

[Thursday, 24 June 1993.]

**MR DAY** (Darling Range) [12 noon]: Mr Speaker, in my first address to this Parliament, like the member for Dianella I congratulate you on your election to the important position you now occupy. I wish you success in fulfilling the requirements of the office, particularly in maintaining appropriate standards, while nevertheless allowing issues to be debated passionately and fully.

I regard it as an honour and a privilege to be elected as a member of this House. Standing here today takes me back 21 years to my first visit to this Parliament. I was still at school and my late father arranged for me to visit Parliament for my general education and because of his interest in the democratic process. The date was 11 May 1972. I remember it well because while I was sitting in the Public Gallery in this Chamber the State's longest serving Premier, Sir David Brand, made an address in which he announced his retirement as Leader of the Liberal Party and, therefore, as Leader of the Opposition. Sir David Brand was Premier of Western Australia for most of my childhood, and the occasion remains clear in my mind today. As Premier from 1959 to 1971, together with his long time Minister for the North West and Industrial Development, Sir Charles Court, as he was later to become, and other members of successive coalition Governments, he oversaw a period of great economic growth and development in this State. I was interested to read his last speech to this House as leader in June 1972 in which he said -

This is a great State with a wonderful future. It will only remain great if we believe in its future and in the vast opportunities that lie ahead. It will remain great if we are prepared to work and to produce in order that we may be able to enjoy a better way of life. We must recognise ourselves as part of a team that must produce something out of this country, be we unionists or millionaires. We have to produce more and more before we are entitled to ask for more and more.

It would be difficult to find a set of words which more aptly describe our situation today, although these days I am not sure that being a unionist and a millionaire are mutually exclusive. I succeed Hon Ian Thompson as the member for Darling Range. Ian was first elected in 1971 and at the time of his retirement had served for 22 years. For most of that time he was a member of the Liberal Party, but in 1989 he decided to part company with the party. Although I know that action disappointed many of his supporters within the Liberal Party, Ian is widely regarded as a member who vigorously and capably represented his constituency. He also played a pivotal role in the operations of this Chamber as Speaker for six years until 1983. I am sure that all members wish Ian and his wife Margaret a fulfilling retirement.

I would not be standing here today without having had the help of many people. I thank the electorate of Darling Range for their clear expression of confidence in both me as the Liberal candidate and the Liberal Party generally. I thank the members of the Liberal Party for giving me the opportunity of representing the party in the election and also the members and supporters of the campaign committee, headed by Mrs Dawn Stratton, who worked so hard over the 18 months that I was a candidate. I also thank my fellow members and the officers of the House who have assisted me since the election. There is no doubt that parliamentary and political life imposes pressures on families, particularly those with young and school aged children, which would not otherwise exist. I especially thank my wife Leigh for her support and encouragement before and since the election. My children are a little young to fully appreciate the implications of my current position, although after the past couple of days and nights I think they are rapidly becoming aware. I thank Christopher James and Olivia for their forbearance so far and I look forward to their learning about the processes of democracy through my involvement.

I owe a great debt to my parents for continually putting the interests and education of their two children before all else. I am pleased that my mother is here today, but sadly my father died when I was 17 years old. My father spent most of his working life in the Commonwealth Bank but regarded the years he spent in the Australian Army around the time of the Second World War as one of the proudest periods of his life. In October last year I was fortunate to be able to attend with my mother the 50th anniversary commemoration of the Battle of El Alamein on the Mediterranean coast of the western desert of Egypt. That battle in 1942 was a turning point in the war against Nazi forces and about 20 000 Australians, including my father, were involved and many were killed. I place on record my gratitude to all those who have made sacrifices in standing up for their country against tyranny and aggression.

I was born in Western Australia and I have lived most of my life either in or close to the area I now represent. Similarly to the Minister for the Environment, my professional background is as a dentist and for the past seven years I have been in private practice in partnership with my sister Elizabeth, primarily in Glen Forrest but also in Beverley, and to a lesser extent Wundowie. Before commencing private practice I worked for the Perth Dental Hospital in a variety of clinical situations, including Canning Vale Prison. Part of my work with the hospital involved conducting the domiciliary service for a year. That involved visiting and treating patients who were

confined to their beds or homes, either private or nursing homes. Visiting a large range of people in such circumstances from young brain damaged motor vehicle accident victims who were comatose to the aged, geriatric patient, in some cases with Alzheimer's disease, was a very educational, sobering and humbling experience. It was my view at the time that the equipment and facilities provided for this service were less than ideal. I hope that the situation has improved in recent years, but if not I would certainly support moves to do so.

My practice of dentistry has been very much in the era of fluoride. Since it was introduced into most public water supplies in Western Australia 25 years ago in 1968 the number of cases of tooth decay in children and now young adults has declined dramatically. For example, I am advised by the dental services of the Health Department of Western Australia that the average number of decayed, missing or filled teeth in Western Australian 12 year olds has steadily declined from 7.68 in prefluoridation 1967 to 1.5 in 1991. That is a decrease of about 80 per cent. While a number of varying factors no doubt contributed to this improvement, water fluoridation is considered to be the primary cause. Fluoride has been one of the great public health success stories of our time and its presence has changed the nature of dental practice considerably.

Each member is entitled to feel that his or her electorate has some special qualities, and I can assure the House that Darling Range is no exception. Not surprisingly, the electorate includes a large part of the Darling Range to the east of Perth. Much of the area is State forest and water catchment area for Mundaring Weir and the Victoria and Bickley Brook reservoirs. Most of the population lives in the western third of the electorate around the area of the Darling scarp. Darling Range includes parts of two hills shires, namely Kalamunda and Mundaring. About 25 per cent of the population lives in the Shire of Mundaring in the areas of Glen Forrest, Darlington, Boya, Greenmount and Helena Valley. About 75 per cent of the electorate lives in the Shire of Kalamunda including the residential areas of Gooseberry Hill, Kalamunda and Lesmurdie and the more rural areas of Piesse Brook, Hacketts Gully, Paulls Valley, Walliston, Bickley, Carmel, Pickering Brook, Canning Mills and parts of Forrestfield and Wattle Grove. Kalamunda is the commercial centre of the electorate.

The Darling Range area has been important in the development of Perth and Western Australia. Towards the end of the last century timber mills were established at places such as Mason's Mill in Carmel, Canning Mills and Smith's Mill, which is the area now known as Glen Forrest. In 1891 the Zig Zag railway was completed. The chief proponent of that was Edward Keane, a former member of this Parliament. The line was the first reliable transport route to the city, running from Canning Mills to Midland. The area was an important source of timber, particularly for the supply of sleepers for the State's expanding railway system. A timber mill still operates at Pickering Brook.

Also in 1891 Perth's first reticulated water supply was established with the opening of the Victoria Dam, which was rebuilt and enlarged in 1991. Despite the proximity of this supply, it is interesting to note that Kalamunda did not have a reticulated supply until 1954, following the successful representations of the then member for Darling Range, Mr Ray Owen.

Darlington was initially established as a vineyard in the 1880s and quarries at Boya were important in supplying granite for the construction of the moles at Fremantle Harbour and as ballast for the State's railways. Today the principal rural activity in the Darling Range area is fruit production. Although some orchard activity occurred late last century, most orchards were established as part of a soldier settlement scheme following the First World War. Recent statistics supplied by the Department of Agriculture indicate that 52 per cent of the State's stone fruit trees and 27 per cent of apple trees are planted in the hills district. In addition, a number of vineyards and wineries have been established in the electorate in recent years and are becoming increasingly important.

The forest and rural areas of Darling Range are great assets, not only to local residents but also to the people of Perth and the State. It is essential that we make the most of these assets, in both a horticultural and recreational sense. I believe that any proposals to extend urbanisation into areas of fertile agricultural land should be treated with a great deal of caution. Future generations will be very grateful to have a significant horticultural industry on the doorstep of the city.

Planning and urbanisation matters are of great interest to the people of Darling Range. I appreciate that these issues are seldom easy to deal with but I ask the Government to take the public into its confidence and to listen properly to the concerns of local residents. I am pleased that the Minister for Planning has indicated this will occur. I know there is a great deal of frustration about the way in which urbanisation in the Helena Valley area has occurred, contrary not only to strong local feeling but also to the clearly expressed wishes of the Shire of Mundaring and the shire planner. I do not intend to discuss the merits or otherwise of the particular development, but there is a strong feeling that consultation with the community existed in name only. The Bushmead Rifle Range area is being considered for housing development at present. I urge the Government to consider carefully the environmental significance of this area before proceeding with any development. It is worth noting that the area has been given interim listing by the Australian Heritage Commission.

The forest areas of Darling Range are a wonderful facility for the people of Western Australia to have available to them. I commend the officers of the Department of Conservation and Land Management, particularly in the Mundaring District, who are involved in the development of the "hills forest" project, which aims to make the forests of the district more accessible, meaningful and enjoyable to visitors, with a greater range of interpretative displays and participatory activities. From what I have seen so far, an excellent result is being achieved.

I also commend the members of the Kalamunda Historical Society for their work in establishing and developing the Kalamunda History Village. However, more can be done to utilise the recreational and tourist potential of the hills region. I am sure that local residents do not want the area transformed into a major tourist mecca, but I am aware also of a desire by some groups, such as the Kalamunda Chamber of Commerce, to promote the region more effectively. For example, the availability of overnight accommodation is very limited, which is perhaps a little ironic considering that the Kalamunda area was regarded for the first half of this century largely as a holiday resort.

One other electorate matter on which I will comment is schools. Recently I visited Glen Forrest Primary School, where what appears to be a discriminatory policy within the Ministry of Education was pointed out to me. I understand that if a school is fortunate enough to be new or to have had a new library built, computer hardware for use in the library is provided by the ministry. If the school or its library is not new, then such equipment must be provided by the school community - usually the P & C association. I know that at Glen Forrest Primary School the parents have already made a substantial contribution to extending the library, and this policy appears to discriminate clearly against established schools. I mention Glen Forrest Primary not to single it out, but in order to draw attention to the problem in electorates such as Darling Range. For example, Kalamunda Senior High School, which is now over 30 years old, is in need of substantial upgrading. I ask the Government to give the schools of the Darling Range electorate the attention they deserve.

It is impossible to represent an electorate such as Darling Range without being aware of the community's concern for our physical environment. Having grown up in the hills, I well appreciate that local residents place a high value on their local environment and flora and fauna, and also on the environment in a broader sense. The fact is, of course, that all of us are environmentalists in some way. Whether our primary concern is the street we live in, the park across the road, the condition of our rivers or forests, or the state of the soil in our agricultural regions, all of us have some interest in the state of the environment. Clearly the "growth at any cost" attitude which may have once existed is now obsolete with more people being aware of and concerned about the environmental consequences of particular actions. On the other hand, however, most of us are concerned also about maintaining and improving our standard of living and particularly in providing economic opportunities for our children and those who follow us.

It is important to ensure that the debates in which we will become involved are not taken over by those with extreme views, who would, as the late Professor Manning Clark said, "lock everything up and not even let us walk through the bush lest we tread on a twig and break it"; or words to that effect. Of course the same applies to extreme views on the other side. We must successfully communicate the message that if we are to prosper as a State and nation and if we are to make our maximum contribution to the world community, it is necessary to use of some of our resources. What matters is that we use those resources in a balanced and responsible way. There is ample evidence to support the view that the worst environmental degradation has occurred in those countries which have undergone the least economic development. Responsible development enables us to ensure that we have the ability to conserve those parts of our environment which are irreplaceable. If we are to leave an acceptable standard of living for those who follow us, then properly managed industrial development is essential.

The High Court's Mabo judgment is, quite naturally, evoking a great deal of discussion. This issue is complex, and this is not the occasion to canvass its full extent. In this judgment the court rejected the concept of terra nullius and concluded that, in some circumstances, native title applies. What is not clear are the implications of the declaration that native title exists. In some quarters expectations are being created which are clearly unreasonable and unsustainable.

It is most important that the issue be resolved as soon as possible. I am aware of one Darling Range constituent who wishes to set up a relatively small and unobtrusive tourist operation in the Kimberley but who is unable to do so until the Utemorrhah land claim is settled. I understand the local Aborigines have no problem with the development that is proposed and would have the opportunity to be involved. This is the sort of development which must be repeated many times over if we are to work our way out of the economic problems we have, and it is essential that the decks be cleared so that further export income can be earned.

I was interested to hear His Excellency the Governor, a former Chief Justice of this State, comment at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association seminar held here last month that he thought that from the Aboriginal point of view Mabo was a disappointing result. He made the point that any Aboriginal rights would exist only if

some continuous association with the particular land since white settlement could be demonstrated. His Excellency further commented that even if that association were established, the only right that would be conferred would be a right to continue their traditional uses of the land.

We do need to deal with the social, education and health problems of the Aboriginal community in this State. It is clear that there is an unacceptable disparity between the health of much of the Aboriginal population and that of the remainder of the population. It is clear also that simply directing money at the problem will not solve it. The Mabo judgment is not a panacea for all that has occurred in the Aboriginal population over the past 205 years, but hopefully there is some way in which it can assist in resolving some of these problems, and that will be a good thing. I do not believe that the Mabo judgment has to be a major problem for the Australian population. I am sure that there are people of goodwill and commonsense on both sides who are capable of resolving the issue in a sensible way that will give the Aboriginal community a sense of involvement in the future of the country while still allowing responsible economic development to occur.

During the time that I serve as a member of this Parliament I have no doubt there will be many issues on which we, as members, will disagree. That is a healthy part of the democratic process. We need to remember though that we are very fortunate to live in this part of the world. We do not suffer from the sorts of problems that exist in countries such as the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Northern Ireland and many other places. We are fortunate to live in a country with many natural resources, an abundant food supply, a stable political structure and freedom of speech. These are features which we often take for granted.

The challenge before us is to ensure that we make the most of the gifts with which we are endowed. We need to ensure that our children and grandchildren can look to the future with confidence and without being burdened with excessive debt as a result of inappropriate spending by our generation. It is immoral to expect those who follow us to pay for our consumption today; we will be able to do nothing better than to leave the finances of this State in good order. That is not to say that all borrowings are wrong but I believe there is a widespread view that the State's debt levels have increased unacceptably in recent years.

The people of Western Australia are looking for competent and responsible management and I look forward to playing a part in that process.

[Applause.]