



**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**INAUGURAL SPEECH**



**Hon Ruby Florence Hutchison, MLC**  
(Member for Suburban)

Legislative Council

Address-in-Reply: First Day

Thursday, 17 June 1954

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## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

*First Day*

**HON. R. F. HUTCHISON** (Suburban) [3.35]: I move—

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor in reply to the Speech he has been pleased to deliver to Parliament: —

May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the State 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.

I have pleasure in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidential chair and hope you will have a fruitful, calm and pleasurable sojourn in office. As the first woman to raise her voice in the deliberations of the Legislative Council of Western Australia, I feel keenly my position and my responsibility to the women of this State and those who will, in general, follow my footsteps. I shall endeavour to live up to the standards of truth and integrity that they would expect of me.

For too long has this House been silent for want of a woman's voice but now one might as well, like the historical figure, King Canute, attempt to hold back the rolling waves as try to keep women from their rightful place in the Legislature and public affairs of this State. I hope I shall not be long without female company here. While I am in this House I shall do my utmost to help in the government of this State, and will do everything possible to be worthy of my position. Science and the recent war have thrust woman forward from the kitchen, where she was supposed to belong, and she has now taken her rightful place in society. A great many women have played a worthy part in history. I hope to follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before, and play my part in the future.

After all, government really depends on good housekeeping, and it is women who have the correct views on good economy and good housekeeping, and the way in which to keep the family together in order that men and women may be complementary to each other. I think that applies in the sphere of government also. I hope that we shall have more women's voices in the Parliament of this State in the not far distant future.

One of the planks of the platform on which I was elected to this Chamber was adult suffrage, and I want the people of Western Australia to know that I shall fight untiringly to obtain adult suffrage for this Legislative Council. We know that this is practically the most powerful Legislature in the British Commonwealth, yet its suffrage is definitely against women. This House has a very narrow franchise—a property franchise and a householder's franchise—and I hope to see that widened considerably. I noted with pleasure last year that one non-Labour member of this House, Hon. Leslie Craig, spoke in favour of adult suffrage. I hope that when a Bill is brought down this year to liberalise the franchise for this House, members will take note of the fact that the people have given a decided answer that democracy has reached the stage where we can expect to attain fair and just representation in both the halls of legislature in this State.

The Government has called the session together earlier than usual for the purpose of reconsidering the rents and tenancies legislation. As a woman, I can inform the President and members of the widespread suffering which prevails at present as a result of the irresponsible action of this Chamber last session in throwing out the Bill dealing with rents and tenancies. Only yesterday a woman came to me and asked me what she would do with her furniture if she could obtain only a room in which to live, as she had been evicted from a house in which she had resided for 13 years. Therefore, I am hoping that something will be done to help people such as her in the future.

I think the time has arrived when humanity should take precedence over monetary matters. The cause of humanity means a great deal to the people of the country today, and the time has passed when we could overlook the suffering of our neighbours and have no care about them. There is no doubt that our neighbours are suffering at present as a result of the Bill dealing with rents and tenancies having been defeated at the last special session of Parliament.

I maintain that a country's greatness is governed by the happiness of its people; and, to me, housing is a first essential to make our people happy. Since the war, we have seen young people grow up and come face to face with the problem of when they can get married, a situation which has been brought about because of insufficient housing. It has not been because they could not buy a house but because, as a result of the war, there have not been sufficient

building materials with which to erect the houses. Every father and mother knows only too well what it means when their son or daughter grows to maturity and wishes to get married and rear a family which, in truth, is the basis of society. However, not being able to find accommodation, these young people have not been able to realise their ambitions. Whilst the housing shortage exists, protection should be afforded to those who are already occupying houses. I commend the Minister for Housing for the worth-while job he has done since he has assumed office, but there is still a long way to go before we reach that happy stage where one can buy a house at will.

I shall now speak on the subject of child welfare and education. To me education is the keystone of society, and it goes hand in hand with child welfare. In a country such as ours, with its expanding economy and development, which is proceeding so rapidly at present, we shall have to pay special attention to education in the very near future. I should like to see scholarships established whereby all children would be given an equal opportunity to fit themselves for the future. At present a public fund is being raised in order to send abroad for further studies one of our gifted young Western Australians. This matter is one that should receive the consideration of the Government and we should try to foster more scholarships so that every man may reach his right place in the sun. There is no doubt that education is most necessary for our future prosperity.

I hope that we shall do more than we have done in the past for our underprivileged children. At present we are extremely short of homes and the essentials which are necessary for the development of these children. It is my hope that homes will be built so that these children may be segregated in their proper categories in order that they may receive our help and obtain their education more rapidly and in a wider sense than they have done in previous years. In my opinion our best investment is in the cultural, physical and spiritual welfare of our children. I hope that our children will have a big share in the shaping of our State's future and that the Government will give every consideration to this question when legislation to deal with it is brought before the House.

It is my hope that today will prove to be a happy augury for the future. I think that this House will live up to its commitments and the name it should hold. At present I do not know that I should feel as proud as I do when I think of the actions of the members of this Chamber during the last session of Parliament. This State can look forward to great things, but it is my earnest desire that the members of this Chamber will consider that it is a duty to have regard for the welfare of those who look to them for consideration.

I am conscious that I have to watch the clock. When I came here I was warned that people would soon be shuffling their feet if I continued speaking too long. I am aware that today is an occasion for festivity, and that we have afternoon tea to look forward to and an opportunity to meet friends, old and new. Therefore, I do not intend to delay the House much longer.

I trust the session will be fruitful; and, being the only woman of this Chamber, I hope I will become more experienced as I go along and that I will do justice to that which I am expected to do. I cannot expound any more on what I have already said. I will now be true to name and close my remarks by wishing this Chamber all it would expect of itself in the coming session.