



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Hon Paddy Embry, MLC
(South West Region)

Address-in-Reply Debate

Legislative Council, Thursday 31 May 2001

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Motion

HON PADDY EMBRY (South West) [12.01 pm]: Mr President, may I first congratulate you on your election to the highest office in this Chamber. May I also congratulate those members who were returned. Those of us elected for the first time will rely on you, Mr President, for guidance for some time; certainly I have relied on you already, in the absence of a map of this building. Thank you to those from both sides of the House and to the permanent staff who have taken the time and trouble to initiate us gently. The welcome has certainly been more civilised and therefore more meaningful than that of the small minority group in the public gallery last Tuesday week and on the Tuesday of this week.

To the new members, I offer special congratulations and perhaps a reminder for us all that never before in Western Australia's short history have so many people voted to change their sitting member. They did so purely and simply because they were dissatisfied with, firstly, the arrogant way they were being governed, and, secondly and more importantly, with the results of that process. In simple terms, the cake is judged on how it tastes rather than what it looks like in a cookery book. It was fascinating in the early stages of counting on election night to hear that 37 per cent of first preferences were going to Independents or parties other than Labor or Liberal. Surely the message there is both loud and clear.

I am told that it is customary in a maiden speech to talk of personal and family history, one's party and one's electoral hopes and expectations. I am a sheep farmer on the south coast, approximately 110 kilometres east of Albany. I came from England to Australia via New Zealand, so could reasonably be referred to as a boat person. My primary schooling was in England and secondary schooling in Perth. I did what was the normal practice at the time: I had one year at home followed by two years as a jackeroo and then went back to the home farm, which was at Boyup Brook. In 1964 we were allocated a conditional purchase block in the Wellstead-Cape Riche area.

I joined the One Nation party - a party I am proud to be part of - in June 1998. I was the party's candidate for the federal seat of Forrest in October of that year and was later elected as a state vice-president and, eventually, here I am today. It is most humbling to be part of our State's parliamentary process, and I take that duty most seriously. The task ahead will not be an easy one. I welcome our national president and founder, Pauline Hanson, and thank her for being here today. It is because of Pauline, and principally her efforts and courage, not to mention her

policies, that I was elected on 10 February. May I also pass a welcome to Mr Bert Crane. He was a member of the other place for many years and a close friend of my late father, as was the father of the Leader of the Government in this House.

I want to thank so many new friends who have offered and given me so much hospitality and encouragement. They have worked tirelessly since July 1998. I thank my whole family - my wife of more than 30 years and four children - for their sacrifices over this period; my two sons at home on the farm who have taken on the additional workload during my time away. In addition to the workload, they have endured and are still suffering the added worries and heartbreak of the drought. It has probably been the worst season on record - certainly the worst in living memory. People cannot fully understand that feeling of devastation unless they have experienced it themselves. One sees it in one's friends' faces; one sees it in their reactions in normal conversation, and one sees it in one's family. Most especially, I want to thank my wife, who has not once complained. She is most supportive of what seems to be, as the more experienced members in the Chamber will well know, almost a double life.

My father served in the British Royal Air Force for 35 years. He rose to the rank of Air Chief Marshall. He is the most often decorated officer in the history of the British Air Force. The first book written about him featured his successful escape from German hands as well as his six-week ordeal as he returned to Britain. He was the first allied serviceman in the Second World War to achieve that remarkable feat. He also continued to fly on operations for the remainder of the war. Under the Geneva Convention, by so doing he was liable to be shot as a spy. On his retirement we settled in Western Australia, and dad gave generously of his time. He was state president of the farmers union for two years, chaired the state cancer council and for quite some time also served on the state advisory board of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.

My mother was the youngest of seven. She was born in Sydney but lived on Norfolk Island - I think while it was still a penal settlement. Her older siblings completed their secondary and tertiary education in Sydney. The older two were killed with the Australian forces during the First World War, the first at Gallipoli and the second in northern France. Her third brother was blinded by mustard gas in World War I. He recovered sufficient sight to gain his driving licence in New South Wales. His family, however, had considerable concern whenever he was at the wheel! He did successfully complete a legal degree and became the Chief Crown Prosecutor for New South Wales. Her fourth brother was killed in the Royal Navy during World War II.

Mr President, my background, and the reason that I have told you of my parents, is that of loyalty to my country. I place it first on my priority list. Loyalty within our family is shown by my two farming sons, who had a six-hour drive this morning to be here. I hope it did take them six hours, and not perhaps the four and a half to five hours that has sometimes been my experience.

The South West Region is considered to be the jewel in the crown of our great, potentially prosperous and beautiful State of Western Australia. I am sure everyone here - with the exception of Pauline - would agree that Western Australia is the jewel in the crown of Australia. The south west has the largest population of the country regions; three of our largest centres being Albany, Bunbury and Mandurah. Albany on the south coast, with its wonderful scenery and rugged coastline, provides a wide variety of activities. It has pristine beaches, excellent fishing and nearby is the spectacular Stirling Ranges, where there is scope for the more energetic bushwalkers and rock climbers. Leaving Albany we soon arrive on the southern edge of our truly magnificent and unique forest.

At this time, I must strongly point out the tragedy that has occurred in the future of our timber-based towns. The forest timber industry, managed correctly, is probably the only truly self-sustaining industry known to mankind. Over recent years, and culminating in the last state

election in February, we have seen how emotion - fuelled with ignorance and lies - can, in a democracy such as ours, completely devastate an industry. Several towns and, more importantly, the people who live in those communities, are suffering. Many workers have already been sacked and more sackings will follow as the full impact of the timber policy strikes home. The impact of no spending money from the workers forces shops and other services as well to leave these country towns. Mr President, we have witnessed political parties which have based their policies on the timber industry 100 per cent on how they think people will vote rather than on commonsense and the integrity to do what is right. In other words, we have witnessed an abrogation of duty. I wonder how many people who oppose the forest industry enjoy the beauty of jarrah furniture and flooring in their homes.

The ever-increasing awareness of the taste and quality of our south west wines is bringing us to the forefront of an exciting industry. The south west has many important primary industries - fruit growing, horticulture and dairying, to name a few. The dairy industry has been brought to its knees by deregulation. Deregulation is the direct result of the devastating national competition policy. Other industries in the south west include the traditional industries of fishing, grain, beef, wool and sheep meats. Of course, mining is very important, with coal and its subsequent use for power generation near Collie, as well as the bauxite mines near Pinjarra. The real wealth of our nation is generated by exports. Tourism is increasing, but is relatively a drop in the bucket.

Most of our rural industries and therefore our rural communities are under real threat. It has been widely published that the average age of the Australian farmer is approximately 57 years - the oldest in the world. We produce eight to 10 times more product per man than any other farmer in the world, and 75 per cent of our farmers have part-time, off-farm jobs in order to survive. Very few young people are going on the land. The rates of unemployment and young male suicide are higher in the rural areas than in the urban areas. In my own district, only one young man is the same age as my oldest son. What further proof must we have before we, the representatives of those people, do what we are elected and paid to do? We must surely have the courage to make the major changes needed to bring our State back on the road to prosperity and justice. I urge the Government, as strongly as I can, to put real pressure on the federal Government, both now and in the future no matter of which political persuasion it might be, to govern as the key clause in our Constitution reads "for the mutual benefit of the States".

We all know Western Australia never receives its fair share of the nation's income, yet so much of it is generated here in WA. Recently, in the allocation of exceptional circumstances assistance to our drought and frost-affected farmers, an insulting and pathetic maximum of \$30 million was granted, when \$200 million was directed to New South Wales for flood relief during the same general period. One reason given was that floods were unusual. That is wrong; the eastern seaboard seems to suffer frequently from excessive rain, drought and fire, and is often successful in obtaining the exceptional circumstances assistance. The loss of income incurred in Western Australia was approximately \$2 billion over the two years; the loss in New South Wales was considerably less. They have apparently been reluctant to disclose the amount. Part of the problem is that a drought-declared area ends abruptly and is not shaded, as if the rain or frost should know not to stray across a fence, a road or shire boundary. The most unusual part of the claim is that it came from Western Australia rather than New South Wales. I have been told that Western Australia has never before been successful in its application for this special assistance. I do not wish to be cynical, but one cannot help wondering whether the state election result might have been a factor in our federal Government throwing our farmers just a small scrap. One cannot help gaining the impression that the reason is that Western Australia has far fewer voters and therefore far fewer marginal seats. Our State Government needs to become far more forceful and persuasive than it has ever been in the past. A vast amount of export income is earned in Western Australia, yet we receive relatively paltry amounts back in

the form of grants. It needs to be made clear to the federal Government that Australia's income is almost entirely generated in the States. Virtually none is earned in Canberra; yet it is Canberra that is living way beyond its means. We in Western Australia must insist that the injustice can no longer be tolerated if our current form of federation is to continue.

If our rural industries and communities are to survive, we need to make sure that we forget this nonsense of one vote, one value. Such a system would reduce rural representation to such a level as to prevent the rural minority from ever receiving a fair go. We all know that politics is about having the numbers. We all know that Western Australia's lack of numbers in the House of Representatives leads to the inequality previously mentioned. Western Australia's safeguard is supposed to be the Senate. Too often, members vote along party lines rather than in the interests of their electorates.

If we wish our agricultural industries to survive, we need to make sure that there is a reasonable profit margin for farmers. This will, in turn, ensure that adequate money is available for reinvestment. We continually hear these days, almost ad nauseam, the expression "a reasonable return to shareholders". Our farmers are the shareholders of their farming business, and they, too, need a reasonable return for their investment and efforts. Unless significant changes occur, the present drain of potential young farmers to the city will continue, and we will no longer have the most labour-efficient food and fibre producing industry in the world. In fact, given time, we may not have an industry at all. People may laugh about that, but some years ago the federal Government was paying fruit producers to pull out their trees. Australia now imports vast quantities of fruit juice from overseas. It is not a joke.

I would like to give the House one example of a problem that needs to be rectified. In many of our outer areas, secondary and tertiary education is almost non-existent. This is because the population is small. Because the population is small, the problem could be solved relatively easily and with a minimum of cost. The allowance allocated for isolated children living away from home is \$4 049 per child per annum. A further means tested \$950 lifts the maximum amount to \$4 999. However, to fit the criteria for being isolated, children must live more than 56 kilometres from a state high school. There is also a second home allowance if one parent moves to Perth for educational purposes and rents accommodation and the two homes are more than 56 kilometres apart. This allowance of \$4 999 for each of three children - the maximum figure - brings the sum to \$13 947 per annum. This pays the rent, and saves the parents the huge cost of boarding fees.

An ever-increasing number of parents are following this course. In other words, families are being encouraged to split up, so that husbands and wives live apart. In the long term, this can lead to marriage breakdown and the resulting trauma for the whole family. In fact, it can generate an atmosphere quite the opposite of the harmony and stability that children and university students need to help them through those important years of study and adolescence. I repeat, Mr President, that because the number of rural students is relatively low, it would not require a vast number of dollars to pay the total boarding costs for these families. I know from personal experience of living 110 kilometres from the nearest high school, how vast are the costs to an individual of educating four children. No other choice was available to me, other than borrowing the money or selling the farm, and selling the farm is what many rural families are doing. This is one factor that is forcing people to move from the country.

Two federal parliamentary inquiries have found that the total number of isolated rural students in the whole of Australia is less than the total number of students in any one of our larger tertiary institutions - for example, the Curtin University of Technology. The recommendation of those inquiries was for the Government to pay the entire boarding fees for all those students. John Howard's reaction to this was to suggest yet another parliamentary inquiry. No wonder rural people are deserting the coalition in droves.

I wish to turn to a few grave matters that brought about the formation of a third political force in our country and in our State. As members well know, One Nation polled third in the 1998 federal election and is steadily growing in strength. One Nation was formed because so many people were let down, their plight was ignored and their worries were unanswered. They could see the Australia they knew and loved being economically destroyed and, with that, the gradual breakdown of family values, economic stability and, indeed, a large question mark over the future for their children and grandchildren. They stood by helplessly while successive federal Governments, joined and encouraged by some State Governments, became part of what is called globalisation. At first the term sounds great. However, it does not require a lot of research to discover the evil and total economic devastation it brings to almost every country that becomes involved.

Globalisation is about greed and power. As a result of globalisation, a few people in the richest two, three or four countries become richer and the remainder become poorer. In addition to that, and worse still, is the fact that the world's wealth is becoming more and more unevenly distributed. A good example is the United States, where the poverty levels are increasing.

The value of our dollar has gradually slid since deregulation. The Australian dollar used to be worth approximately \$US2. Now it is worth roughly 25 per cent of that. So much for deregulation.

Australia has seen almost all of its secondary industry disappear since its irresponsibility in signing up and joining the World Trade Organisation. The United States of America has refused a reasonable request for entry of our agricultural produce because it cannot compete on the so-called level playing field. The people of Australia have never been asked whether they wish to remain an independent country. That subject should be decided by a national referendum. Governments have never discussed such matters openly in the Parliament, but have gone ahead and secretly signed treaty after treaty without proper consultation. Our standard of living, once among the highest in the world, has fallen to approximately twenty-seventh. This has happened in a country blessed with so much natural wealth and has been brought about by mismanagement and bad government.

I shall raise the topical issue of fuel prices. Is our State Government aware of the rort going on with refined diesel fuel imported into Australia by a multinational company at a cost between 11c and 14c a litre? The fuel is on-sold at a huge profit. The company is able to do that because it is not recognised as a regular fuel company. As such, it is not sent the appropriate declaration forms to detail its tonnage and, therefore, it avoids three levels of taxation. This matter should be the subject of a royal commission. If I am correct, the federal Government is grossly negligent in its duty of financial control. There is no need for Australia to be a party to the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Australia must bite the bullet and withdraw from organisations such as the WTO and engage in sensible, bilateral trade contracts, as does every Asian country except Japan.

The last issue, and one that I found hard to believe yet, again, not a great deal of time and effort was required to find out the truth, is a matter of the greatest importance for the future of Australia's national security. It has traditionally been the sole prerogative of each of the three armed services - Navy, Army and Air Force - to recruit their own personnel. This well-proved method enables the services to select personnel according to their own requirements and traditions. The present federal Government changed that and removed that vital task from the military by contracting it out to an American company called Manpower Australia. The federal member for Forrest, Hon Geoffrey Prosser, confirmed that by letter, stating that it would be conducted in Victoria, Tasmania and southern New South Wales for a trial period of 12 months. However, a letter from the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, Minister Scott, informed us on 4 September last year that the contract was entered into for a six-year period. The

inconsistency continues because I have seen Manpower advertisements in Albany and also on the huge billboard on the Horseshoe Bridge in William Street, Perth. No company employed to advertise in a small south west corner of Australia would spend so much money out of contract so far away in WA. I believe the word "inconsistency" is generous. The manager of Manpower Australia stated on the *Today* show, hosted by Tracy Grimshaw, that only those recruits who display global interests at heart will be allowed to join. One cannot help but wonder to whom and to what our servicemen and women will swear their allegiance in the not too distant future.

Many individuals are concerned about Governments that are not open in their deliberations. History indicates they have every reason to be concerned. People are horrified by the sell off of public utilities. The Government may have the legal right to sell them but morally it does not. Utilities such as BankWest and Westrail were owned and paid for by Western Australian taxpayers. Surely a Government is charged with the responsibility to manage those assets well, not to sell them without the people's consent. That consent should be granted to the Government following a referendum held after open and informed debate. There should be no hiding behind the smokescreen of commercial confidentiality.

I am sure that a number of members of this Chamber have suffered the loss of family members who gave their lives, as did my uncles, to guarantee that our culture and our way of life would survive in independence. It is part of our responsibility to ensure those lives were not lost in vain. My father's last military appointment was as Commander of the Strike Air Force of the NATO Forces. His previous position was Commander-in-Chief of Fighter Command. Part of that job gave him the responsibility for the defence of the whole of Great Britain. In seven years he was twice chosen to decide whether the west should go to war with the late Soviet Union. The situation was so bad that the politicians had bowed out of the subject. He was considered by the Governments of the United States of America, Britain and France to be the top military strategist of his time. Shortly before retirement, he gave a lecture to the heads of government departments in Britain. The core of his lecture was that never again would a major power use a nuclear weapon, as the resulting destruction would be too catastrophic. He said that there would be minor wars using conventional weapons but in future the weapons of war would be primarily economic.

Although I do not suggest that we should be anything but allies of the United States, we must be fully aware that we are almost totally succumbing to American commercialism. I ask members whether this is what they want. The numerous treaties, legislation, banking and corporate changes that successive Governments have brought about in the past 30 to 40 years have proved my father's predictions correct. In that time there has been a gradual but steady erosion of Australia's economic independence, which is undoubtedly eroding its independence in other matters.

I refer to the deregulation of our currency. Its value in the past was set by the Government; now it floats but not very well. Members know that our dollar is now worth approximately one-quarter of its pre-deregulation value. In effect, that is a devaluation of our wealth to 25 per cent of its previous value. Deregulation of our banks means that Australians are no longer the major shareholders. We are losing control of our own destiny. During the recent proposed takeover of the Woodside gas project by Royal Dutch-Shell, Prime Minister Howard said that we do not want Australia to become simply a branch office. That is exactly what we have become. We are one of the most - if not the most - foreign-owned countries in the world. The permission for capital to be freely moved around the world without sufficient safeguards has allowed the controlling interest in many Australian companies to fall into the hands of multinationals. Japan permits a maximum of 49 per cent foreign shareholding in its companies. We seldom impose a limit.

The taxation agreement that allows these companies to take the profits from their Australian enterprises out of the country virtually untaxed makes it almost impossible for Australian-owned companies paying a high rate of tax to compete. Australia is party to numerous trade agreements, such as the Lima agreement, that have resulted in the world trade order. We allowed the removal of all our secondary industry tariffs and protections, but did not insist that the United States and Europe follow suit. Those protective policies have led to the disappearance of many Australian jobs.

Given its impact, the national competition policy is without doubt one of the worst policies implemented in this country. I note with interest that the federal Labor Party is considering a second look at it. More careful examination of its consequences should have taken place before it was enacted.

Our special trade agreement with New Zealand places us at great risk of importing many agricultural diseases because that country has not been as vigilant as has Australia in its quarantine control processes. This trade agreement allows New Zealand to buy produce from overseas and on-ship it to Australia. The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service allows entry of produce provided it is not more than five per cent disease affected. We should insist on a zero per cent tolerance. Our wine industry is under threat now because of this idiocy. Hon Jim Scott recently spoke in this Chamber about genetically modified canola. I suspect that I will not often agree with the member, but in this case I do. The future of Australian agriculture lies in selling to the top end of the market. The top end is the section that pays the most. We must ensure that our produce is of the highest and most desirable quality. That increases the demand from those who have the ability to pay. Europe is one such market.

I have spoken today on what might appear to be federal issues. However, I must point out that every aspect of federal government activity affects Western Australians. Since Western Australia became part of the federation, we have seen a steady and gradual erosion of States' rights. This trend must be stopped. Cooperation is one thing; subjugation is another. One of the problems with democracy is that for a political party to be elected to government, it must appeal to the majority of voters. Sadly, its efforts to meet the demands of the majority lead it to ignore the minority, and economic and social injustices quickly follow. This is made particularly easy for our federal Government because it is based so far from Western Australia. The cynical view of federal politics is that it is about the interests of those who live in Sydney and Melbourne versus those who live in the rest of Australia. In state politics, it is the interests of those who live in the city versus the interests of those who live in the country. Given that most of the voters are based in cities, one vote, one value would be a disaster for rural areas of Western Australia - where the export dollar is earned.

I now thank the 18 629 constituents who had the confidence to vote for me on 10 February. I will do everything in my power to represent the region well. I will endeavour to safeguard our state rights. However, most importantly, I want decision making for Australia to return to Australian hands.

[Applause.]
