

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

First Session of the Thirty-first Parliament

The Legislative Council was prorogued as from 6 January 1983.

The Legislative Assembly was prorogued and dissolved as from 6 January 1983.

The Thirty-first Parliament was convened for the despatch of business on 22 March 1983, and the first session was opened by His Excellency the Governor (Rear-Admiral Sir Richard John Trowbridge, K.C.V.O., K.St.J.).

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 22 March 1983

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

The Legislative Council met at 10.00 a.m.

The PRESIDENT (the Hon. Clive Griffiths) took the Chair.

PROCLAMATION

The Clerk of the Parliaments (Mr L. B. Marquet), read the Proclamation of His Excellency the Governor (Rear-Admiral Sir Richard John Trowbridge, K.C.V.O., K.St.J.) summoning the first session of the Thirty-first Parliament.

GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION

His Excellency's Commissioner (His Honour Mr Justice Wallace) having entered the Chamber at 10.02 a.m., a message was sent to the Legislative Assembly requesting the presence of members in the Council Chamber.

Members of the Legislative Assembly having arrived accordingly, the Commissioner requested the Clerk to read His Excellency the Governor's Commission to do all things necessary to be done in the name and on the part of Her Majesty the Queen, or in the name and on the part of His Excellency the Governor, in order to the opening and holding of the first session of the Thirty-first Parliament of Western Australia.

The Commission was read.

COMMISSIONER'S STATEMENT

The Commissioner (His Honour Mr Justice Wallace) read the following statement—

Mr. President, Honourable members of the Legislative Council and members of the Legislative Assembly:

I have it in command from His Excellency the Governor to inform you that at 12 noon today His Excellency will declare to you the causes of the calling together of this Session of Parliament; and it being necessary that a Speaker of the Legislative Assembly be first chosen, it is His Excellency's pleasure that you, honourable members of the Legislative Assembly, repair to the place where you are to sit, and having been duly sworn by me in the terms of the Commission granted to me by His Excellency, you do elect your Speaker, and likewise notify the same to His Excellency.

The Commissioner (His Honour Mr Justice Wallace) and members of the Legislative Assembly retired from the Chamber.

Sitting suspended from 10.12 a.m. to 12.01 p.m.

The PRESIDENT (the Hon. Clive Griffiths) resumed the Chair at 12.01 p.m., and read prayers.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Delivery

His Excellency the Governor (Rear-Admiral Sir Richard John Trowbridge, K.C.V.O., K.St.J.) entered the Council Chamber at 12.03 p.m.; and, the members of the Legislative Assembly having

also attended in the Chamber obediently to summons, His Excellency was pleased to deliver the following Speech—

Mr President and Honourable Members of the Legislative Council.

Mr Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly.

You are assembled here today for the First Session of the Thirty-first Parliament of Western Australia.

With profound regret, I refer to the deaths of two former Parliamentarians. They were the Honourable Sir Arthur Griffith, a former Minister and President of the Legislative Council, and the Honourable Charles Roy Abbey, a former Member of the Legislative Council. We commend their services to this State and extend sincere sympathy to their respective families.

Honourable Members will be aware of the Government's commitment to undertake a comprehensive review of the electoral processes of this State. The Government confirms that, during the life of this Parliament, it will legislate for an electoral system which will more truly and accurately reflect the will of the people.

It will also bring forward legislation to reform the Legislative Council to ensure adherence to the wishes of the majority of Western Australians as reflected in the recent State Election.

This special sitting follows the commissioning of a Government, with the Honourable Brian Burke as Premier, pursuant to a State Election on the 19th of February this year.

It has been convened specifically to receive, and to deal with, a Bill to give legislative effect to an important undertaking given by the Government.

The Prevention of Excessive Prices Bill is being introduced at a time when adverse economic circumstances require a measure of sacrifice by the general community.

In presenting this Bill, the Government acknowledges that the challenges of these difficult times can be met only through community cohesion and consensus.

It further acknowledges that the task of bringing people together with an essential unity of purpose requires, on its part, not only a commitment to all sections of the community but also an assurance that the restraint necessary in these times is shared by all.

With the presentation of this Bill, by which it honours its earlier undertaking, the Government is thus seeking to provide such an assurance—the

assurance that the burden does not fall on certain sections of the community only and that there is, indeed, an equality of sacrifice.

Mr President and Honourable Members of the Legislative Council.

Mr Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly.

I now declare this Session of Parliament open, and trust that Providence may bless your deliberations.

[His Excellency and the members of the Legislative Assembly then withdrew from the Chamber, and the President resumed the Chair.]

QUESTION

Question without notice was taken at this stage.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL REFORM BILL

Leave to Introduce

THE HON. D. K. DANS (South Metropolitan—Leader of the House) [12.26 p.m.]: In order to assert and maintain the undoubted rights and privileges of this House to initiate legislation, I move, without notice—

For leave to introduce a Bill for "An Act to Reform the Legislative Council".

Question put and passed; leave granted.

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by the Hon. D. K. Dans (Leader of the House), and read a first time.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Distribution of Copies

The PRESIDENT (the Hon. Clive Griffiths): I wish to announce that, for the sake of accuracy, I have obtained copies of His Excellency's Speech, which will now be distributed to members.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: FIRST DAY

Motion

THE HON. ROBERT HETHERINGTON (East Metropolitan) [12.28 p.m.]: I move—

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency—

May it please Your Excellency—We, the Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia, in Parliament assembled, beg to express

our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

Mr President, as you may well imagine it gives me a great deal of pleasure to move from the Government benches this Address-in-Reply motion to indicate our loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen. It is something that for six years in this Parliament members opposite told me was unlikely to happen, yet here we are on this side of the House with a very good majority in another place and with a fine majority in the State as a whole.

One thing disappoints me—members who have been here for six years will remember that I moved for the introduction of a Bill to redress the existing situation by making the term of office for members of the Council equal to two Legislative Assembly terms—which is that the newly elected members of the Legislative Council are not present on the floor of the House to be welcomed and congratulated for their fine performances in their various electorates. But that will occur another day.

I am aware that, as far as this Council is concerned—this so-called House of Review—at the last election the most conservative estimate is that the Labor Party on the two-party preferred system of voting obtained 51.3 per cent of the vote for the Legislative Council as a whole and won seven seats out of 17.

It may be some members think this is a satisfactory state of affairs for a so-called democracy, but not everyone does. I suggest it is something we will need to look at in the Parliament to come.

I am aware also that with a Government in this House which has a majority against it, all sorts of interesting things may happen. I will not venture to predict what may happen, but I am hoping what will happen is the Opposition will follow what Lord Salisbury stated in the House of Lords in the United Kingdom in 1945. Whether or not that is the case and whatever may come about, it seems to me that as far as the Constitution is concerned we have a state of affairs which is far from satisfactory.

In the Legislative Assembly in 1980 the Labor Party won 47.8 per cent of the vote and 23 seats. The non-Labor parties won 52.2 per cent of the vote and 29 seats, giving them a majority of six in a House of 55. In 1983 the Labor Party won 54.6 per cent of the vote and won 32 seats and the non-Labor parties won 45.4 per cent of the vote and 25 seats, giving the Labor Party a majority of seven in a House of 57, and yet the Labor

Government obtained two per cent more of the popular vote than the non-Labor Government obtained in 1980. It would seem its majority should be larger. I suggest we should look closely at our electoral system and our Constitution.

I do not wish to pursue that matter at this stage. However, the result of the recent election is that there are now five Labor Governments in Australia, including the Federal Labor Government, and I suggest this is a watershed in Australian history. This places a heavy and onerous, if not awesome, responsibility on the newly elected Commonwealth and State Governments because we must realise that this economic crisis which we are facing is not one which will go away easily. It is not a temporary thing; it is something which has resulted from structural changes in the economy. We must consider the situation carefully.

Of course it is not the first time that Governments have been swept in and out of office at a time of economic crisis. This happened in the 1930s when the economic crisis was finally solved by war. That option is no longer open to us. The possibilities of nuclear war are too horrifying to contemplate. Therefore, we have to do something about our economy without that kind of solution.

I suggest to members opposite, as well as to members on the Government side, that we can all learn from the lessons of the past. The present Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Federal Parliament (Mr John Howard) stated that Oppositions should not regard themselves as Governments in exile, just waiting to resume their rightful place on the Government benches. I think Oppositions do that too often and this is something that we in the Labor Party did in the past.

After World War II we faced great economic problems and the economy was restructured under the Chifley Government to enable the prosperity that followed. When that Government was defeated many people in the Labor Party looked back nostalgically to the days of the Chifley Government and tried to bring back the past. That of course could not happen.

It was only when the Labor Party in this State faced facts and looked at the need for change and produced policies that were in line with the future rather than the past that it was successful in the recent elections. Federally, we were in line with prosperity in 1972 but became aware of the future problems and were doing something about it. It is essential to be aware of these problems as we are passing through what might be called the fourth industrial revolution—a revolution involving computers, sensors, and automation which will in-

crease productivity. At the same time as we increase productivity we have to solve the problems brought about by social and economic change. Labor Governments will need to turn their attention to these matters so that these problems are solved quickly and carefully. We must bring everyone into this problem solving by understanding industrial democracy. Until such time as we can make these hard choices and bring about a period of stability and expansion for all, that increased productivity will not be shared by all.

If we do not resolve our problems we may finish up with a left wing dictatorship or something akin to the life depicted by George Orwell in *1984*. For that reason I suggest to members in this House that this is an important time in history, not only for us but also for the world, and we must grapple with the new economic problems and solve them without the holocaust of nuclear war from which no-one would benefit because we would all be destroyed.

We on the Government side of the House have a grave responsibility, and the members of the Opposition have an equal responsibility, to tackle the problems of the 1980s and 1990s so that together, with vigorous government and a vigorous Opposition, we may solve our problems and produce a country where not only is there employment and productivity, but also prosperity for all, through proper distribution.

It is with pleasure, Sir, that I commend the motion to the House.

THE HON. TOM STEPHENS (North) [12.38 p.m.]: I formally second the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. I. G. Medcalf (Leader of the Opposition).

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE: SPECIAL

THE HON. D. K. DANS (South Metropolitan—Leader of the House) [12.39 p.m.]: move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Wednesday, 23 March, at 10.30 a.m.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 12.40 p.m.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

PREVENTION OF EXCESSIVE PRICES BILL

Consultation

1. **The Hon. G. E. MASTERS**, to the Minister for Industrial Relations:

Did the Government consult the Trades and Labor Council on the prices freeze legislation to be introduced into the Parliament—

- (1) before the drafting of the Bill;
- (2) during the drafting of the Bill; or
- (3) after the drafting of the Bill?

What changes were made to the legislation as a result of those discussions?

The Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) to (3) The short answer is "No".

