



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

VALEDICTORY SPEECH



HON FRANK HOUGH, MLC
(Member for Agricultural Region)

Legislative Council

Thursday, 19 May 2005

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CLOSE OF SESSION

Valedictory Remarks

HON FRANK HOUGH (Agricultural) [5.05 pm]: I was not going to rise this evening because I felt that four years in this place did not qualify me to make a valedictory speech, but I was told that if I did not make one, it would seem like sour grapes. However, I will enjoy making it.

Hon Peter Foss: We would have been disappointed.

Hon FRANK HOUGH: I know Hon Peter Foss would have been disappointed. If I have achieved nothing else in Parliament, I came through the front door of Parliament House in front of an angry mob - like a Christian being stoned while being led into the lions' pit. I do not think a member has ever entered Parliament before under those circumstances. I will leave Parliament tomorrow with a lot of knowledge and a lot more friends. I also now respect a lot more people. I did not really know them and I prejudged them, and I feel bad about that. I will also probably slide out the door tomorrow like one of my little cream cakes with the wings taken off: quietly and sedately! I say to my friend Hon Bruce Donaldson that they are all his from now on.

People come into this place and say that they are on the right side of politics; the other people are on the left side of politics and they are wrong. They are all mad, and we are smart; and we are brainy and they are stupid. Someone said I was right. However, when a person comes into this place, he meets those people. All people probably have a niggly, irritating thing about them, and all people have a good and bright side. I thought that if I was going to be in this place for several years, I should look at everyone's bright side. I must say that I looked at the good side of everyone, and I worked on the good side of everyone. I will leave this place not thinking a bad thing about one person in this chamber. Maybe some people niggled me, maybe they irritated me, and maybe they got up my nose. However, at the end of the day, I look at members in this place and thank them very much, because I guess I have learnt humility and courtesy, and gained knowledge. All members have shared their knowledge with me. Members might not be able to think of what they did. It might have been Hon Ken Travers talking football or whatever.

Hon Paddy Embry: It wouldn't have been him talking politics.

Hon FRANK HOUGH: No. However, I will leave this place with a lot of knowledge, and I will look back at this place and the people here with great fondness. I must thank the President. I thank the Leader of the House, in particular. He has been extremely helpful. He is a good bloke. A couple of times he forgot we were here, but I have forgotten that, and have looked on the good side. The Leader of the House gave me a lot of support, and I thank him for it. I say the same to the Leader of the Opposition, and all other members in this place, such as Hon George Cash and, in particular, Hon Bruce Donaldson. I spent a lot of time in the electorate with Hon Bruce Donaldson. I must say that I have learnt a lot and have thoroughly enjoyed my time here.

I thank my constituents and the people who voted for me. Some friction has occurred because of the problems between Pauline Hanson and me. She has probably swallowed a hate pill, but she will get over that. She will probably get out of bed on the right side tomorrow and think of me lovingly. I thank Pauline. She has some good points, but she cannot dance. She has a good side and a funny side. I thank Pauline and the people who voted for me.

I spent six or seven days a week in my electorate and I have slept in many beds - not like Willie Nelson and all the girls I have loved before! Of all the beds I have slept in, I have slept either alone or with my wife. Nevertheless, I have slept in many beds over the past four years and worked six or seven days a week. Members from the Agricultural Region are aware that members get dragged to a bowling club or a golf club on a weekend, which is irritating. However, members attend those functions and smile. I would love to have gone to those functions in a pair of scuffs, shorts and a T-shirt, but unfortunately I had to wear a collar and tie. During the Address-in-Reply debate, I outlined what I thought might have happened at the last election and the reason I will not be here for the remainder of the current session of Parliament.

I thank my wife for putting up with me and for understanding when I was not with her, my children and my grandchildren on all those nights. My family has been extremely supportive. I hope Parliament considers me to have been a contributor. Whether it be a small, large or indifferent contribution, I hope Parliament considers that I have contributed something. I believe that I have. I leave this place thinking and knowing that I have. I hope that my colleagues feel the same. We must look at the bright side.

The staff in the chamber, the dining room and Hansard are fantastic; they do a damn good job and I must admire them. Members want for nothing because of their service. They are always smiling and courteous, which is tremendous. Where in business today would we find such efficient and courteous people who are willing to help? It does not exist elsewhere, but it does exist in the Western Australian Parliament. I thank them; they are fantastic. They should all hold their heads high and be proud of supporting this place and supporting the members. They do a bloody good job. I say with great pride that if I meet any of the staff one night in a bar or a shopping centre, I will buy them a cup of coffee because I think of them in a friendly and warm manner. I thank them. I apologise if I have forgotten anyone from Parliament.

I thank my electorate officers, Roxanne Gilmour, who has been with me from day one, and Dr Natalia Boranski Kostiki, who was stolen from me by the Department for Planning and Infrastructure at the end of last year. She has whizzed through that department, completed her PhD and jumped up two grades. She is wonderful, very intelligent and has fitted the mould. I was very lucky to have two staff who were so much in tune with my personality and so willing to help. They did not work for me; they worked with me, which was beaut. We were a good team. Some of our press and research work was outstanding.

My colleagues Hon Paddy Embry and Hon John Fischer and I have shared six years of humour, if we forget about the \$58 000 court case that the nitwits at One Nation put us through -

Hon Paddy Embry: It is lucky I resigned earlier!

Hon FRANK HOUGH: The member copped only \$10 000; Hon John Fischer and I paid about \$58 000. I could have put that money to much better use than the court case. I thank my colleagues for going through that. Ironically, I was not even mentioned in the initial documents of the court case, but a nutcase multimillionaire in the party took the other members of the party to court. They were mostly pensioners or retirees who did not have any money. If they had not been able to defend themselves, it would have been a tragedy. That dope kept the court case going for two years. I do not thank him at all, but I thank my colleagues for the support they gave me. My two colleagues are great people. We have been through quite a bit over the past six years. I suppose we have not experienced the type of factional fighting that occurs in the Liberal or Labor Parties; we faced only mundane matters such as people wanting to string us up and get rid of us. I know that the factional fighting in the two main parties is a lot bloodier than ours is. However, what I went through was exciting and helped build my character. Although we must look on the bright side, there is always an apple that is rotten to the core, so I do not thank that person who took us to court.

I have enjoyed my time in Parliament and I have gained a wealth of knowledge. Being a member of Parliament has given me a different slant on life. The only criticism I have about Parliament is that during the debates we say the same thing about the same subject even though the government has 16 votes and the opposition has only 14. I have asked myself, "Why am I saying this?" However, we must say things so that they are recorded in *Hansard*, and the constituents can read them and think members are doing a good job. That is fantastic and I believe in that process, but I would not keep putting money on the table in a card game if I could see that another bloke had four aces and a king in his hand and I had only a pair of twos. That would be stupidity. However, that is Parliament. That is part of the process of the game that we play, although it is a pity sometimes.

I have listened to many arguments put by members from both sides. Sometimes I thought members opposite presented a fantastic case and that they were right, but I had to vote against the government. I heard some fabulous arguments from members on our side also. However, it did not matter how great their arguments were, or if I thought no-one could possibly dispute them, because we lost the vote. I used to wonder whether something was wrong and whether my interpretation of the argument was not right. Hon Peter Foss, Hon Norman Moore and Hon Robyn McSweeney presented some great arguments during one debate, in which two and two made four. They were right, and members opposite argued that two and two added up to only three and a quarter. On that basis we should have won the debate.

Hon Kim Chance: That is before GST.

Hon FRANK HOUGH: Yes, plus GST. I thought that we should have won that debate; and why could we not win it based on truth and mere facts? I will walk out of here somewhat baffled about that, but that is Parliament and we must go through the pantomime or the charades.

It is 20 past five and Hon John Fischer wants to speak, but in conclusion I thank everybody in this place for their assistance and for making me a better person. I really believe I have become a better person. Years ago - please do not think I am going to tell a story - when I was a young executive I was aggressive and did not listen. Most people in those days drove a sedan but I drove a bulldozer, because I thought it was a quicker way to get through the pack. I did not listen to anyone and I was quite successful because I bulldozed and everybody did as they were told, or else. One day Kevin James, from Kevin James Motors Pty Ltd - a little fellow of five foot six or seven - pulled me aside when I was the dealer principal of Auto Classic and said to me, "Frank, you are a great operator, you've got a bundle of enthusiasm, you've got a fantastic way about you, but think of yourself as a cowboy: when you're going to do a job, grab the gun in your holster, remove it, aim it and fire." I said, "Well, don't I do that?" He said, "No, you don't; you grab the gun and start shooting; you shoot your foot off and you start shooting everyone else and sometimes you hit

the target.” I asked him how I did that. He said that he used to be like me. He said, “If someone asks a question and you know the answer, instead of shooting your foot off, bite your tongue. It hurts like hell and your eyes will water. Get your hanky out of your pocket and, while you are wiping the water out of your eyes, think about the answer. The answer you give will surprise you because your tongue is hurting like hell. After you think for 30 seconds, the target becomes a lot clearer.” He said that the answer I gave may have been the right one, but it might have hurt someone’s feelings, it might have done many things, but by taking that 30 seconds, I could give the answer in a different way, nicely without hurting someone’s feelings or whatever. That is what Kevin James taught me and I have taken that philosophy through life, because it has slowed me down. I have a bundle of energy. Sometimes I cannot stop, I get excited and I like to do things that I should not do. This Parliament has taken me into the next phase and has made me a better person. I thank members for that. I thank you, Mr President, members and everyone else.
