

Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly

Sunday, 21 October 1990

JOINT SITTING OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Centenary of the Constitution

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Clive Griffiths) and **THE SPEAKER** (Mr Michael Barnett) took the Chair at 4.00 pm.

Prayers were read.

THE SPEAKER: I declare this joint sitting of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council open and call on the member for South Perth.

MOTION - CENTENARY OF THE CONSTITUTION

Joint Sitting - Student Parliament

MR GRAYDEN (South Perth) [4.01 pm]: I move -

That the students who are here from all parts of Western Australia to help celebrate the Centenary of the Constitution through their participation in the Student Parliament, be admitted to the floor of this Joint Sitting to present to the Parliament written addresses on behalf of all the people in their areas.

One hundred years ago today, the proclamation of our State's Constitution was publicly read. Since that time, tremendous development has taken place throughout the State. Western Australia has grown from an infant State to a healthy, husky teenage one. All this has taken place under our parliamentary system of democracy. Most importantly, that system has enabled us to preserve and to further strengthen and entrench those values which make Western Australia such a desirable place in which to live.

As a people, we believe passionately in freedom, implicitly in the sanctity of the individual, truth and justice, law and order, the rule of the majority and values of that kind. Our parliamentary system has made the perpetuation and entrenchment of those values possible.

The youth of today represented here this afternoon by students from all over Western Australia will be the new custodians of our parliamentary system of democracy. It will be their obligation to protect and enhance that system as the new century unfolds.

Question put and passed.

CENTENARY OF THE CONSTITUTION - PROCEEDINGS

Cameras

THE SPEAKER: I have received a number of requests about the use of cameras on this occasion. As it is an extraordinary event and while it should not be taken as a precedent for any future event, it would be improper of us to preclude the opportunity to people who have been sent to represent all of those schools. Therefore, photography will be allowed during this part of the ceremony.

STUDENT PARLIAMENT

Presentation of Addresses

The students presented their addresses to the President and the Speaker.

PARLIAMENTARY HISTORY ADVISORY COMMITTEE - CENTENARY OF THE CONSTITUTION

Joint Sitting - Publications Presentation

THE SPEAKER I have for presentation at this joint sitting of Parliament the following volumes published by the Parliamentary History Advisory Committee -

Biographical Register of Members of the Parliament of Western Australia Volume One 1870-1930 and Volume Two 1930-1989

Index to Parliamentary Candidates in Western Australian Elections 1890-1989

Membership Register, Electoral Law Statistics 1890-1989 for the Legislative Council of Western Australia, and

The Centenary Edition of the Parliamentary Handbook.

[See papers Nos 610-614.]

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION

Interim Report - Tabling

MR KOBELKE (Nollamara) [4.26 pm]: I table for printing an interim report of the Joint Select Committee on the Constitution, and move -

That the report be printed.

Today we meet in a joint sitting of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council to mark the centenary of responsible Government in Western Australia.

I am pleased to table this report from the Joint Select Committee, which is reviewing our State's Constitution, as today's proceedings celebrate its proclamation in 1890. For the first time in 100 years we are undertaking such a review of Western Australia's Constitution. I wish to thank the members of the committee and its officers for the way in which they have contributed to its work.

If we are to look down a road which our Constitution may take into an uncertain future, we must have an appreciation of the road we have travelled for the past 100 years. Our system of Government and the institutions that form an important part of our way of life are underpinned by our Constitution. That Constitution is a complex combination of Statutes, traditions and practices. It has given Western Australia a parliamentary democracy that works. We may make different judgments as to just how well it works but in comparison with many other parts of the world we have much to be thankful for. Western Australians enjoy a level of freedom, political stability and a standard of living which we jealously guard.

Our world seems to be changing at an ever increasing pace. Fortunately, we do not have to countenance changes of the magnitude of those presently taking place in eastern Europe. There they search for a whole new economic and political order. Western Australia, however, cannot escape the challenges of this changing world. Our Constitution has served us well over the past 100 years. We need to ensure that it continues to serve us at least as well into the twenty-first century. To this end, the Joint Select Committee on the Constitution is entrusted with an important project. This interim report and the committee's continuing deliberations will, I hope, assist the Parliament and the people of Western Australia to move down this road.

[See paper No 615.]

MR MENSAROS (Floreat) [4.30 pm]: As a member of the Joint Select Committee on the Constitution from the Opposition side, I would like to endorse and support the comments made by the chairman of the committee, the member for Nollamara.

So far the committee has been most objective and bipartisan in its deliberations and decisions. There were occasionally different views expressed - not necessarily on party lines - which were argued out and a consensus reached based on the arguments. That made participation in the committee's work enjoyable and useful. It worked in a different manner from the Parliament. The arguments were not built up to suit a predetermined goal, they were based rather on the facts and previous arguments. Therefore, one can say that the process was a true inductive methodology instead of the deductive one which Parliament usually follows. I trust that this method of approach to the many remaining problems facing the committee will be maintained.

Question put and passed.

MOTION - CENTENARY OF THE CONSTITUTION

DR LAWRENCE (Glendalough - Premier) [4.34 pm]: I move -

That the Parliament of Western Australia notes the historic significance of events 100 years ago today when the proclamation of our State's Constitution was publicly read, and expresses its continuing commitment to the parliamentary system of democracy.

One hundred years ago today the colonists of Western Australia, virtually all of them of British origin, were celebrating the arrival and proclamation of their new Constitution. By then the colonists numbered about 45 000, but they had no idea how many Aborigines lived here. What the settlers did know was that the State covered an area of one million square miles, that they had a £45 600 opening credit balance, and that the challenges and responsibilities before them were absolutely enormous.

This morning representatives of the Parliament and some parliamentary staff planted 100 trees. At that event I said that, of all the things which had their beginnings on 21 October 1890, my research revealed two outstanding survivors: One is the Moreton Bay fig tree planted by Governor Robinson in Fremantle and the other is our Parliament. It seems to me symbolically significant that both have proved to be sturdy stayers and both have put down deep roots in our State. However, we must never forget that the maintenance of strength requires nurturing. We have had the good fortune to inherit a strong parliamentary democracy and a 100 year tradition of State Government. I see it as our responsibility to hand on to our successors a system that we have safeguarded and enhanced. Creating a Joint Select Committee to review our 100 year old Constitution is one action recently undertaken by Parliament in fulfilment of this responsibility.

Others have reviewed the events surrounding the original proclamation and the century of development under responsible Government. My purpose now is to put into perspective some of the changes which have taken place over the last century. The population has grown dramatically since 1890: There are now more than 1.6 million people, with origins in many countries - as we saw illustrated dramatically with the students here this afternoon - living in Western Australia. Voting in the first elections under responsible Government took place from 27 November to 12 December 1890. It seems that there were 5 860 electors enrolled to vote in 30 Assembly districts. The current enrolment is 987 574. To be entitled to enrol one had to be a male British subject over 21 years of age and satisfy a property qualification. Today, of course, there is no racial, sexual or property discrimination and the only requirements for the right to vote are that people be resident Australian citizens over 18 years of age. It was not until 1983, however, that Aborigines achieved equal status in terms of the electoral laws.

The chain of events moved rapidly from the proclamation on 21 October. After the elections members were sworn in on 30 December and John Forrest became the State's first Premier. On 20 January 1891 the new Parliament heard its first opening speech delivered by Governor Robinson at the now traditional joint sitting. Looking back on that first session of the new Parliament, the ambition and determination of those present is clearly evident. Although the Government proposed a short opening session, the Governor said, "At the same time Ministers are keenly alive to the importance of a vigorous though prudent policy in regard to public works." For this purpose the Government proposed a Loan Bill of £1 336 000, which represented £29.14.0 per colonist or the equivalent of 78 working days' pay for a typical tradesperson. At current rates that figure translates into \$7 090 per person and would amount to a loan of something like \$11.3 billion!

Reading about that first plan confirmed for me the unchanging nature of the fundamental responsibility of Government, which is to help achieve the aspirations of the community it serves. The huge loan was proposed to finance, over a period, a wide range of projects. Railways were to be built from Perth to Bunbury, Boyanup to Busselton, Geraldton to Mullewa, and Perth to Yilgarn. Improvements to rolling stock and Perth and Guildford stations were proposed. Extensive construction of telephone lines was planned. Harbour improvements at Geraldton, Carnarvon, Ashburton, Cossack and other ports were included, and there were plans to deepen the mouth of the Swan River for steamships and to construct wharves on its banks. The construction of Leeuwin lighthouse was on the list. Reorganisation of the Departments of Works and Railways was planned to put them on a

commercial and economical basis. *Hansard* reported, "It is hoped that any officers displaced by these arrangements will be duly provided for elsewhere." An independent agency was to be established in London.

In summing up, the Governor said of the first Government's Budget, "It will, they are confident, attract population, develop our mineral resources, encourage the settlement of the land, greatly increase facilities of transit, and will be the means of placing the people of the colony in a position to develop its great and varied resources." Of course, we say pretty much the same thing now: Perhaps there really is nothing new under the sun.

Although the first day of the Parliament was all that was needed to pass the first Supply Bill, within minutes of the Council's receiving that Bill from the Assembly the relative powers of the two Houses over money Bills were the subject of an exchange. The Government was criticised about the size of the loan and for underestimating the cost of the plans. Another speaker praised the property franchise saying, "It is the due of honest labour and it is the boundary mark set between barbarism and civilisation." He promised: "To universal suffrage, I shall give an unwavering resistance."

These few observations show that on the very first day of Parliament differences of opinion were expressed on important issues. Our Parliament today has, I am pleased to say, maintained the tradition. Indeed, it is a measure of Parliament's strength and proper functioning that it provides an effective forum for the expression of different viewpoints from the community. It is the view of the Government that further improvements can and should be made to our electoral system to enhance the ability of Parliament to represent Western Australians fairly.

Today, one hundred years since the proclamation of our Constitution, I reaffirm the commitment of the people of this State to the protection and enhancement of our system of parliamentary democracy. This means an affirmation of the essentials of a democratic community which include freedom of speech, assembly, association and religion, and the protection of a just legal system. It means an affirmation of our belief in free and fair elections which legitimise the ascendancy of Parliament and the rule of law.

Looking back over a century of parliamentary rule is a salutary exercise. It should make us mindful of the need to act in this Parliament so as to win the approval of our descendants 100 years from now in the year 2090. Voting for today's centennial motion at this joint sitting is a special privilege enjoyed by members of this Parliament. The anniversary of responsible Government on 21 October was an important day in the early years of our State's history, but its significance has faded over time. Commencing with this celebration year, it seems to me that it would be a good idea to bring the anniversary of proclamation back on to our calendar as a focal point for our ongoing endeavours to increase understanding of and participation in our parliamentary democracy.

Members: Hear, hear!

MR MacKINNON (Jandakot - Leader of the Opposition) [4.40 pm]: I am honoured and privileged to be able to second the motion by the Premier. In doing so, I congratulate those involved in the organisation of the centennial celebrations of our system of parliamentary democracy, not just you Mr Speaker and Mr President, although you have played a significant part in that, but also former Speakers Thompson and Harman and members of the centennial celebrations committee under the chairmanship of Professor David Black and all others involved in the organisation. I congratulate and thank them for their contribution in assisting to ensure that the first 100 years of our system of parliamentary democracy have not been merely celebrated, but have been recorded in a manner that will enable future generations to study and reflect upon and, I am also pleased to see, will continue that work in the future.

It is appropriate that the committee decided to make students part of the celebrations. We, the parents and grandparents who guided the State through the first 100 years have now to pass on that legacy to the young people who represent the future generation. They will chart the next 100 years and, as we head into the twenty-first century, they will face many challenges. They will need resolution and wise and educated heads to enable them to address those challenges. As you will know Mr Speaker and Mr President, a system of parliamentary democracy is not one that is set in stone; it is not one that does not change. It will change

and it will evolve. As we look to the future, challenges will arise, as I have said. I urge the students - these future leaders - to remember that many principles in our parliamentary system of democracy must change, but the principles underlying that system must remain. The Premier mentioned some of those - the freedom of speech is among them. However, I am sure we would all agree, basic principles must not be violated if a system is to be retained that will protect what we hold so dear to the future. I am talking about principles like representation, recognition and respect - representation through a fair and representative system of elections; recognition of the need for a strong bicameral parliamentary system and respect. As members, we must remember that we have a responsibility to the people of this State through our conduct to maintain respect for this system. If that is not held, the system is in severe doubt.

We must understand also as we celebrate today this system of parliamentary democracy - a system we and the people of this State take for granted, as is apparent by the disappointing turnout of people to celebrate this occasion - that people living on the other side of the world in eastern Europe are turning out in their hundreds of thousands to fight for what we take for granted. Who could have been but touched the other day by the article in *The West Australian* about an Albanian woman who was reunited with her children after 40 years in gaol. Her crime was that her husband had left Albania to try to provide her children with a new start in America. She is free because of the tremendous challenges and changes that eastern Europe has seen recently. As our young people look to the next 100 years they should remember not to take our parliamentary system for granted. Our system of parliamentary democracy must change, but some underlying principles should remain rock-solid to underpin it.

A couple of important challenges face our Premier as she is about to attend the Premiers' Conference in the Eastern States. We should all try to understand those challenges as we move into the 1990s and the twenty-first century. The Federal-State relationship issue needs resolution in the immediate future if Australia is to have a sensible system of parliamentary democracy. The funding question, the duplication of resources by Federal and State Governments, the Premiers' Conferences - an issue on which the Premier and I agree - need fundamental change. A system is needed that is better represented and looks at how we handle ourselves as a nation and State. I hope the conference addresses those problems and is not a one-way street which provides more power to Canberra. That is not what we need. I am confident that the Premier will represent well our point of view. I also believe that one of the real challenges facing us in the future was touched upon by our late Governor, Professor Gordon Reid, in his book on the Federal Parliament, in the section which addressed the role of Parliament versus the Executive. Members will know that over the years, the role of Parliament versus the Executive has been a topic of debate for members of Parliament. That is an issue which needs resolution. The role of Parliament needs strengthening vis-a-vis the Executive. If we are to have a system of Government with proper checks and balances, Parliament must have sufficient power to play its part in that process.

At this joint sitting, I can say with some feeling that the changes the Legislative Council has recently made to its role by establishing the new committee systems is a welcome move. It will assist in reasserting the check and balance process. I hope also that the controversial issue of compulsory versus voluntary voting - an issue about which I feel strongly - will be addressed in future. The role of referenda in a developing democracy is another issue. Should they be held or not? It is pleasing to see the Government taking action on amendments to the Local Government Act. The relationship between State and local government will be an important part of the debate about the future make-up of our State and the relationship between the levels of Government.

As Professor David Black said on the steps of Parliament today, this is a historic and important day. In 50 years from today those students will be here and some of them, I sincerely hope, will be in Parliament, or at least taking an interest in the proceedings of Parliament, as the celebrations of 150 years of parliamentary democracy in this State are held. Let us hope that when they do that, they will look back and recognise that this institution of Parliament will be the stronger, the more relevant, the more responsive and the more respected because of our contributions as members of Parliament and because of the opportunity presented in this 100 years of celebration to examine the Constitution of this State and how it should be strengthened for future generations. I thank Parliament and the

members for this opportunity. I have great pleasure in supporting the motion moved by the Premier.

[Applause.]

MR COWAN (Merredin - Leader of the National Party) [4.47 pm]: It gives me a great deal of pride to stand here and represent the National Party and speak on the motion moved by the Premier. It also gives me personal pride because my family has been associated with Parliament in Western Australia since as far back as 1839. It also gives me a great deal of pride that our political party is the second oldest political party in this State.

The Premier commented about the challenges faced by the people of Western Australia over the past 100 years and indicated how they successfully managed to meet the challenges. The Leader of the Opposition has indicated some of the issues that we may face in the future. It is important that we not only recognise and respect the work of the people over the past 100 years, but also we should look to the future as parliamentarians and see what can be done to ensure that our Constitution and our Parliament work well. We come here as representatives of a district; people expect us to give them the best possible representation; they expect us to carry their views and their arguments to this Parliament. In Parliament, conflict often exists between the representation of those views and the demands of party discipline.

Given that conflict, and also given the diversity and the demand on Government, there is also a conflict between the demand that Government makes and the checks and balances which, as the Leader of the Opposition said, are required by this Parliament. So I suggest to those members who are in Parliament today that our responsibility is to ensure that when on occasions we have to delegate our authority we always bear in mind that we are here to represent the people who elect us and that the Government is answerable to the Parliament. If we bear in mind those two things, we will ensure that while in a democracy the majority should always rule it does not become a tyranny and the minority is always heard.

[Applause.]

HON J.M. BERINSON (North Metropolitan - Leader of the House) [4.51 pm]: The Legislative Council was of course established much earlier than the Legislative Assembly. At various times it has been suggested by some that it should also leave the scene earlier; and I must say I have been tempted on occasions, at least fleetingly, to adopt that point of view. Of course, the removal of the Legislative Council from our parliamentary structure will not happen; indeed, it never was going to happen. The bicameral system is well established, and it is the duty of us all to ensure that it functions effectively and usefully. On behalf of the Government members in the Legislative Council, it is my pleasure to acknowledge and welcome this centenary of the Parliament and to pledge the commitment of us all to maintaining the proper role and standards of the Legislative Council as an integral part of the Constitution and the system of government in this State.

[Applause.]

HON GEORGE CASH (North Metropolitan - Leader of the Opposition) [4.52 pm]: I join with my parliamentary colleagues in recognising this very historic occasion, the centenary of the proclamation of responsible government in Western Australia. Members from both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council who are keen on parliamentary history will, no doubt, have reviewed the debates of the Legislative Council in the late 1880s when consideration was being given to the Constitution as we know it today. In 1897 the Legislative Council, after some debate but not by a unanimous vote, agreed to affirm the principle of self-government in Western Australia. Later, in April 1889, the Legislative Council met, and this time by unanimous vote advised the Governor of the day of their support for the Constitution Bill.

Three persons at that time - Governor Broome, Hon S.H. Parker, MLC, and Sir Thomas Cockburn-Campbell, MLC - were then appointed as delegates of the people of Western Australia to represent the colony's views at the imperial Parliament in Westminster. The debates in the Parliament of Westminster at that time indicate that that Government was somewhat reluctant to proceed with the grant of responsible government in Western Australia, but it is true that after it had heard the representation of that delegation of three persons to a Select Committee which had been established to consider the position of the

Parliament, the House of Commons passed a Bill in July 1890. That Bill was later passed without dissent by the House of Lords, and Royal assent was granted in August 1890.

Some of the debates of the Westminster Parliament indicate that the concern at the time appeared to revolve around the question of the population in Western Australia. As members will know, in late 1880 there were only 45 000 people in Western Australia, which covers an area of one million square miles. I think it is fair to say that 100 years later, with a population of more than 1.6 million people, and a Budget in excess of \$5 000 million, our forefathers can rest content on the magnificent progress that has been made by both the Parliament and the people of Western Australia. It is my hope that in the next 100 years, as we move into the second centenary of responsible government in Western Australia, we will see orderly and considered progress and the enrichment of the lives of the people of Western Australia.

Before I conclude I want to mention the very important contribution that one member of the Legislative Council, my colleague, Hon Phil Pental, has made to the committee that has been considering and studying the history of the Parliament of Western Australia. Mr Speaker, as you acknowledged earlier this afternoon, and as Associate Professor David Black acknowledged also, Hon Phil Pental was an inaugural member of that committee and continues to be a member of that committee. On behalf of members of the Legislative Council, and also on behalf of members attending this joint sitting today, I record my appreciation of the contribution made by Hon Phil Pental.

[Applause.]

DR GALLOP (Victoria Park - Minister for Education) [4.46 pm]: One hundred years ago in Western Australia a procession was held to celebrate the achievement of responsible government in this State. Among those who participated were six of the original colonists. The colony was known at first as the Swan River Colony. One of those six original colonists was a Mr Richard Gallop, who came to Western Australia with his two brothers as an indentured labourer in 1829. Richard's brother James was my great great grandfather. It is with some pride, therefore, that I record my family's association with three important dates in our State's history: 1829, 1890 and now 1990.

There is also an important political reason for me to feel some pride in being a member of Parliament on this historic occasion. This year is the centenary of responsible government in Western Australia, and next year those of us in the Australian Labor Party will be celebrating our centenary. Many of the forces which were at work in Australian society in the nineteenth century to bring about the creation of self-government, responsible government, democratic government, and ultimately national self-government were the very same people who created the Australian Labor Party 100 years ago.

In the 100 years that have followed, my party has been rock solid in its commitment to democracy and the parliamentary system of government. Indeed, we initiated many of the reforms in our system which have improved and strengthened Parliament, democracy and, generally speaking, the way of life of our people. The other parliamentary parties have disagreed with us on the details of the system but not on the fundamental principles of a parliamentary system of democracy. That agreement on basic values is part of the strength of our community. We share values, even though we disagree on priorities.

I will now make a couple of comments on the meaning of responsible government. First, it is important that we note the initial reluctance of the British Parliament to grant self-government to Western Australia in the 1880s. The ground for that reluctance was the colony's poor reputation for handling Aboriginal affairs. Indeed a condition of self-government, as the Chief Justice informed us earlier today, was to be an annual payment of £5 000, later to become one per cent of gross revenue, to go to an Aboriginal Protection Board. This provision was eventually dropped in 1898. It worries me that today there are still many in this country and overseas who view Western Australia in these terms.

Events such as today allow us to reflect on the extent to which we have fulfilled our commitment to all our citizens, including the original inhabitants of this State. I am proud to be a member of this Parliament with our first Aboriginal member, Mr Ernie Bridge, who is also a part of our Government. Our laws have improved, and our policies have improved in this area, but have our hearts and minds come to terms with the needs and aspirations of the State's original inhabitants?

Secondly, I draw attention to the real essence of responsible Government: A system of free and democratic elections. To the colonists of the nineteenth century self-government meant elected Government. We are here today as parliamentarians only because we are elected by the people. Both the Parliament and the Government which comes from that Parliament are elected. We should never celebrate Parliament as something abstracted from the system of elections which is its rationale and its lifeblood.

This leads me to my concluding comment. It makes no sense to grant the right to vote, and then distribute that right unequally throughout the State. It defies logic and morality. I hope that when we celebrate another 100 years of responsible Government in this State we will be able to point to the achievement of one-vote-one-value. More importantly, though, I hope that we will still be celebrating the great benefits which come from having a parliamentary system of democracy; a system which best recognises the foibles and weaknesses of human nature on the one hand, but, on the other hand recognises the ever present yearning for human freedom.

[Applause.]

MR THOMPSON (Darling Range) [5.02 pm]: Mr Speaker, Mr President, I thank you, Mr President, and David Black, for having recognised the small part which I played in the setting up of the committee to prepare for the events which have led to today and the events which will continue after today. It was not my idea; I wish I had been bright enough to think of it. It was David Black's idea. He mentioned it to Phillip Pandal, who mentioned it to me. We had a formal meeting and eventually invited a number of people to participate in that committee. One of those was the late Professor Gordon Reid. Another was the late Colin Jamieson. I pay tribute to those people who accepted the invitation to be on that committee for the work that they have done.

I am very proud of the fact that for six of the 100 years the Legislative Assembly has been in existence I was its Speaker. I shall cherish that all my life. I would like to think that I made some contribution to the welfare of this Parliament.

The Premier said that the two things standing today following the proclamation delivered 100 years ago were, firstly, the Moreton Bay fig tree, and secondly this Parliament. The Moreton Bay fig tree grows strong and steady. It produces leaves and figs, and is much the same now as it was 100 years ago. It is bigger, but that is about all that is noticeable about it.

With respect to this Parliament I suggest that the Legislative Assembly is a different place now from what it was then. The rise in the strength and dominance of the Executive has been one significant factor which has occurred in those 100 years. But something which is of more concern to me, and it should be of more concern to many people, is the dominant role played in this system by political parties. I believe that more freedom should be permitted to the members of the respective parties; members should not be bound in the way that they are to adhere to the decisions of political parties.

To put this matter into context, let me quote a couple of statistics. In the electorate of Darling Range the Liberal Party has a membership of about 300 financial members. There are 20 000 people on the roll, and another 10 000 who live there, and they are represented by the member for Darling Range. I put it to the House that it is a nonsense to expect that that member should be directed by one per cent of the community when he represents 100 per cent of the community.

It is not only the Liberal Party which forces that sort of dominance on its membership; the Labor Party does it more forcibly than does the Liberal Party. I say very deliberately in this forum that members should recognise that they have a wider responsibility than simply to their political parties. A distinct change has occurred in the parliamentary system in the 100 years that we have had responsible Government. The first Parliament consisted of some people known as the Ministerials, and the rest were members. It was not until very much down the track that the Constitution and the Standing Orders of the respective Houses of the Parliament started to recognise political parties. If members look at what has occurred in this Parliament during the last 10 or 15 years they will find that the political parties are becoming more institutionalised in our Standing Orders and in our practice than ever was the case before. I suggest that it is against the interests of the wider community to have it that way.

With respect to the Constitution I say very deliberately that it is time the Constitution became

an instrument which was influenced in a different way. Our Constitution was set up by politicians and by members of Parliament. Only members of Parliament have had the opportunity to amend it. The Federal Constitution, by contrast, can change only as a result of a referendum of the people. It is time that the people had a more direct opportunity to have a say in the Constitution of this State. There will be members of this Parliament who will defend their role in it by saying, "Yes, but we are responsible to the people." I put it to this House that more and more the members of this Parliament are becoming responsible to their parties, and it is the parties' interests which are paramount in what goes into constitutional reforms.

The electoral system is very much a part of the Constitution of this State. Here it is the political parties which do deals to determine what changes to the Constitution will occur. The Labor Party has been in a very disadvantageous position because in the 100 years there has been responsible Government in this State the Labor Party has not had a majority in the Legislative Council for one day. As a result the laws which have passed through the upper House in relation to the electoral system have largely favoured the interests of the conservative side of politics. As we go into the next 100 years it is inappropriate to allow that situation to prevail.

I support the comments made by the Minister for Parliamentary and Electoral Reform with respect to one-vote-one-value. In 1990 it is totally inappropriate for us to have an electoral system which does not enshrine the principle of one-vote-one-value.

Mr Speaker and Mr President, I thank you for the opportunity to make these few remarks. I am committed to a bicameral system of parliamentary democracy. The Legislative Council has acted very responsibly in the work it has done in recent years, notwithstanding the fact that I have some criticism of the way in which it is elected. It is to the credit of the conservatives in that place that they have been prepared to resist the pressure from political parties to do things in the interests of political parties. However, I see more and more as time goes by that the political parties are putting a gradual stranglehold on those people who serve in the Legislative Council, and if it gets to the point where they have total dominance I believe that will produce a situation where the Legislative Council will be brought into disrespect.

[Applause.]

Question put and passed.

The SPEAKER: I now declare this joint sitting of the Western Australian Parliament closed.

House adjourned at 5.11 pm
