



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr Ben Wyatt MLA
(Member for Victoria Park)

Premier's Statement

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 29 March 2006

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PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Consideration - Motion

MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park) [12.14 pm]: Mr Speaker and fellow members, I am humbled by such a turnout today. I will endeavour to make my speech as interesting as I possibly can for all members. It is an immense honour to be here, and indeed it is with some trepidation that I stand in this place today as the member for Victoria Park. In that regard I will begin my first of hopefully many speeches by thanking the people of the electorate of Victoria Park for entrusting me with the enormous responsibility of representing their interests in the state Parliament. I assure all my constituents that it is an honour I do not take lightly and that it is a job I will undertake with the utmost diligence, enthusiasm and professionalism.

GEOFF GALLOP AND THE ELECTORATE OF VICTORIA PARK

I am very much aware that the previous member for Victoria Park, Geoff Gallop, spent the best part of 13 of his 20 years in Parliament on the front bench for the Australian Labor Party, five years of which were as Premier of our great state. It is appropriate that I take this brief opportunity to reflect on my predecessor. Geoff spent 20 years representing my electorate and, in various capacities, the state. His commitment to Victoria Park was never doubted and was reflected in his massive support within the electorate. One of Geoff's legacies, and that of Ron Davies before him, is that I now represent a discerning electorate that has quite rightly become accustomed to high-quality representation. Although I as the member for Victoria Park will no doubt forge a different path from the path that Geoff forged, if I can emulate his passion and commitment to the electorate, I am confident that I too can replicate his electoral success. I thank Geoff for leaving an electorate with high expectations of its member. I look forward to spending every waking minute meeting those expectations and, one day, possibly ensuring that the member for Victoria Park returns again to the front bench for the ALP!

Formed in 1930, Victoria Park is one of Western Australia's older electorates. To me it represents all the complexities, excitement and potential that are being experienced across our state and our nation. It certainly is an economic and social microcosm of Australia. I have spent 15 years of my

life living in and observing the phenomenal changes to this inner city electorate that I now proudly represent. Taking in the suburbs of Victoria Park, East Victoria Park, Burswood, Lathlain, Carlisle, Welshpool, Cannington, Bentley, St James and Queens Park, my electorate has all the demographics of the state. Traditionally, Victoria Park has been dominated by blue-collar workers who, with their families, have grown up and retired in the electorate. Indeed, my neighbour Lena of Italian descent has spent 50 years in Victoria Park raising her family and retiring on the same block of land. My former neighbour, Vi, built in Lathlain when it was considered to be on the fringe of metropolitan Perth. My old boss, Lou, and his sister Helen have run their bottle shop in Carlisle for the past 17 years. When I worked with them we certainly had a very small wine and beer collection. A good reflection of exactly how we as a nation and a state, and certainly the electorate, have changed is the growth in not only their wine collection from all over the world but also their extensive boutique beer collection. It is these still active people in the community who will cast their decision over my performance in this place.

Consistent with world trends for inner-city living, Victoria Park has experienced a large influx of young families and young professionals who have moved into the electorate and who have sought the advantages of living in an environment of character and history that is also conveniently located close to the city business district, Curtin University of Technology and the Swan and Canning Rivers, and has its own train line at a time when public transport is becoming more and more important to people. A short stroll along Albany Highway, with its bustling cafe, restaurant and pub strip, showcases Victoria Park's growing youthful culture, the generation to which I belong, and is a clear display of what is happening across the state during these economic times: young people with a sense of confidence about their place in the world. Additionally, the state government's commitment to redevelop parts of Bentley and Queens Park in partnership with the local community will ensure that the state's economic success does not stop at one end of my electorate. However, while doorknocking and speaking to thousands of people throughout my campaign, it was apparent that although the economic times are indeed bright, there is also a pervasive insecurity, fear and concern about the impact of globalisation and the federal government's industrial relations laws. Beyond the frivolity of conversation and laughter in the cafes and pubs is a looming gloom felt by many. I will return to that topic shortly.

OATH OF OFFICE

Yesterday I was sworn in as a member of the state Parliament of Western Australia. There was one unique and extremely significant difference in my swearing in from that of any other member of this place before me. I am the first member of Parliament of any state to have sworn my allegiance in the oath of office to the people I represent, rather than to the Queen of Australia. With the passing of the Oaths, Affidavits and Statutory Declarations Act 2005, we, as members of Parliament, now have a choice in stating where our loyalties lie. In preparing for this speech, I read a number of first speeches from all sides of the house and I noted a common theme in respect of this. I am delighted to have had the opportunity to choose. I by no means, however, wish to disparage the work of the English monarch. However, as a proud supporter of the republican cause, there can be no doubt that the age of an unelected monarch on the other side of the world symbolically heading our state and our nation should be long gone. This is no doubt true in practice, and the fact that, as an Australian, I have, and feel, no bond whatsoever with the office of the British Crown makes me particularly proud to swear my oath to the people I account to rather than to Buckingham Palace.

GLOBALISATION AND ITS CHALLENGES

Globalisation has increased the intensity and speed at which worldwide activities impact on our everyday lives. We watch with great concern as decisions by transnational corporations impact on our lives, regardless of what actions are taken by Australian governments. We watch as oil prices reach levels that mean that people in my electorate sacrifice other household expenses to keep their

cars on the road - oil prices that are decided by perhaps the greatest economic cartel our world has ever known. People in my electorate watch concerned while the basic employment rights that we as Australians have developed over a century and have come to know as the basic standards of living that we expect, and would expect of each other, have been sacrificed on an unsubstantiated argument that such sacrifice is necessary to increase productivity at a time when we, as a nation, have never been so productive. It is interesting to note that this year we will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the eight-hour day, a right that will soon be gone. I mention this fact and wonder, when the laws have finally sunk in, how much further back will we go. These laws are not a federal issue; they are a household issue and I will report on the individual impact these laws have on everyone in my electorate. I will draw grim comparisons between what the federal government has taken away and what we as a nation - as a people and society - have struggled with for more than 100 years to establish how we want to balance our lives.

The current climate and generic process and the impact of globalisation create many exciting opportunities and, indeed, many challenges. How do we ensure that everyone in our state, from inner-city Perth to all our distant regions, takes advantage of these times? How do we, as members of Parliament, continue to think global and act local? What does that mean anyhow? How should government respond to globalisation? As this process restricts the role of government further and further to simply that of a regulator, we need to consider - if this is the case - what role government should play to ensure that the operation of global markets does not leave people behind in poverty and without access to these advances in technology. It is these challenges that brought me here today as a member of the state Parliamentary Labor Party. It is my belief that one of the fundamental roles of government is to address inequality and injustice. In this tradition, the Labor Party is the party best placed to respond to these challenges. We are fortunate to be enjoying the current commodity boom. I say to my colleagues that enormous responsibility comes with these economic times. Today, our greatest responsibility is to develop a sustainable economy for Western Australia. We all know that our state is overly reliant on the resources sector. We know this! We cannot continue to rely on the growth of external countries to be the linchpin to fuel our own wealth creation. We know that beyond the resources sector there is a Perth diaspora. Our greatest talents in the arts, education, training, medicine and science are finding homes all over the world. What are we doing?

BROADENING WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S ECONOMIC BASE

It is this question that has brought me to this place. It is incumbent on me, as someone who has benefited enormously from our community, and on all of us here to ensure that we leave our community, our state, in a condition better than how we found it.

We need to broaden our economic base. What I am saying is not new; indeed, the Industry and Technology Development Act recognises this issue. Section 3 of the act states that the role of the WA Technology and Industry Advisory Council is to, among other things, encourage the establishment of new industry in this state, encourage the broadening of the industrial base of this state and promote an environment that supports the development of industry, science and technology and the emergence of internationally competitive industries in this state. By way of example, I refer to the information and communications technology industry. The most recent article on the Technology and Industry Advisory Council web site is titled "Enabling Growth: The Contribution of Information and Communications Technology to the Western Australian Economy". This report indicates that information and communications technology has had a much more significant, direct influence on productivity growth across Australia than initially expected. In Western Australia in 2004, revenue generated by this industry was estimated to be in excess of \$6.6 billion. It is interesting to consider that today this industry is contributing 3.3 per cent of the state's gross output and thus is of a similar size to the combined agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

I attended the Western Australian Information Technology and Telecommunications Awards last Friday night and have first-hand knowledge of how dynamic this industry is in Western Australia and how the intelligence, commitment and passion of our players match those of the rest of the world. In his statement to this place on 7 March 2006, the Premier emphasised the importance of broadening our economic base. The fact that the Premier has retained the key economic portfolio of state development shows the commitment of the Carpenter government to this issue. Similarly, the creation of a new portfolio of science and innovation means we have a minister who has the particular responsibility of ensuring that we, as a state, remain on the front foot with respect to innovation.

While I am in a congratulatory mood, I use this opportunity to also mention the recent commitment by the state government and the University of Western Australia to each provide \$50 million for the construction of what will, hopefully, become two world-class biotechnology research centres in Perth. While the term “biotech” is bandied around, it might be useful to define this term. A paper by Ron Johnston of the Australian Centre for Innovation and International Competitiveness, which is also on the Technology and Industry Advisory Council web site, defines biotechnology as “the use of living organisms or parts of organisms to create products or processes”. That is not particularly helpful to anyone other than a medical researcher. However, I go on to ask: to what has the state government just committed \$50 million? On the issue of biotechnology, Mr Johnston states that biotechnology has created insulin and human growth hormone for the medical and health industry, insect-resistant cotton and slow-ripening tomatoes, improved rennet and food additives in the agriculture and food sector, and it has provided bacteria tailored to break down specific environmental pollutants and to reduce sulphide ores to their oxides in the mining industry.

Clearly, I need say no more about the potential of the biotech industry. I see research and development in particular in the areas of biotechnology as the pointy end of what we, as a society and as an economy, need to focus on. Western Australia has the potential to become the world leader in biotechnology. It is not only vital for living standards for people all over the world, but also a key area in which Western Australia has a solid reputation and can continue to grow. The feats of Barry Marshall, Robin Warren, Fiona Wood and Fiona Stanley stand as testimony to this fact. Although the Labor government is working hard in this area, there is no finish line. We must always, always focus on this point and focus on how and where we can ensure that we, as a state, do not need to rely on commodity cycles - cycles that will inevitably turn against us - to sustain us.

ABORIGINAL POVERTY AND THE REGIONS

How do we also strive for the balance of wealth and happiness? This is what we seek as a Labor government. How do we ensure that these economic times are used responsibly to guarantee that we as a state government, the deliverer of services, deliver these services effectively and efficiently? How do we ensure that all Western Australians share in our economic wealth and have access to basic citizenship entitlements such as education, health, power, water, environmental health and security?

Most people in this place know my father, Cedric, who is in the house today. He represents much of what our state is and can be. Dad was born in Meekatharra and taken as a young child to Sister Kate’s home, interestingly enough, the remains of which are in my electorate. He ended up in the Clontarf home for boys and ultimately his football talents took him to Aquinas College, which I also attended. However, much to the consternation of the Christian Brothers, I never emulated my dad’s football skills. Dad worked hard. Any bitterness and disappointment he had towards then government policy never stopped his commitment to social justice and to ensuring that my sister and I received everything that was denied him - a loving and supportive family and an education that both my sister and I can claim as second to none. Dad is currently the coordinator of the Jigalong

community, a community made famous by the movie *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. Indeed, Barry Marshall and Fiona Stanley have a close connection. I make regular trips to Jigalong and continue to be in awe of the country where the Martu people live. To see this country just after the wet reflects the true meaning of “God’s country”.

I want to take a minute to reflect on yesterday’s discussions in this place on Halls Creek. It must have been the presence of my dad in the gallery as I was not expecting such a passionate debate on this issue on my first day in Parliament. The member for Merredin made a number of points on Halls Creek and proposed a select committee to investigate the situation. Although I find his commitment to this cause most admirable, I do not believe it is the solution for the people in Halls Creek. Aboriginal people all over our country have been analysed to death on this issue. This was recognised by the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara. I say to all members here today that the solution will not be found in Halls Creek alone. This issue is not indigenous based; it is poverty based. We talk about the problems in Halls Creek, but the fact is that the issues faced by that community are the issues faced by indigenous communities around our state and nation. We can spend all the time we want talking about Halls Creek but we must reach an understanding that when the mob from Balgo, Meekatharra, Roebourne or wherever descend on Halls Creek, the already inadequate services simply collapse. The question that should be asked is: why have other mobs descended on Halls Creek? It is because those communities are also dysfunctional and have nothing to support them. We cannot solve the problem in Halls Creek without taking a statewide structural view of this issue. I will return to this point shortly.

Jigalong, like hundreds of other communities, is a community afflicted with abject poverty. It is a community that, not unlike many others, is located in a region that produces immense wealth for our nation. The consultants ACIL Tasman Pty Ltd recently prepared a report for Rio Tinto that produced two interesting statistics. In 2004-05, the Pilbara produced \$12.9 billion in exports, of which approximately \$53 million went back into the Pilbara; that is, less than half of one per cent. Of the royalties and taxes produced by that \$12.9 billion, less than one per cent was returned to local governments. It is clear that the problems facing communities such as Jigalong and Halls Creek are not issues that can be quarantined to the portfolio of indigenous affairs. I repeat that these are issues of poverty; poverty that many Australians would be horrified to know exists in our country and in our times. Those of us fortunate enough not to experience real poverty are often confused by what this word means. It simply does not mean “material deprivation”. Poverty of the kind that is passed from generation to generation is exclusion - a lack of power and respect - that is more often than not afflicted upon people who are controlled and bullied by the welfare machine.

The reason that globalisation has exacerbated isolation is that those in poverty, often termed “outsiders”, are further removed from this process and, accordingly, poverty becomes further entrenched and much harder to fight. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening. The rich may be getting richer, but the poor are in retreat and decline. Whilst the globalisation of our economy has created enormous wealth, it has also become a great social isolator. At the same time as the inner-city areas are experiencing unsurpassed wealth, the poor, both rural and metropolitan, are falling further behind. They are isolated and forgotten, and angry and suspicious of the process that has cast them aside. It is on this basis that I want the indigenous debate to proceed. It should proceed on the basis that it is a poverty issue and a social isolation issue, and not a simple case of an Aboriginal welfare issue.

This is another reason that I stand here as a Labor member of Parliament. It is the Labor Party that traditionally has represented the poor and isolated in our community. It has consistently amazed me that most country seats at a federal level are held by the conservative parties. The retreat of services from the regions, from the banks to telecommunications, in the pursuit of profit has exacerbated the social isolation of rural communities and is unlikely to cease once Telstra is finally sold.

As parliamentarians we must accept the proposition that not everything we provide must be based solely on what makes economic sense. Most Australians are happy for governments to provide a service that may not pay for itself, provided it is a service that is essential and is provided responsibly. Again, it is in this context that we must look to indigenous issues. Indigenous development should be seen in the context of overall regional development. I look forward to working with the Minister for Indigenous Affairs and her department to, hopefully, encourage a sharper focus on its roles and responsibilities and, importantly, define exactly what we as a government and a Parliament want to achieve in this portfolio area.

I served on the national board of Indigenous Business Australia. The work of IBA is, quite simply, to promote indigenous economic development. Through this work, IBA has grown its non-recurrent funding from \$40 million to \$110 million in a highly diversified portfolio. Each investment has an indigenous community partner. IBA's web site states -

We see the accumulation of assets and participation in the mainstream economy as one of the significant opportunities for Australia's Indigenous peoples. It is also a means of ending the poverty to which so many of our people are subject and that so often ends in unacceptably high levels of poor health, rates of imprisonment and a number of other social problems being experienced in our communities.

Again, the issue is poverty. It is my firm belief that the Aboriginal cause sits hand-in-glove with the regional development cause. Unless we can bring real economic benefits to our remote indigenous communities, and the board members of IBA successfully managed to do that in a number of remote communities across Australia, we will not be able to provide real alternatives to the levels of poverty currently being experienced. As a director of IBA, I was invited to attend a number of the state government's regional investment tours. These tours take financiers and private equity experts from the city into the regions across our state, and aim to marry up regional business operators and entrepreneurs with potential investors and, importantly, act as an educational device for businesspeople in the regions. The success of these tours and the commitment of their organiser, Kevin Strapp, cannot be disputed. The first round of these tours between 2001 and 2004 resulted in 113 projects being presented to the tour with an investment to date of more than \$170 million into regional Western Australia. These tours and the work of IBA are a fine example that there is a real economic alternative to the isolation in and retreat from our regions. I look forward to the next regional investment tour. Perhaps I may not be joining it, but I am delighted it is going ahead in the goldfields in, I believe, May.

Whilst my priority is to the constituents of Victoria Park, my foundation in the goldfields ensures that I have an extensive network of friends and family across the regions. Accordingly, I am a great friend of our regions and our mining sector. The Perth diaspora I referred to earlier is in reverse in one particular area; that is, resources. We are at the cutting edge in technology in this area and attract the best talent from across the world. The private resources sector is leaping ahead of state and federal governments in respect of developing relations with Aboriginal landowners, local content in employment and environmental consideration. This fact is often lost in the heat of debate. Looking at current best practices may teach us, as parliamentarians, a great deal. I look forward to working closely with the engine room of our state as a member of this place.

EDUCATION

I will make some brief remarks on the value and importance of education in our society. An education, be it university-based or skills-based, is the one great social equaliser. Thanks to the commitment and hard work of my parents and the generosity of the Rotary ambassadorial scholarship, I stand here today a very fortunate recipient of amazing educational opportunities in both Western Australia and the United Kingdom. These benefits should not be destined for the

lucky few, but should continue as the basic building blocks of our society, regardless of background. A strong education will ensure that as Western Australians we can meet our own aspirations and strive to better ourselves in a global environment of great change. The delivery of a strong education system is the responsibility of state government and one of the reasons I wanted to enter this place is to aid in this delivery. I want to work with the Carpenter government to continue its work to ensure that our public education system rebuilds itself, so that our best will again come from these schools and that our training remains relevant, consistent and highly competent.

GOVERNANCE AND FEDERALISM

Our federal system initially provided our state government with broad powers to legislate for the peace, order and good government of our state. Key areas - defence, immigration and foreign affairs - are, quite correctly, the responsibility of the commonwealth. However, it was initially viewed that the state government would legislate on the majority of issues. Without a lengthy lecture on constitutional law - I know members would love me to give them one - clearly, our federal structure has changed and, in some cases, for the better. The beauty of our federal system is that it is flexible and can adapt as the complexities of governance changes. However, as members of Parliament, we need to consider exactly what federal structure we want and what is the role of state governments. I am encouraged by the position taken by Premier Carpenter, as I have long held the view that it is pointless to fight with the federal government for political purposes. If we can negotiate an outcome in the best interests of our state, it is important that we have, at the very least, a constructive relationship with the federal government. However, with our current federal system under attack, we need to consider the capacity for the state government to promote the renewal of governance. It may well be that this capacity lies within the regions. As a state we are quite well defined by our regions, whether it be the Kimberley, goldfields, Murchison, Pilbara or the great southern. Perhaps we need to consider how we increase governance at these levels to promote more interest in the governance structures and to reduce the social and economic isolation that so many of our fellow Western Australians experience.

I do not mean to dwell on challenges. However, to be a member of this place means that we need to ensure that we rise to meet and overcome such challenges. We, as a state, are in fortunate times. We, as a state, live in a community where there still remains a sense of society and a sense of belonging. However, we must nurture and protect these times and ensure that these times are used to provide for our long-term future. To have the honour to be elected a member of Parliament has been a long-term goal of mine. I firmly believe that it is this place that still, despite the vagaries of our global economy, continues to be the true place that Western Australians look to to ensure that the state's interests are met, maintained and protected. My campaign was based on an overwhelming sense of optimism and hope for my electorate and our state. Whilst there is always more to be done, we are a lucky state in fortunate times. However, it also became apparent that there is a disturbing sense of cynicism in our community directed towards our elected representatives at all levels of government. Whilst not the sole contributing factor, I have no doubt that this was partly to blame for the low turnout at the by-election that saw me elected to this place. Only 61 per cent of eligible voters cast a vote. As the member for Victoria Park, one of my priorities will be to re-engage with these people who feel let down and somehow ignored by our political process.

It is more and more difficult to be a successful member of Parliament in modern times. We need to be aware of local, state, national and international events and issues. We as MPs need to be more aware of our community and other communities. As state members of Parliament, we must ensure that we meet world best practices. If we expect to seek the support of our electorates and provide the best possible services to our state, it is important that we know what other states and other countries are doing in this regard.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Many members may know that I am a lawyer by trade. I recognise that I have chosen to pursue politics and law and no doubt one day I will retire and start selling used cars. I apologise; I have many car salesmen in my electorate and they are held in much higher regard than I ever was as a lawyer! I do love being a lawyer and being able to assist others in my work. I have worked with some amazing people from all over Australia, both as clients and colleagues, and the experience has provided me with an invaluable insight into Australian society in a corporate world and a social justice world. However, as a lawyer, one of my great concerns is the slow distancing of the justice system from our community. It is apparent that the political system is in a long-term crisis of confidence. We are aware of this and hopefully we are working to reverse this trend.

While doorknocking my electorate, it became clear that our legal system is held in much the same regard as our political system. However, by and large, our lawyers seem to think this has simply manifested itself in the usually quite clever lawyer jokes. I have experience as a lawyer in both the commercial and public sector. It is quite apparent that the practice of the law in the large private law firms has become much more focused on the business rather than the law. The number one priority is the billable hour. Unfortunately, the billable hour has no relationship whatsoever with outcomes achieved for the client. The nature of a large practice is such that clients sought are only large corporate organisations as it is only these clients who can afford access to high-quality and well-resourced legal advice and representation.

As a lawyer with the state Director of Public Prosecutions, I was fortunate to have my faith in the legal profession restored by the commitment of all lawyers in this office to the public good. While some individual lawyers within the commercial sector do have the goodwill and desire to try to ensure an element of community interaction, I feel that the commercial business of these practices make it utterly incompatible with community involvement and contribution. I propose to regularly make comment in this house on how the community commitment within these firms actually works as opposed to what may be on their web site and the various marketing brochures. It is apparent to me as a lawyer and as a very new member of Parliament that access to justice is a long, expensive and intimidating process. More often than not, people need only short-term advice on everyday issues. The legal system is often the only means by which people can achieve an equitable and fair outcome. As each day goes by and the world gets more complicated, we need to recognise that if what we do in this place is complicated for those trained in it, how must it appear for those who are not? The justice system is the bastion by which we can ensure that those less knowledgeable in the process can access their own advice and have their cases advocated and concerns met.

THANKS

Finally, it falls upon me this afternoon to thank those who helped me become the member for Victoria Park. There are many people in this group - I would estimate 200 - some of whom are here today. Sadly, I cannot list them all but I will list just a few. I want everybody to know that I will never be able to thank them enough for the commitment and support that I received. Kate Doust, my campaign manager, performed miracles of organisation in an environment of tight time frames and high stress. She ensured that I was occupied 100 per cent of the time and became a close confidant on all things electoral and fashionable. Thank you. To Bill Johnston, my campaign director, thank you for your support and considered advice based on years of knowledge. I also thank Kate and Bill's children - Liam, Zoe and Rebekah - who had me sitting at their breakfast table each morning for six weeks, something that no child should have to endure. My apologies.

To Reece Harley, Michael Watts, Rewi Lyall, Pam, Ray, Matthew and Varun, thank you all for an amazing job, when nothing was left undone, I was conveyed to each place regardless of time or effort and the phones in my campaign office were always manned. To the state Parliamentary Labor

Party, in particular Shelley Archer, who prepared a breakneck doorknocking schedule, thank you all. Their support was incredible, and, for a nervous and often stressed candidate, invaluable. To the federal members, in particular Kim Wilkie, whose appetite for the shameless kept me out in the wee small hours of every day, to Julian and Lesley Grill, who have known the Wyatt family since I was a small boy in Kalgoorlie and who have provided me with long hours of political debate and advice, thank you. Howard Pedersen, who worked for my dad for many years and has been unfortunate enough to continue working with me, providing me with hours of political argument, thank you very much. It was a privilege to have the personal support of the Premier, Alan Carpenter, both through the preselection process and the campaign. By-elections are particularly tough for incumbent governments and the candidate, and the Premier's day-to-day involvement ensured that the people of Victoria Park knew they had a Premier who was serious about what they had to say and a campaign team that was always motivated.

To my family - mum, dad and Kate - I would not be here without their love, patience, support and continuous stream of advice, despite the fact that they should all know by now that I do know best. Mum and dad, I stand here today utterly indebted to you both as you ensured that I received an education that I never appreciated until it was over. Thank you. To my sister, Kate, your amazing strength and confidence over the past challenging year will inspire me for many years to come. If you can defeat the last year, nothing is impossible. Finally, to my fiancée, Vivianne, nobody should have to put up with what she has put up with over the past few years. I proposed to Viv on Boxing Day last year, unprepared and without a ring. I still have no ring! I am reminded regularly that I have no ring, and promise her that it is forthcoming.

To all the members of this place, regardless of your political persuasion and regardless of the fact that I may disagree with you on many points, on one issue I can guarantee that as long as I am a member of Parliament, I will listen to and work with you all with the respect I have as contributors to our civil society in perhaps the toughest way possible. Thank you.

[Applause.]
