



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Hon John Fischer, MLC
(Mining and Pastoral Region)

Address-in-Reply Debate

Legislative Council, Tuesday 29 May 2001

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

HON JOHN FISCHER (Mining and Pastoral) [8.10 pm]: Mr President, I join with other members in congratulating you on your election as President, although I suspect that, in the circumstances, your colleagues would prefer Hon George Cash to be in the Chair. I am sure your deliberations will be wise and fair.

I also take this opportunity to thank the 103 543 people of Western Australia who voted for One Nation in the Legislative Council election. In particular, I thank the people who voted for One Nation in the Mining and Pastoral Region. I wish to thank Pauline Hanson, the national President of One Nation, for the incredible courage and tenacity she has displayed in establishing a third political philosophy in this country. It is an honour to have her here tonight.

In preparation for the privilege afforded this, my maiden speech, I opened the doors and consulted widely without restriction. The opinions and facts I proffer are a result of that process. After careful consideration, I have selected information that exhibits clearly both my own and One Nation's viewpoint.

The election of three One Nation members to the Western Australian Legislative Council has in many respects broken the crucible of politics in this State. It is the first occasion in many years on which a political party has been elected to the State Parliament that is not to the ideological left of the Labor Party. Of particular significance is the manner in which the three One Nation members were elected. Two of our members were elected without the need of preferences from other parties, and I obtained 0.86 per cent of a quota. I should perhaps record with some pride, but with an equal dose of disappointment, that not one member of this Parliament contributed to our success. However, I did receive the preferences of Hon Mark Nevill, who made a great contribution both in this Chamber and in the Mining and Pastoral Region. I regret that it was Mark Nevill that I replaced. In spite of the fact that we did not receive preferences from the Greens (WA), One Nation was responsible for the election of Hon Robin Chapple and Hon Dee Margetts. Having said that, I would be less than honest if I did not confess that those members have the leadership of the Western Australian Liberal Party to thank for their august presence in this Chamber. No doubt Hon Murray Nixon and Hon Greg Smith will contemplate that irony in their retirement.

In helping to elect Hon Robin Chapple and Hon Dee Margetts, One Nation delivered control of the Legislative Council to the Labor Party and the Greens. However, as Mr Peter Walsh, former Labor senator, long-serving minister and guardian of the morals and integrity of the Labor Party, wrote in the March edition of *The Institute of Public Affairs Review* -

If One Nation is illegitimate, surely a government elected on its preferences must also be illegitimate?

I shall observe with interest how the Labor Party exercises this alleged illegitimacy in the passage of legislation that comes before this Chamber.

The three One Nation members were elected in spite of and in the face of a campaign of vilification and deception by the two major political parties in particular. Both political parties have adopted a policy of placing One Nation last on their how-to-vote cards. It is not a decision they make on the basis of an informed or objective judgment having given consideration to the competing policies of each candidate and party standing for election; it is not even a decision based on philosophical grounds; it is a crude, pragmatic decision based on political expediency. To justify this decision, regrettably both the Labor Party and the Liberal Party have at various times undertaken a campaign of hate and prejudice against One Nation. One Nation is not vilified for what it stands for, but for the threat it poses to the two major parties. At a recent meeting of the state council of the Liberal Party, Mr Ron Birmingham, the senior vice president of the Western Australian branch, described the people behind One Nation as evil and told the delegates they should read *Mein Kampf* to understand our policies. What disgraceful, disgusting and dishonest allegations to make, all in the name of Mr Birmingham's defending his disastrous part in the decision to place us last on the Liberal Party's how-to-vote cards. Mr Birmingham claimed that One Nation is a racist party and that is why the Liberal Party placed it last on its how-to-vote cards. That happened in spite of the fact that just 24 hours before the state election, the State President of the Liberal Party, Mr David Johnson, was soliciting our support. If the Liberal Party genuinely believes that the One Nation party is racist, Mr Birmingham might well explain to Liberal Party voters why its senior members held numerous meetings with One Nation in the earnest hope that the two parties could enter into an arrangement that would provide for the swapping of preferences ahead of the Labor Party. The obscene comparison between the policies of the Nazi party and those of One Nation may offend me. They are no doubt deeply offensive to the 100 000 people in Western Australia who voted for One Nation at the last election. The insults and smears are not cast only on members of One Nation; they are also cast upon tens of thousands of good and decent people who chose One Nation ahead of the Liberal Party and the Labor Party.

A senior member of the Liberal Party recently wrote to a daily newspaper claiming that One Nation was racist and xenophobic. That man is a close associate of the endorsed Liberal Party candidate for the federal seat of Canning. No doubt that candidate will, in due course, approach One Nation and ask for our preferences. The endorsed Liberal candidate for the federal seat of Stirling also spoke strongly at the Liberal Party state council meeting in favour of putting One Nation last on how-to-vote cards. Presumably he will also be in the queue.

It may not have dawned on the Liberal Party that the vast majority of One Nation voters at the last election were dissatisfied and disaffected coalition voters. This is one election in which it was remarkably easy to identify the move in primary votes. Is it any wonder that the Liberal Party is now in turmoil about the decision by its leadership to place One Nation last? It came as no surprise to learn that since the election the overwhelming majority of members of the Liberal Party state council have indicated that they are against placing us last on how-to-vote cards.

The Labor Party's campaign of vilification and its decision to place One Nation last on how-to-vote cards, irrespective of the policies of any other candidates, has manoeuvred the Liberal Party, and the Prime Minister in particular, into following suit. Prime Minister Howard is

vulnerable to allegations of racism because of his well-documented excursion into the proposal in 1988 that Asian immigrants be selectively restricted. The political imbroglio into which he plunged is well documented in Paul Kelly's book *The End of Certainty*. When Labor announced it was putting One Nation last, it turned to Mr Howard and challenged him to do the same. Given what he saw as his political baggage of 1988, Mr Howard buckled at the knees, fell into line and followed suit. The Labor Party now enjoys the benefits of having inveigled the Liberal Party into unwittingly placing One Nation last and consequently losing both the lower and upper House of this Parliament in the last election.

In *The Institute of Public Affairs Review* article, Mr Walsh observed -

Labor has manoeuvred itself into an incredible position where it picks up moral acclaim for vilifying One Nation on the swings and gets One Nation preferences on the roundabouts.

I take this opportunity to expose once and for all the myth that One Nation is racist. One Nation's policy on multiculturalism refers in item 1 to the acceptance and integration of migrants into the mainstream of Australian life, as Australians. It states that One Nation will focus on government activities that enhance the fellowship and assimilation of all citizen as Australians. Item 2 refers to the abolition of the current concept of multiculturalism. It states that One Nation will abolish funding for multicultural programs, while at the same time upholding the principle that individuals or groups are free to preserve their cultural heritage using their own resources. Item 3 recognises the need for all Australians to speak English.

The policy also states that One Nation will formally establish the ability of the population to communicate in English, regardless of the languages that may be spoken by choice. The One Nation policy on immigration states that inappropriate high levels of immigration combined with the policy of multiculturalism have led to a serious breakdown in the social cohesion of Australian. The One Nation policy states that for many reasons, such as the problems of unemployment, a lack of integration of fellowship among the population, increasing costs of infrastructure, services and environmental impact, the issues of immigration and population must be urgently addressed in the interests of our future as one people, under one flag and with one set of rules.

Essentially, the thrust of the policy is that with all due fairness, we must have an approach to immigration that will benefit, not burden the existing population. In particular, it must be imparted to and accepted by immigration applicants that if they wish to migrate to Australia, they must want to be Australians and not simply people from somewhere else who now live in Australia.

Mr President, that is the essence of our policy on multiculturalism and immigration, which apparently is the reason that invites both major parties to place One Nation last on their how-to-vote cards. Contrary to the voting intentions of 103 543 electors of Western Australia who supported One Nation, John Howard and Kim Beazley have both openly claimed that One Nation played no part in the outcome of the election and that Labor's win was due entirely to the preferences of the Greens (WA), induced by the Labor Party's decision to ban all old-growth forest logging.

I have no particular wish for One Nation to take credit for the election of the Labor Party nor do I wish to gloat about One Nation's role in the defeat of the coalition; however, I do wish for the record to set down the truth: I believe that One Nation's preferences were responsible for the election of the Labor Government. That view is apparently shared by a former secretary of the Labor Party Mr Gary Gray. In *The IPA Review* article Mr Peter Walsh exposes the myth created by the Prime Minister and Mr Beazley. Mr Walsh observed -

Having demonized One Nation for five years and denied its political legitimacy, Labor won the election with the assistance of One Nation preferences.

He goes on to say -

. . . seven of the seats that Labor won from the Coalition were seats in which the One Nation primary vote was greater than the final two-party-preferred margin.

Mr Bruce Stone a professor of the University of Western Australia. in his article in the *Australasian Parliamentary Review* titled "The Western Australian election of 10 February 2001: more a case of protracted suicide than of assassination", states -

At most eight or nine seats might possibly have been delivered by One Nation: five in the non-metropolitan zone . . . and perhaps three or four in the metropolitan zone . . .

It would be impertinent of me to claim why all these people moved away from other parties - the coalition parties in particular and voted for us. However, there are some self-evident reasons. As I travelled around my electorate during the campaign I was struck by the overwhelming number of people who feel isolated from the major parties, and who feel a sense of alienation and helplessness in a storm of political and economic change. People feel that the system of government is no longer relevant to them, and that it is no longer designed to accommodate or satisfy their needs. There is a sense of frustration and anger that their voices are no longer being heard. The process of Government to them bears no semblance of relevance to their daily lives. Government is now intimidating; it brings with it a sense of foreboding. The rush to change which consumes all modern Governments in the name of the collective greater good holds no apparent place for the individual's wellbeing.

Governments, both federal and state, in the past decade and a half have been frenetic, and in some respects schizophrenic, in their economic approach to society. Grand and lofty words such as globalisation, internationalisation, rationalisation and privatisation may be compelling to an uncaring, desensitised and antiseptic world of bureaucrats and government ministers who see them as the route to a brave and bold new future. To people in rural and mining towns and centres, they are the cold and clinical prescription for the destruction of their quality of life and their social fabric. One of the profound effects of economic rationalism and economic efficiency, as it is euphemistically called, has been the destruction of small Australian towns and communities. These towns are in many respects the social fabric of Australian society. They have helped develop and mould the quintessential Australian character. The notions of self-help, self-reliance, community participation and voluntary service are the inimitable qualities intrinsic to small towns and communities - all having sprung from individual and collective need, and all of which have shaped the nature and character that is uniquely Australian. It was the self-reliance, the mateship and the rugged and reckless indifference to outside authority, which springs from these qualities that personified the character of Australian soldiers in two world wars. This strength has been the core of Australia's development, and it continues to be the fabric that binds society in Australian country towns. It is this that is lost with the demise and destruction of these communities. It is apparently the price that successive Governments of both political persuasions reckon is worth the benefits of economic efficiency.

As we all know the first elements of decimation of these towns is the removal of their infrastructure. Invariably it begins with the closing of government agencies and services. In pursuit of greater efficiency, countless towns have seen their hospitals reduced to nursing posts, post offices reduced to agencies, and Main Roads' depots, Telstra technicians' and linesmen's depots closed and moved to regional centres or to the metropolitan area. In the past we have witnessed the closure of rail services, the sale of Stateships and, more recently, the privatisation of rail freight. The residents are invariably informed that this is the price of progress and that reducing or removing services will reduce the cost of those services for all consumers. In some

obscure and perverse way, this economic efficiency is deemed to be in the best interests of those who are most affected.

The federal Labor Government embraced the mantra of privatisation and sold off the one great Australian icon that stood as a symbol of security, certainty and stability of country life: the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. The new managing director, on his multi-million dollar salary, with promises from the board of a great deal more if he increased the share price, immediately placed profits before people and shareholders before customers. The result was the closure of bank branches in country towns across Australia. The Commonwealth Bank's behaviour in private hands was no different from that of the other major banks that brutally and uncaringly closed hundreds of branches. The response of the Government to these appalling corporate citizens was muted approval. Greed is good.

The federal Liberal Government has been no better, and in fact the rate of acceleration of country branch closures has increased. Howard came to office, liked what he saw and promptly sold off 51 per cent of Telstra. Services and facilities rapidly departed from remote and rural parts of Western Australia. As staff and their families streamed out of towns, school numbers dropped, schools were closed, and the teachers followed the bank staff. Police stations soon closed, and more families were transferred away. Many of those towns are now just shells. Little remains except the memories of what used to be. Many other towns exist without basic facilities. If residents have to travel away for banking and other services, the temptation is to buy goods elsewhere, so the shops and other outlets also close. The logical consequence is that the Government's services are relocated in either major centres or metropolitan areas. The loss of towns and the dislocation of the population are the necessary and acceptable cost.

The end result of economic rationalism is intended to reduce costs and to use the savings by either lowering taxes or providing national infrastructure. Governments, of course, rarely reduce taxes and charges, because rather than allow the taxpayers to spend their money as they wish, Governments prefer to spend the money for them on their favourite projects, and look for thanks from a grateful electorate.

In the last term of the Court Government, the citizens of Perth were endowed with a belltower, the partial construction of a maritime museum and the promise of a convention centre. These monuments to the folly of government epitomise the inequity of the relocation of services and resources. How often does the Government imagine that the voters of the Mining and Pastoral Region are able to visit these grand edifices? As with the well-equipped hospitals and high schools, they are for the indulgence of city folk.

The tragic consequence of the demise of country towns does not visit just one generation of Australians but very often affects three. Often people retire to these towns so that they can be with their children and their grandchildren. If young couples are forced to move away because of job opportunities, it means that the grandparents are either left isolated in the town in a home they cannot sell or forced to move somewhere else.

Economic rationalism is about efficiency; it is not about equity. For those Australians who live outside large population centres, economic efficiency invariably comes at the price of social equity. The obvious question that must be addressed is, what obligation and responsibility does government accept for the maintenance of social and economic infrastructure in regional and remote Australia? What rights do the people in those areas have to the same quality of life that is available to the voters and taxpayers in suburban Perth? By what criteria are their entitlements judged? The question is not rhetorical. No Government has set out what it sees as the tangible or intrinsic values of country communities, save for the normal platitudes that are invariably a substitute for real commitment. I have dwelt on this matter at some length because it goes to the heart of the practical consequence of the obsession of successive Governments of pursuing dry, uncaring economic policies in the name of efficiency and rationalism.

I have already touched on the effects of privatising the Commonwealth Bank. In many respects we can expect the same result with services and facilities if the federal Government fully privatises Telstra. While the directors of Telstra are boasting about record profits and massive cost cutting, many people in my electorate do not have a decent telephone service and do not have access to a mobile telephone service or a fast facsimile transmission service. With that as the consequence of a partial privatisation of Telstra, what might we expect with full privatisation? The only improvements that have been made in some parts of the country regions have been brought about in the form of inducements to those federal country members to convince them to vote for a full sale of Telstra. It is not without significance that the federal Government has dropped the complete privatisation of Telstra from the political agenda leading up to the federal election. The country people know what its sale will mean to them.

Before I leave the issue of globalisation, I wish to address two other areas. The first is the consequence to the Mining and Pastoral Region of globalisation, or internationalisation as some wish to call it. Internationalisation is not restricted just to the transfer of finance, goods and services. It includes the transfer of sovereign power. This, of course, has occurred through the formation and ratification by sovereign states of international treaties, covenants and conventions. The federal Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade report entitled "A Review of Australia's Efforts to Promote and Protect Human Rights" observed that there has been a tendency for the United Nations to limit national sovereignty. This evolution, therefore, increasingly demands a reconsideration of the principle of national sovereignty. United Nations conventions, now covering a wide range of activities, inevitably change the character of domestic institutions, affect domestic legislation and extend accountability beyond the usual domestic constituency.

In other words, as the internationalisation of law increases, so the strength of domestic law is subjugated and weakened. Perversely, while international conventions interfere with domestic law, they arm the federal Government with the power to override state laws.

It should not be forgotten that the signing and ratifying of these conventions, treaties and covenants are not subject to parliamentary approval or scrutiny, and some have been entered into on behalf of the Australian people without even the consideration of Cabinet.

The High Court of Australia has developed a doctrine that the external affairs powers allow the Parliament to legislate for the implementation within Australia of any international obligation to which this country is a party. This extends to anything of international concern in which Australia takes an interest. Not only do international agreements provide the federal Government with power to legislate in areas over which it would otherwise have no jurisdiction and for which the Constitution makes no provision, but also Australian legislation shall be interpreted in accordance with the principles and intentions of the international instrument.

Justice Kirby, the then President of the New South Wales Court of Appeal, confirmed the direct influence of international conventions when he stated that several of the trailblazing decisions of the High Court in 1992 were influenced by the fact that what Australian courts decide can now be scrutinised and criticised by the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

It is perhaps worth observing that the committees of some of these conventions, to which the High Court of Australia has deferentially begun to fashion domestic common law, are made up of members of countries with totalitarian despotic leaders. Those members of the United Nations committee on the elimination of racial discrimination who have graced the committee, include members from Romania, China and Cuba. By any measure, having delegates from these countries sitting in judgment on Australia's compliance with the terms of that convention, is, to say the least, bizarre.

The effect of the intrusion of international conventions, to which neither the Parliament nor the people have agreed or approved, is to be starkly found in the Mining and Pastoral Region. The problems of both unlawful immigrants and native title are in many respects the product of international conventions.

The four conventions which apply to immigration legislation are: the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees; the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees; the international Convention Against Torture; and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The enormous number of boat people who are coming ashore on our north west coast is the direct cause of the various courts' generous interpretation of these conventions. The clear message right around the world is that Australia is a "soft touch". Six thousand boat people this year paid people smugglers to smuggle them into Australia.

Boat people entering Australia have six levels of application and appeal. Following their international departmental assessment, asylum seekers have access to a special merits review body, the independent Refugee Review Tribunal, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, the Federal Court of Australia, the Full Federal Court and the High Court. Asylum seekers may also appeal to the minister's discretionary power. As a point of interest, illegal immigrants often have more access to the law through aid than ordinary Australians. That situation is bizarre. Technically, access to the courts is supposed to be only on matters of law; however, in recent rulings the High Court has extended access beyond matters of law.

Illegal refugees also have access to the International Convention Against Torture. That body, made up of members of other countries, sits in judgment on whether, if the refugees are returned to their own country, they are likely to be subject to torture. To add to the protracted time it takes to deal with refugee applications, this body meets twice a year and has a long backlog. Need we wonder why the Derby and Port Hedland immigration detention centres are bursting at the seams? In 1999-2000 the cost of illegal immigrants in Australia was \$200 million. The cost of the 2 000 refugee applications this year is projected to be more than \$15 million. The cost of the Refugee Review Tribunal is about \$14 million per year. The 2000-01 budget allocated \$52.1 million over four years to establish two new detention centres in Darwin and Brisbane. The total expenditure on detention centre infrastructure last year was \$24.4 million. The cost of upgrading the Port Hedland detention centre over a number of years was \$12.5 million. The cost of upgrading Curtin detention centre was \$5.5 million. At the same time, the people of Derby do not even have a decent and reliable electricity service.

Sadly, this is one of the growth industries of my electorate. It is also a boon to lawyers who vehemently oppose amending the laws to restrict access to the plethora of tribunals and courts to which the illegal migrants can appeal, armed with their lawyers. This lucrative avenue of the law is now second to that of the native title bonanza.

The human tragedy of the very generous interpretation of the various conventions by our courts is that it is sending exactly the wrong signal to those people overseas. The result is the flood of fare-paying illegal migrants who are stealing the places that have been allocated to the refugees living in appalling and atrocious refugee camps around the world. As the federal Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs points out, Australian tribunals and courts have granted refugee status to 97 per cent of Iraqi boat people, compared with between 10 and 15 per cent of those whose cases were heard by the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Jordan. It is interesting to observe that the very same illegal Middle East migrants, who claim to be escaping harsh and brutal regimes, are now threatening and assaulting Australian citizens in Australian detention centres.

The fact of the matter is that successive federal Governments have enthusiastically embraced these conventions, which are invariably not needed by those who signed them and ignored by those who do not. Our proactive and interventionist High Court has taken it upon itself to

reinterpret domestic law on the basis of these conventions, treaties and covenants, and the consequence has been the diminution of domestic laws and the transfer of sovereign power to international bodies.

The second matter which greatly affects the Mining and Pastoral Region is the native title legislation. This legislation springs from the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. This convention provided the mechanism for the Racial Discrimination Act, which in turn effectively ultimately led to the present native title legislation, and more particularly the gridlock that presently exists. Enormous sections of the Mining and Pastoral Region are locked up and cannot be explored for minerals or metals. The consequence has been that exploration in Western Australia has declined and remains at a very low level. The granting of tenements has ground to a halt. In 1993-94, 805 leases were granted, and in 1999-2000 fewer than 200 were granted. In 2000, 10 500 mineral title applications were in process; 16 000 mining leases were in the right to negotiate process; and merely 180 mining leases were granted. The level of expenditure in mining exploration has declined from \$175 million in 1975 to \$100 million in 2000. I do not blame that all upon native title problems, but it is in large measure due to them.

There has been a very significant increase in the budgets of major Australian mining companies for overseas exploration. It has not been possible to quantify how much this shift from domestic to foreign exploration expenditure is due to the uncertainty of tenure of mining leases in Australia. However, from the public comments of these companies, it is significant. Mining companies use three criteria when considering exploration in a country: a stable political system; a stable economy; and security and certainty of land tenure. Clearly, Australia has the first two but, equally, it does not have the third.

It is not my wish on this occasion to visit the issue of Aboriginal land rights. However, neither the social engineering by the judicial activists who sit on the High Court, who produced the Mabo decision, nor the legislation which followed, has served the best interests of Aboriginal people or the wider community. The conventions to which I have referred and the consequences flowing from them show the profound impact on Australian domestic laws of the globalisation of sovereignty.

As I said from the outset, globalisation is not just about the transfer of capital, goods and services; it is also about the transfer of national sovereignty. The four conventions relating to immigration, refugees and human rights significantly diminish both the Commonwealth's and the State's sovereignty. One Nation has frequently spoken out about this loss of national sovereignty. The response of both major parties to our concern has been to condemn us for displaying what they describe as xenophobia.

One Nation is reflecting strong and growing community sentiment, to which the federal coalition has, with its decision on the takeover attempt of Woodside Petroleum, apparently partially awoken. I have no doubt that our calls for greater control over our own natural assets and collective destiny played no small part in the recent decision by the federal Treasurer in rejecting Shell's takeover bid of Woodside. Does anyone seriously believe that if the bid had been made just two years ago, this gung ho, let it rip federal Government would have rejected the offer? I think not. As almost every informed political commentator has observed, the decision clearly reeked of political considerations. The Treasurer has had to keep a straight face. However, the Prime Minister in particular has exploited the decision for political benefit at every opportunity. To some short-sighted, brain-washed lemmings in the major parties and to economic purists, nationalism may be xenophobic; however, to the great majority of the public, it is economic realism and practical, healthy patriotism.

Given the present disastrous state of the Australian dollar, a number of our major companies are at risk of foreign takeovers. The great Australian mining house, WMC Resources Ltd, which

has many of its assets in this State, is vulnerable, as the directors are well aware. To our opponents, economic opportunism may simply be just one of the hazards of the new world economic order. To One Nation, resting our long-term economic strength and fate on nothing more than the whims and foibles of each economic breeze that drifts past is national, social and economic heresy.

One Nation does not espouse reactionary economic policies and it does not stand Canute-like before the waves of inevitable change that modern communications, transportation and electronic transfers provide to an ever shrinking planet. What One Nation does oppose is the view of both the Labor Party and the Liberal Party that efficiency is more important than equity, that economic theories are an end in themselves and that the notion of a greater good, automatically subjugating and subsuming an obligation to the individual, is a morally defensible imperative. There can be no greater good if it is not a good collectively, for all individuals.

I do not claim that my views are novel or new and I am sure that they have been more eloquently put by others. However, I believe they are views that deserve to be restated. Each of the items I have addressed goes to the question of who controls our economic, social and political destiny. Are we to export control over the levers which dictate how we live and in what sort of community and country we live? One Nation makes no apology for being nationalistic in its outlook and conduct. It is an essential ingredient in the formation of our policies. One Nation does not as a principle accept the international transfer of judicial authority from our courts, and it is opposed to the transfer of legislative authority from the legislators to the courts. It does not accept the High Court as a social arbitrator.

I hold the very strong view that laws are best made by those closest to the people that they are to affect. I am a federalist and not a centralist and therefore I support the devolution of authority and the One Nation policy of citizens initiated referendums.

If the federal Government wants to hand over authority for decision making in Australia, or if it wants to take unto itself new and greater authority over the States, it can seek approval from the electorate by way of a referendum, not by use of international treaties. I hold the view that conventions should be signed and ratified by the federal Government only with the approval of both Houses of the Parliament.

I have taken this opportunity to address these issues because the changing balance of power and authority at a state, federal and international level is, in my view, fundamental to the future economic, social and political direction of Australia. These are not just federal issues; they are also state and local issues. These matters particularly touch the daily lives of the people of my electorate.

What has in many respects become an international laissez-faire economy has dramatically changed the attitude of all levels of government towards the provision of services and social infrastructure. It most certainly has seen Governments stand by and allow national and international companies to become delinquent corporate citizens.

The use of international conventions has not only seen a significant shift in political authority, it has also allowed the High Court to become a participant in the political process. I believe the fact that ordinary people feel disempowered and alienated was in considerable measure reflected in the vote of the two major parties at the state election. There is no evidence in the Labor Party's vote that the public has any belief or faith in its reflecting the wishes of the electorate. The dramatic collapse of the coalition's vote speaks for itself.

One Nation does not claim to have all the answers, it does not offer a panacea, but it does claim to listen to and to understand the hopes and aspirations of ordinary Western Australians. One Nation does claim to reflect the voice of those who no longer feel they are heard by the major

parties. One Nation does claim to represent those who no longer believe their interests are paramount in the plans of either a Labor or Liberal Government.

Mr President, if the votes received and the members elected by One Nation at both federal and state elections force Governments of either persuasion to address the matters that One Nation speaks out about, I will feel we are making a significant contribution to the wellbeing of those we represent.

[Applause.]
