas Eve a few years ago, my phone rang at about 10 o'clock in the morning. It was one of my constituents. I will not mention the town he was from, because it is a little too close to home. I had a vague memory of meeting this guy. He took a lot of time and trouble to get his message across to me. He was obviously very upset. It was Christmas Eve, and I thought, "Why is this guy ringing me on Christmas Eve?" I wanted to spend that time with my family, and I thought he should too. Eventually when he got his message out, he said, "My son has just been shot in Katmandu. He is dead and I need to get the body home." It was Christmas Eve, and members know that Canberra basically shuts down. I said to him that I would do everything I could, and I hung up. To cut a long story short, with the help of the then Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fischer, who had good contacts in Katmandu - I interrupted Tim's Christmas Eve - we managed to get that young lad's body home on the day after Boxing Day, I think. If members have ever dealt with a place such as Katmandu, they will know how difficult it is. It was a very sad situation, but I must say that it gives a person a good feeling to be able to help people under those circumstances. It is just one of those interesting things that happened and sticks in my mind.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Mr M.G. HOUSE: One of the most fascinating experiences I had was when my electorate secretary rang me and said that she had just had a guy in the office who had threatened to shoot his next-door neighbour. I said, "Why are you ringing me?" She said, "Because he said to ring you and tell you, and he's coming back in 10 minutes." I said that he had probably just had a bit of a blue, and I would not worry too much about it. She rang me back 20 minutes later and said, "Well, he's been back and I told him that I had told you, and he said, 'That's right.'" She rang back about two hours later and said, "The police have just been around, and that bloke shot the next-door neighbour." I said, "That's handy." This fellow had taken a rifle and shot the guy in the stomach. He was charged with unlawful wounding and spent seven years in jail, I think. That taught me to not take things too lightly. I decided that the next time I got a message like that I would be a bit more serious about it.

I think all of us could recount funny and serious incidents that have happened in this Parliament. I will tell one such story. As I said earlier, when I was first elected I was allocated this seat, and the current Premier used to sit where the member for Perth now sits. The current Premier was waxing eloquently about something I did not really understand very much, and I was interjecting a bit. Eventually he got sick of me and turned around and said, "Hey, you're nothing but a philistine." I sort of sat back and thought about it, and then I pressed the button

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 10 November 2004]

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Mr Mike Board; Mr Clive Brown; Mr Monty House; Mr Bill McNee

to get the Clerk to bring me one of those big dictionaries on the table at the front of the Chamber. I was thumbing through this dictionary, and the now Premier was getting a bit agitated and kept looking across at me. Eventually, he stopped, looked at me and said, "You won't find it looking under F!"

I was indeed privileged to be the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries for eight years. I think we achieved a lot. We certainly tried our hardest. We initiated a number of programs that were on the edge of that portfolio, with rural leadership and community builders and some small community revival programs. They were great programs in which some 3 000 country Western Australians participated. Apart from the hard yards that we had to do with the deregulation of the dairy industry, cost recovery in the fishing industry and a range of things that caused us a lot of angst and pain, I think the community builders program and rural leadership program is something that will leave a lasting mark on rural Western Australia.

I have had four fantastic electorate officers who, as the member for Bassendean said a while ago, are a member's right hand when he is not in his electorate. I would like to say a special thank you to Tina Stodhard, Julie Dupe, Jeanette Trent and Michelle Sherwood. They are terrific people. They wear their heart on their sleeve for a person, and they have done a terrific job for me. When I became a minister, I was really fortunate to have probably the best ministerial staff that one could wish for. They were dedicated people and wonderfully talented, and included Andy Munro, my chief of staff and my friend, and people like Kerrine Lynch, Aileen Murrell, David Beurle, Darryl Hockey, John Dedman, Anna Woolhead and others. They were dedicated people who worked on weekends and in the evenings and did everything that was asked of them, and they used their initiative. To them I pay the highest compliment. Without them we could not have achieved any of the things we did.

I want to thank all the members of this Parliament with whom I have served. I was thumbing through the yearbook last night, and it is amazing how it refreshes a person's memory on those 19 years and some of the people who have now gone on to do other things. It is fair to say that while we have disagreements, we understand each other. I often think we are a bit like a dysfunctional family in this place; we know each other so well. We are like a family but without that bond of love that goes into a family. We know about each other's friends, children, wives and husbands; we share all that, which I think is wonderful, and I think that camaraderie continues.

I also give my thanks to all the staff at Parliament House from the Clerks to the people who man the doors and the telephone exchange and the Hansard and kitchen staff. They are all wonderful people who serve in the best interests of Western Australia. Above all, I want to thank the people of the electorate that I have represented from Lake King and Lake Varley in the north to Katanning, Munglinup, Wellstead, parts of Albany, Walpole, Denmark to Mt Barker, Cranbrook, Tambellup, Broomehill and Gnowangerup and others in between. I hope that I have been able to represent those people in a way that has been meaningful, and advanced their interests, beliefs and views and their communities. I have certainly tried as hard as I can, and I think that we can at least see some results. We would all hope for more, but I think most of those results have been positive.

I have been in public life for 32 years; 13 years as a shire councillor, four years as a shire president, 19 years as a member of Parliament and eight years as a cabinet minister. I guess a person cannot just walk away from all that without some pangs of remorse, some feelings of doubt and some wonder about what the future holds. I must admit that I do not walk out of here that easily, but I just felt my time had come. I am sure that people recontesting their seats wonder why and perhaps do not understand that, but a person does know when his time has come and when it is time to leave. Certainly, it is time for me to leave. However, I do not do it without some pangs of remorse and some wish to continue to serve the people of Western Australia in some way. I have done it for far too long to just walk away from it.

It has been a true honour and a true privilege to serve the people of Western Australia, particularly country people, and to advance their interests. That honour and privilege is something that I do not treat lightly and will continue to respect. I came to this House to further their interests, and I hope I have done that. I respect and honour the friendships and associations that I have made here.

Finally, my sincere thanks go to my wife Sally, my son Paul and my daughter Deborah. My wife, Sally, is the Rock of Gibraltar and a wonderful person. I think a lot of people know that our family has to face a small crisis, and we will face that together. However, I pay tribute to them, and thank Sally, Paul and Deborah for their support and put on record my love for them.

I thank the Parliament for this honour in allowing me to speak today.

[Applause.]

MR W.J. McNEE (Moore) [5.27 pm]: It is with some trepidation that I rise to make this valedictory address. I was always taught by my father not to spend a heck of a lot of time looking backwards, as the member for Stirling just said, and I have always tried to keep my eye on the ball and to keep going, no matter how tough the

going got. Over the years, the going has been tough and it has been good, but I say this: I have had an absolutely wonderful life and I do not have any regrets. If I were to rerun my life, I would not change many things. If my children get to my age and have had the sort of life that I have had, I will be highly delighted. I do not want to fall into that trap of saying I want things to be better for the kids than they have been for me. I have had a tremendous life and I have been greatly blessed by a lot of things.

The other day someone asked me how I came to be in politics, and that I must have been standing in the sun too long. I might have been. However, when I was a youngster, some friends and I were involved in Junior Farmers, a wonderful organisation. It taught us a lot about a range of things. We used to debate against Peter Walsh for goodness sake - we could never win - and his brother John. They were great people. They came from Doodlakine, the centre of economics! We grew up together. I can remember one evening when we were in the club at Wyalkatchem, the place where I was born. One of my mates said to me, "Why don't we start a Liberal Party branch?" I had never thought of that and wondered why we would want to do it. He said, "We really should be making a bit of an effort, and if you want to do something you have to be into things. It is no good just hanging about." Anyway, one thing led to another and we started a branch. I got to meet some very interesting people. I was greatly impressed by David Brand, who later became Sir David Brand. He was a wonderful person and a wonderful communicator. I came across Shane Paltridge, who was later Sir Shane Paltridge. Shane opened the branch for us. He was a great fellow. We got to know a lot of people like Jack Stuart, who was the member for Merredin at one stage. Jack was the first bloke I knew who used to buy a trainload of superphosphate; that pretty well impressed me. Jack Heitman and Roy Abbey were also great people. They were the people who influenced me. They were progressive thinkers and successful people, and I could not help but admire them.

I was first elected to this place in 1983, having previously done all the things that one does before being elected. I was on the shire council. I was president for about six years and deputy president for about five years. I cannot remember how many years I was on the council. I thoroughly enjoyed that time, because I served with a wonderful group of people. In those days, we had the reverse problem: we had a housing shortage in the district. We used to sit and talk about that problem. I think Arthur Griffiths was the Minister for Housing. We would come down to Perth to see Arthur. He would say that there were 43 good reasons why we could not have houses and that we did not have a waiting list. We did not have a waiting list because nobody would stick around long enough. We made two or three visits to Perth. We thought that if we hung in long enough and were consistent, we might win. The shire clerk was a heck of a good fellow. He used to drive the shire president and me home so that we could have a couple of beers. I said to the president, "Rex, this is all good fun, but if we keep on doing this I will finish up an alcoholic; we have to do something better than this." I suggested that we build the houses and rent them out. The clerk said to me, "I thought you were a free enterprise man. I thought you would want to sell the houses." I told him that of course I would. From that simple remark, that is exactly what we did. We turned into bankers. I do not suppose that local governments would be game enough to do that these days because that word "accountability" would stuff them right up! I am sure we would be given many good reasons that it could not be done. We did it, it worked and it helped stop the drift of people from the town. I enjoyed doing that because I could see the problem and I could get my teeth into it and try to resolve it. I worked with a great group of people.

For better or for worse, I was first endorsed for the seat of Mt Marshall in 1983. My runs for Parliament were more than Don Bradman ever made! That was my second crack at Parliament - it may have been the third. It does not matter. I was successful that time. The fellow elected with me was Gordon Atkinson, who was elected to the upper House. Gordon was a young and fit man. One evening we were in Mukinbudin together. He told me that he did not feel too well. I asked him whether he wanted a beer. He said, "No, I don't want a beer. I think I'll go home." On Saturday evening I was told that he had died. I think he died from an aneurism.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: It was on the squash courts in Northam.

Mr W.J. McNEE: Yes. It was very sad. His wife told me that he would have been dead before he hit the floor. We were very upset about his death.

When I was elected, I sat in the seat in which the member for Stirling now sits. I sat with Reg Tubby and George Spriggs. What a couple of good guys they were! Reg Tubby did not say a lot in this place, but he had a massive grip on his electorate. He stuck on like members would not believe. I think George had a good grip on his electorate too. I remember thinking that those blokes were successful and that they would stay in Parliament. Whatever they were doing was right. I used to talk them and they would coach me. A lot of other fellows coached me. Despite all that, the 1986 election came along and I lost the bloomin' seat, despite having the biggest swing to the Liberal Party in the State! I knew I had to get 51 per cent of the votes, which was a bit of an effort. I lost my seat. I thought, okay, that is politics.

Nothing much happened after that. We cruised along for the next three years. I cannot remember how it happened, but I had a lot to do with Bert Crane. We served on a rural hardship committee together with David Smith and Ian Taylor, for whom I have a great deal of respect; he was the chairman. Another member was on the committee, but I cannot recall his name. Things were tough in farming. I had a lot to do with Bert and we had a lot of fun together. We had to have a few beers at night or else we would have gone absolutely crazy. He said to me, "Listen, why don't you stand for my seat?" The seat of Mt Marshall had disappeared. Some of it was in the electorate of Moore. Bert told me that I could win the seat. We both knew a bit about the political run, but we had to work all the oracles and do this and that. He told me that we would do it somehow. We had to get endorsements and all those sorts of things. I had known Bert for a long time. He was a highly successful politician. When I first joined the Liberal Party in 1960, Edgar Lewis was the member for Moore. He retired and Bert Crane took over. That was probably in the 1970s. I cannot remember exactly. We used to live in Northam and the Liberal Party ran on federal divisions. We were in the Moore division, which extended from Wanneroo to Northam and out to Merredin. The precise boundaries escape me. On this occasion, we were opposing Bert. We were having a meeting at Northam. Elections were going on here and there. The fellows from Wanneroo came up and we asked them how it was going in Moore. They said it was going all right and that they were working hard. They told us that they had put on a show - it was attended by a few people - and that it was going pretty well until Bert came in with a ukulele and took over the damn show! That is the sort of guy that Bert was. I was elected to the seat of Moore 16 years ago. I had three years as the member for Mt Marshall and three years out in the paddock.

It has been a privilege to represent country people because their word is their bond - absolutely. It has not mattered how far I was under, or whether something could not be done. If I was honest with them, they might growl at me, but they would not necessarily forget me. If I had tried to be half smart, I would have paid the penalty. When I came to this place in 1983, there were some great guys in the Labor Party. Somebody mentioned Tom Jones yesterday. John Harman was the Speaker when I came to this place. He was a great guy. Colin Jamieson was another one. There are others whose names I cannot recall. They were good people. There are lots of good people here today on both sides of the House. I was a bit boisterous on one occasion when I had not been here all that long. I was being a bit cheeky and John Harman had good reason to pull me up. I thought, "Gee whiz, I had better behave myself because you never know what might happen." It has been a great challenge.

I thank my electorate secretary, Dot, who has been with me during those 16 years. She has been marvellous. Whether or not I am in my office, the show goes on and things are dealt with. She is an outstanding person. She has done that job for 22 years, having worked for Bert Crane for six years. She has been an outstanding performer over a long period. I appreciate the work she has done for me. Often when I am in my electorate people say, "I was talking to your secretary. She is so lovely and helpful." That makes me feel embarrassed and I think "Crikey Moses", but that is the way she is. She has a great rapport with the electorate.

I thank my wife and family. They have been a great support to me. I was travelling home one day and I drove past a farm that we owned at the time but no longer do. It was harvest time; I saw two harvesters working. I did not expect that. I wondered who was driving the second one. At that stage we had two boys and a daughter at university and another daughter was working. I knew it would not be the daughter who was working. I knew that one of the boys was at home but I did not know whether the other one was at home. I decided to have a look. I went to the paddock and saw my daughter Kathryn driving the header. She was only a kid. I think she was still at school. I asked her who taught her how to do that because she was pretty good. She told me that her brother Mac had taught her. I asked her how he taught her. She said it was do this and that and get going - like I would have taught him. I thought that I probably did as well. That is the sort of thing that families do. It was probably a way to make some money. I am aware of the great support I have received. Things would have been absolutely impossible without my wife. When I entered Parliament we decided we would keep the farm running. It was a pretty huge project; it was a lot bigger then than it is now. I thought it would be very difficult. However, she did it. She was insistent on it because she said it was no good my representing people unless I knew what was going on. A person sure gets to know, because every time something goes wrong he gets to know about it. When there are cost increases and those sorts of things happening, a person knows about it. It is important to be able to relate to those sorts of things because people expect a person to, particularly in a country electorate. Members are expected to understand those sorts of things. I have never regretted the decision to keep the farm going. However, I am very mindful of the great effort that my wife has put in. She spent many nights at home alone because our family was away. She did that willingly in the knowledge that we thought it would help me to be a better member of Parliament.

I thank the people of the electorate - the old Mount Marshall electorate and the people of Moore. They are tremendous people. On any occasion when we have needed help, they have been there. It is a very diverse electorate because there are fishermen on the coast as well as farms and small businesses. There are some larger businesses, such as machinery dealerships, as well. It is interesting for that reason.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Mr W.J. McNEE: A country electorate is hard to keep up with because there is lots and lots of travelling. From my home to the top end of the electorate is about a three-hour drive. That knocks a hole in the day if I have to drive to Three Springs and back. However, that is what a person accepts as a country member. Fortunately, if the going really gets tough I can charter an aeroplane and get around. That is one of the privileges I have with an electorate such as Moore. I am entitled to air charter. That is a great help. Without that, the job would be almost impossible. I have certainly gained a great deal of pleasure from that.

I must say that I get disappointed when people tell me how bad it is living in the bush. I think the member for Stirling mentioned that. People in Nedlands would kill to live in my house. I think my house is on the heritage list, but I am not sure. However, people have looked at it for that purpose. It does not matter whether it is anyway. It has an iron roof - people love that. It has a bitumen road. I have water and power. Who would want to live down here? I can still leave my house with the door unlocked - do not tell the thugs! It is one of the advantages of living there. It is something that we have to turn around. We have to start telling people how good it is to live in the country and what a wonderful place it is to raise children. I wish that my sons, one of whom is in Melbourne and one of whom is in London, had the opportunity to raise their families in the same environment that they grew up in. They climbed trees. When they were young, the Vietnam War was raging. We have a creek running through our property. There were many "wars" fought there between my children and my neighbours' children. They all had a wonderful time. How can kids go wrong growing up in that environment? How could they go wrong living among those wonderful people? We have to start promoting the side of living in the country that is important. It is important. When I look at my boys I remember that many children from the area were educated at the Koorda Primary School. It had 100 students when my children were there. A lot of them went to university. They are spread around the world. They are working in good positions. People should not be frightened of education in the country. I think education in the country is better for children because it is more holistic than in the metropolitan area. It is pretty good to put up with a few things if they are a bit hard. It is one of the things that we miss these days; we are a bit too soft. If something is a bit hard to do, we change the rules and make it softer. We are told that we cannot do something. We need to encourage people to meet the challenge no matter how hard the going gets. People must try harder and keep at it. If they do not stick at it, they will fail miserably.

The change in my electorate is almost beyond comprehension. The Dowerin Field Day was held a few weeks ago. It was the fortieth occasion. I was 30 when I went to my first Dowerin Field Day. Tractor cabs were coming in; not everyone had them. They did not all have hydraulics. If people had what I call a super-70 tractor and a 24-run combine, they had top of the range gear. They were made for bigger farms. I believe approximately 60 per cent of farmers in those days grew around 500 or 600 acres of grain. It was quite small and quite surprising. I was looking at the figure the other day.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: It used to take six weeks to put a crop in.

Mr W.J. McNEE: Absolutely right. These days 1 000 acres can be done in one shift. The machinery is capable of doing it. The cost of equipment has moved and the technology has changed. If a person leaves the industry for a short while, he will not get back in because the industry is changing so quickly. We got a bill from our spraying man the other day. He does the contract for us. Frankly, I do not understand it; I do not know what he is talking about. I do not know a lot of the chemical terms he uses. I do not try to keep a close check on what they are. I just tell him that I want so and so chemical. It has a fancy name. It is one of the ways things have changed.

Mr P.D. Omodei: How much was it?

Mr W.J. McNEE: I dread to think. What is a few dollars? Farming methods have changed. As a result of that massive increase in productivity, a lot of people have left country areas. I recently read a history of Wyalkatchem in which it was recorded that, towards the end of the 1960s, 1 000 people attended a football final. If we mustered football supporters from Dowerin, Wyalkatchem, Koorda, Bencubbin and Training today, we would not find 1 000 supporters. Nonetheless, the quality of life has improved beyond measure. Our communication system has changed greatly. The other day I was with some people whose son is in England. While we were sitting at the kitchen table he sent a text message telling his brother he was changing jobs. In 1949, when I was at school, we did not have a telephone, the roads were not tar sealed and we did not have bores. Huge changes have occurred since then.

As a member of Parliament, I have had a great opportunity to represent the constituents in those wonderful areas. I deeply appreciate that and the opportunity that the Liberal Party has given me as its endorsed candidate. Recycling was not an in-word in those days. I was recycled and I can recommend it; it was a good opportunity.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 10 November 2004]

p7858b-7871a

Mr Mike Board; Mr Clive Brown; Mr Monty House; Mr Bill McNee

These days it might be more difficult to achieve that. I am deeply appreciative of that opportunity; it has been my privilege.

When I look to the future I think farming will need some political support. I am not referring to handouts; it will need support in confronting some of the outlandish lobby groups whose leanings probably reflect more than a tinge of green and who want to stop the live export trade. Sheep farmers did not benefit from the Saudi Arabian market this year, and that has brought down the price of lamb to \$20 less than it was last year. People who want to stop mulesing have no idea what they are talking about. They must be told, quietly, to go and have a Bex and a lie down. That operation is vital to maintaining the good health of the flock. If they want to subject the flock to pain, they should ban mulesing. That probably has nothing much to do with a valedictory speech. As I leave this place I suggest that those are the sorts of issues farmers will need some help with. Those lobby groups will need to be pulled into line and told to get their facts right. A few months ago Channel Nine's program *60 Minutes* did not have its story right. I was surprised the show was aired, given some of the people who sponsor *60 Minutes*.

I thank the people who have supported me over a long time. It has been a very great privilege to represent them. I have tried to return their trust by endeavouring to support them in this place and wherever else we might be. That was about the best I could do. I thank them for their continued support. I wish everyone health and happiness. I have enjoyed the company of members from both sides of the House. Ministers from both sides of the House have been great, and have achieved many things in my electorate and I appreciate that. I have appreciated being able to sit down and talk about a problem with a minister, even though we were sometimes told that nothing could be done about it. At least I could tell my constituents the reasons for that. As I said earlier, even though constituents might want me to slug it out again and write more letters to ministers, that is their right. They accept an explanation and I am very appreciative of what has been done in my electorate as a result of the achievements of ministers on both sides of the House. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Debate adjourned until a later stage of the sitting, on motion by Mr McGowan (Parliamentary Secretary).

[Continued on page 7930.]