

[Wednesday, 18 June 1986.]

DR GALLOP (Victoria Park) [2.38 p.m.]: I begin by congratulating you, Mr Speaker, on your election to a very important office in our parliamentary system. Not only do you have to be the chairperson of the proceedings that occur in this place, but also you are the symbol of the parliamentary system itself and you speak for us in our dealings with the Monarch and Her representatives in this State. It is a distinguished and important position and I wish you well.

May I remind you, Mr Speaker, of the remarks made by the Speaker in the House of Commons in 1642 when the Monarch tried to bully him into giving up the names of those people who it was claimed were plotting against the Monarch. The Speaker, who was under pressure at the time, said -

Sir, I have ears to hear and lips to speak only that the people shall command me.

I hope that you, Mr Speaker, will take those fine words into account in your dealings in this place.

I came to this Parliament as a result of a by-election caused by the resignation of Mr Ron Davies who had served the electorate of Victoria Park with great distinction for 25 years. It is a great privilege to follow in Ron's footsteps. Not only did he win the respect of his electors, but indeed one could say also that he was loved by his electors because of the hard work he put in over the years on their behalf.

He was a patient and understanding man who took the time and effort to listen to all of his constituents no matter who they were or where they came from. Not only was Ron a first-class local member of Parliament, he also achieved high office. He was the Leader of the Opposition for the Parliamentary Labor Party from 1978 to 1981, a Minister in the Tonkin Government from 1971 to 1974, and a Minister of the Burke Government from 1983 to 1986. I am sure all members here wish Ron well in London, where he will be our State's Agent General.

Victoria Park is one of our older electorates, formed in 1930. Indeed, while canvassing during the by-election, I discovered that many of the people who grew up in that electorate in the 1930s are still there today. It was a pleasure to meet with them and talk over the problems of the day.

Today, the electorate covers not only the core areas of Victoria Park and East Victoria Park, but also Lathlain, parts of Carlisle, Kensington, South Perth, and St James. The bulk of the electorate is composed of working-class men and women and their families, many of whom have left the work force and gone into retirement. Many are still in the work force and are vitally interested in the basic questions of politics that relate to the provision of employment, the promotion of economic growth and social justice in Western Australia. These are the traditional and basic aims of the party that I will represent in this Parliament - the Australian Labor Party.

The electorate contains also a very important small business component associated with the commercial centre along Albany Highway and an increasing proportion of younger professional people and students seeking qualifications. These people, the traditional Victoria Park electorate, and the newer people coming into the electorate, plus the small business component, are very keen to see that Victoria Park preserves its quality of life, its residential quality, and its inner urban nature. I will be looking forward to working with the elected representatives of the South Perth City Council and the Perth City Council to see that that residential amenity is preserved and that the social amenities are improved as resources allow. I have a great belief in the system of local government and I intend to work with the elected representatives at local level, to bring about an improvement of the area, having myself served on a city council in the past.

I come to this Parliament from Murdoch University where I was a lecturer from 1981 to 1986. I was also a postgraduate student from 1975 to 1977 when the university was first set up. I would like to make a few brief comments about the university.

Despite some early doubts about the viability of Murdoch University it has survived through some troubled times. It now plays an important part in the higher education system of this State. Enrolments this year totalled 4 619. Next year it will begin marketing in Malaysia and Singapore to attract full fee-paying students. It hopes to attract 100 fee-paying students per annum.

Murdoch University has contributed to higher education in this State in many ways. The one I wish to focus on today relates to access. "Access" is a very important word in the vocabulary of members on this side of the House. We believe that higher education should be opened up to as many people as possible who are capable of enjoying it. Part of the philosophy of Murdoch University has been to have a flexible definition of the phrase "being capable of enjoying it". It has been a great privilege to have been at a university where mature age students, particularly women, have been encouraged to apply for admission without necessarily having a formal educational background. These students may have left school at a young age when expectations were not as high

as they are today. They have been accepted into the higher educational system and have achieved a great deal. It has been a pleasure to see that process of access opening up opportunities for mature age students.

Secondly, I refer to distance education. The external studies unit of Murdoch University brings higher education to the outlying areas of this State. The university has established a very good reputation in the country by opening up opportunities to those who live in outlying areas. What we see is the philosophy of the Labor Party and the philosophy of educational equality in operation. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The flexible definition of the phrase "opening up education" has not meant a decline in standards. What it has meant is that people who never had the chance of such education in the past have now been given the opportunity and have grabbed it.

I believe in the philosophy that has been outlined by the Leader of the Chinese Communist Party, Mr Deng Xiaoping, when he said that he does not care about the colour of cats so long as they catch mice. The philosophy at Murdoch University has proved to be successful.

I come to this Chamber as a fourth generation Western Australian. I cannot be accused of being a carpetbagger from the Eastern States. My great-great-grandfather on my father's side, James Gallop, along with his brothers Richard and Edward, arrived on the "Lotus" in 1829. My great-great-grandmother was also on that first fleet. The Gallops were indentured labourers from the county of Sussex. Eventually, they became landowners in Western Australia and with their sons and daughters played an important role in the development of this State in the 19th century. They were associated with the development of the Nedlands area. James Gallop senior left Nedlands in the 1850s to shift to Fremantle because he believed he could further the education of his children by so doing. The Gallops also played an important part in the North Perth, Fremantle, and York areas. The family were pioneers of the market garden and wine industries of this State.

During the 20th century one of my relations was a member of the Legislative Council of Western Australia. He was George James Gallop Warden Miles who was the member for North Province from 1916 to 1950. He started as an Independent and then became a Liberal in the last years of his service.

I have referred to my family history because I have a degree of consciousness of the history of British settlement in this State. We need to continue to develop our State as a prosperous and caring society. I wish to quote from a letter written by Thomas Gallop - a shepherd in Sullington - to his sons who came to Western Australia in 1829. His sons wrote back to him and said that they were having some trouble with the Aboriginal population. Thomas Gallop Snr - who was illiterate - got someone to write back to his sons to say and I quote, "recollect that you are intruders in their country". I think those words should be remembered by us today.

Not only should we continue to have a consciousness of the contribution that British and European settlers have made to this State but we also need to come to grips with the consequences of our settlement on the original inhabitants of this State.

I make reference to the Constitution that governs the operation of the legislature, the Executive, and the judiciary. In fact, there is not a State Constitution. There are a number of Acts of Parliament which make up what we would call a Constitution. Members will see these on their tables as "Acts and other information relating to the Parliament". There are two basic Acts, the Constitution Act of 1889 and the Constitution Acts Amendment Act of 1899. There are also two other Acts, the Electoral Act of 1907 and the Electoral Districts Act of 1947.

I do not want to say anything about the last two Acts, but when the Government's electoral reform programme is presented I hope to say more on the electoral system of this State. In reference to the Constitution Act and the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, I am pleased that I have come into this Parliament knowing that we have finally become, in the words of the Bill which passed through all our Parliaments last year and Westminster earlier this year, "a truly sovereign, independent and federal nation". It was to the credit of legislators throughout the country that they put aside many of the party differences that they may have had to make this possible.

That Bill also saw to it that the archaic Royal Instructions that were previously given to the Governor and the Australian State Constitution Act, which were a disgrace to our status as an independent federal system, have passed into the pages of history where they belong. At the State level, however, we still need to go a long way. There are three particular problems with our Constitution Acts that I will mention briefly.

First, the existence of two Constitution Acts poses a problem. I believe this leads to a degree of unnecessary overlap and makes it too difficult for anyone to find out precisely how the different parts of the system work. We need consolidation and clarification of our Constitution.

Secondly, the principles which underlie our system, which govern its operation - most importantly, the principle of responsible government - are left implicit and are not stated explicitly enough in the Constitution that governs our operations. I do not believe that one should have to have a degree in British and Australian constitutional

history to engage in a first reading of our Constitution. Of course, there will always be room for interpretation, but it is important that we say what we mean when we establish our principles. One of the great problems of our Constitution is that the principles of responsible government are far too implicit and not stated in a straightforward manner in the Constitution Acts.

Thirdly, the language is typically legalistic; it is dense, obtuse, and overloaded with ambiguity. Many of the sections also seem to relate to circumstances and events that are well and truly irrelevant to the issues of the day.

For those three reasons, we need first to consolidate the two Acts; secondly, we need to outline clearly the principles; and, thirdly, we need to make the language clearer in the interests of political education generally and in the interests of interpretation so that it is harder for the lawyers to read what they would like into those Acts. We need to consolidate the Acts into one Constitution and to express and embody our principles in that system. This would pave the way for a proper process of entrenchment of the Constitution, because a proper Constitution ought to be a separate Act. I do not believe that the Westminster system, which has it that Constitution Acts can be amended simply by the Parliament, is a good procedure. Referendums are required if a proper Constitution is to exist, but we need to consolidate it before we establish that process of entrenchment.

I will now say something about our federal system of Government and the role of the State Government in our system. Federalism provides the most appropriate form of Government for our nation. Not only does it reflect our history, the development of our country as a nation, but also it guarantees a degree of political diversity so easily lost in a unitary system. It also makes it possible for parties of both Left and Right to achieve their objectives if they can win widespread and continuing support from the electorate. It is true that it encourages social reformers of both Left and Right to be realistic, but that is not necessarily a bad thing.

A unitary system of government leads, as we have seen in operation with an extreme Government in Great Britain in recent years, to the diminution of the powers of local government to a degree that would not be possible in a federal system in which the States have a guaranteed constitutional position. Federalism promotes a better framework of government than does a unitary system. However, federalism needs to be capable of change and development. It must be flexible if it is to be productive of the social good. We cannot turn the clock back to the turn of the century and re-establish life as we imagine it was then. I say imagine, because many of those who talk about the early federal system actually create an imaginary system rather than that which really operated. But we cannot turn back the clock in any case; nor can we allow a commitment to State interests to blind us to the many areas in which a cooperative solution to national problems is the best way forward. Federalism is not an excuse for bloody-mindedness.

We must conceive of our commitment to State rights in the overall context of a commitment to national development. I cannot understand how people can be believers in the development of Western Australia without at the same time being believers in the future of this country. For this reason, I do not see the much talked about dams case as a threat to our federal system. In that case, the identity of our nation, as embodied in the treaty commitments we had entered into, was clearly and unambiguously at stake. The particular area in Tasmania was on the World Heritage List. It was quite specific; it was quite clear. The dams case does not open up the floodgates for the destruction of the federal system. It merely promotes another check and balance. A federalist should believe in checks and balances and should know that they work two ways and not only one way.

The States have an important and constructive role to play in our system. We still have in State Parliaments an enormous range of legislative powers, the famous residue that is left after the definition of Commonwealth powers enumerated in the national Constitution. The States also have an enormous degree of political importance in our society. It is true that our ability to marshal that legislative and political power is circumscribed by financial considerations. Nevertheless, I often wonder whether the ability to impose a tax translates as easily into the power to do it as those who lament its loss would seem to imply. All Governments operate within limits. The fact that our limits are laid down by the Premier at an annual Premiers' Conference - or, I should say, to a degree, laid down by the Treasurer at that conference - makes it no more real than if it were being laid down wholly by the people themselves through the democratic process.

The crucial questions are: How do we use the powers that we have as a State Parliament and, from that, as a State Government, and to what ends do we use the powers we possess? I have assumed a positive answer to the prior question of whether we ought to use the powers that we have. The fact is that the State Parliament is the only body capable of considering the interests of the State as a whole, the only body capable of taking into account the interests of all people. By their very nature, all other bodies are necessarily self-interested and, therefore, partial. The challenge facing a State Government and Parliament is to assess the situation that faces it and intervene in the workings of the State to bring about more favourable results. It is the belief of those on this side of the House that Government can - not of necessity, because the modern Labor Party does not believe in the dogmas of the Left and it is unfortunate to see that many on the other side still believe in the dogmas of the Right - produce the right results. They can do so and ought to do so.

In order to play this role, it is important that members of Parliament have a clear view of the nature of the political, social and economic context in which we operate. In the short time that I have been in this House, I have been disturbed by the attitudes that prevail amongst my Liberal and National Party colleagues in respect of a number of points. I refer first to their attitude to the nature of the international economy and Australia's place within it. We no longer live in the 1950s and the 1960s. Growth in trade in commodities will continue to lag behind growth in manufactures and services, not just because of the agricultural policies of the USA and the EEC, but also because of the spread of up-to-date agricultural technology throughout the world.

In respect of mineral products, we also see the substitution of new materials such as optic fibres and plastics for traditional metals and the traditional recycling of many metals. I am not saying that we ought not promote and encourage agriculture and mining. I am saying that if we are to achieve economic growth we have to look at where the growth is occurring.

If we want to slot into the international economy we have to look at new avenues. We must open our minds to alternatives. I believe our State Government has promoted this wider approach to the balanced economic development of this State.

Secondly, I have been disturbed at the very restrictive definition that many members opposite give to the nature of wealth and the best way to encourage its production in the exchange economy in which we live. A service is just as much an economic good as a loaf of bread or a hammer so long as it fetches a price. I would also argue that the construction of an up to date and generous health, education and welfare system by the Government, by way of a demonstrable process of relationships, actually promotes economic development.

Of course, at the margins it may be necessary to look at our commitments in those areas but generally speaking, any advanced industrial economy that is going to grow will require a proper health, education, and welfare system. To believe that wealth is narrowly defined and the belief that it does not include those sectors of our society is to have a particularly short run and narrow view.

It is also worth pointing out that there is more to the good life, as many philosophers have told us over the centuries, than the mere production of goods and services. The conditions under which we produce and enjoy products are of equal importance as the consumption of the product itself. It is the belief of members on this side of the House that we must promote growth and social justice - what we call economic and social development - and not just one at the expense of the other. Indeed, it is a proposition of social democrats and I believe it can be proved by a study of the developments in advanced industrial capitalist countries, that those Governments that attempt to pursue both growth and social justice at the same time produce more growth than countries that believe the two are in necessary contradiction. This is not just an abstract question.

When we debate issues such as trade union policy, industrial policy and taxation policy it will be clearly seen how the values of the Labor Government are at odds with those of members of the Liberal and National Party in respect of these twin commitments. By their constant reference to wages and the labour market as the source of the problems facing this country the Opposition parties are demonstrating a far too narrow view of the solutions we need to improve our trading performance. Consider a simple fact: Wages in Sweden are much higher than they are in Australia but Sweden is a much more productive country than Australia.

The fact of the matter is that wages are one component of economic efficiency; management is also a component, from the point of view of production, sales, and after-sales service. The capital equipment available to the workers involved in production is also a particularly important component. Indeed, investment is ultimately the key to economic growth and I have been disturbed to hear members of the Opposition parties talk about the rates of return in Australia compared with the rates of return in other countries and then justify the investment policies that are clearly being pursued by some business interests in this country who shift their investment portfolios overseas. They have defended this process which has been followed in the last 18 months by some superannuation funds and investment companies in this country. Not all are taking these actions, but some are. Unless we invest in our country and in our State the rate of return will not increase in the longer term. It is worth pointing out that the working people who live in this State do not have the same degree of mobility as those who possess capital. In these times in which we are told to tighten our belts they will be looking to investors to put their money where their mouths are by investing in the future of our country.

It is worth reflecting upon the early history of this State when profits were not easily available to those who came to this country. According to the view propounded by some sectors of business at present, they should have given up because profits were not being earned in the early days. But the people of those times had a longer-term commitment and they invested not only money but also human effort to achieve results in the long term. That is the sort of long-term approach we need to adopt.

I conclude my maiden speech by saying to members of the Opposition parties, that I believe civilised behaviour is a necessary underpinning for democracy to work. In no way should we compromise the views we hold and we

should present those views strongly. However, we should on all occasions be willing to produce arguments rather than diatribe and be willing to listen to the other point of view.

To members of the Opposition parties I say that, having been a student of the subject for many years, I believe that conservatism is a plausible philosophy. I happen to think it is totally and utterly flawed, but I understand why individuals believe in it and will continue to do so throughout human history. It is a mistaken belief but I respect the integrity of members opposite who hold such views. I hope they will present arguments for conservatism instead of diatribe and I shall enter into the spirit of debate in this Parliament in respect of the divisions between the Opposition's philosophy and the Government's philosophy.

[Applause.]