



**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**VALEDICTORY SPEECH**



**HON DEXTER DAVIES, MLC**  
(Member for Agricultural Region)

**Legislative Council**

**Thursday, 3 May 2001**



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**HON DEXTER DAVIES** (Agricultural) [5.06 pm]: I support the motion moved by Hon Ken Travers and congratulate His Excellency the Governor, Lieutenant General John Sanderson, whom I have had the fortune to come to know through several visits he has made to country areas during the short time he has been Governor. In fact, I have become quite friendly with him. One gets to do certain things as a consequence of being a member of Parliament and a public figure. I was invited to play for the President of the Western Australian Cricket Association's team in a game of cricket against the Governor's XI. Being the sort of chap he is, the Governor went to the WACA and sat with both sides all day. He brought his gardener from Government House with him, because he is also a keen cricket fan, and he sat at the WACA all afternoon. At the end of the game, the Governor came into the change rooms and had a couple of stubbies with us. I am sure he will enjoy his term as Governor of Western Australia and that he will do a very good job because he relates very easily to all sorts of people, which I think is a major part of the job.

Hon Greg Smith: For the record, who won?

Hon DEXTER DAVIES: We let the Governor's XI win.

Hon Ken Travers: As loyal subjects.

Hon DEXTER DAVIES: To carry on with that story, the Governor's XI scored an enormous number of runs, and the Governor was very sporting until the ball went past fine leg for four. A few of the Southern Stars cricketers from the WA Women's Cricket Association were playing. Zoe Goss ran around and the ball went in front of her for four. The Governor spun around and said, "What's wrong with these guys? Don't they dive?"

I have been in this Parliament for only two and a half years, which seems a fairly short time. However, probably the President above all other people in this Chamber knows that I have been intimately involved in the processes of this place for a lot longer than the two and a half years I have spent in this Chamber. In fact, I think the President is the only person in this Chamber who is aware of how heavily I was involved in the formation of the coalition before it won the election and came into government in 1993. I am very proud of that participation, which resulted in the coalition's coming into government and remaining in power for eight years. There were some exciting times for me at that level at that time.

The coalition delivered many of the policies it believed in passionately at that time. However, it did not deliver many of the other policies. I am well aware that a coalition is not always able to provide the solutions that people from both parties want. However, that is the nature of the beast. No doubt members of this Government appreciate that in this world we do not always get everything we want.

I am also well aware that the expectations of the people we represent and the people who make up the membership of our parties have created much of the unease in the community. I am sure the Government will be well aware of the challenges it faces in delivering its promises, just as the coalition was expected to do, but found, as members have indicated, that was not always possible. The political process provides checks and balances so that people are not given things based on a whim. We must argue our cases and compromise, and make the most of what we get. That is what public life is about. We must take on the chin criticism that often riles us because the public expects us to do so. We probably bring much of the criticism on ourselves because we waste too much energy blaming and accusing each other, especially within the Chamber, which is then reflected to the general public.

Members on both sides of the House reflect the talent and experience that is available within the community. If we can make good use of people's talent - people on both sides are neither right nor wrong all the time - I am sure many of the problems would be solved and probably the credibility of parliamentarians would be much higher. I am not saying the blame for the bad perception lies only in this House; other processes have added to that perception. I am sure if we spent more time on problems rather than on who is right, who should solve the problems and whose idea it was, most of us would be held in much higher regard.

I am extremely privileged to have been a member of the National Party. As I have said to all the groups of people to whom I have spoken, the National Party's role is to singularly represent regional people. Everyone knows I come from the Wyalkatchem shire not far from Hon Kim Chance's electorate. The children at my school used to combine with the children at his school so that we could form a team to play in school competitions.

My goal has been to deliver services in the regions and to ensure that the people in those areas have equal opportunity to pursue whatever they want. If Western Australians cannot do that, there is not much hope for people in the rest of the world. Contrary to what we read in the newspapers and see on the television news, this is still the best place in the world to live. Most of the services provided through government are of a very high standard. That is not to say that there is not room for improvement regardless of which Government instigates the service. If we did not work to improve those public services, regardless of who implemented them, we would not be doing the right thing by anyone.

One of my pet hates is that people trying to achieve change, particularly in education, which offers an exceptionally high standard especially at the primary level in the country, tend to attack the system rather than acknowledge that, although there is always room for improvement, it is a pretty good system. If we approached the whole thing in that way we would achieve a lot more. When the system is attacked, the people within the system are also attacked. A lot of very good people have put an enormous amount of effort into delivering education to the young people of Western Australia and Australia. In my experience, they have done an extremely good job. One of the most pleasing aspects of being in Parliament is attending the end-of-year school speech nights. I am continually amazed at the quality of the young people who get up and speak. It is much easier to speak here among my peers than to sit at a school concert and know that after I have finished my presentation, the head girl or boy will stand and speak, and will do a lot better than I did. That happens regularly. It is not out of place to say that Hon Norman Moore, as Minister for Education, and other ministers for education from both sides, can be rightly proud of their contribution to that system. It still needs improvement, and always will. We should be concentrating on the future rather than blaming people about what happened in the past.

One of my favourite sayings is that it does not matter how clever any of us think we are, there is not a lot we can do about what happened yesterday, but if we contribute in some small way towards improving something that is going to happen tomorrow, everything has been worthwhile. I have done this, in my own way, through the National Party and in public life, and finally being involved in this Chamber. The processes I have been involved with on the committees, and the people I have dealt with on those committees, provide a way of concentrating on problems, and focusing energies on solving them. I found that most rewarding. The Standing Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development was a baptism of fire in the forest management process, and it seemed never-ending. It did not matter which way I went, there were more trees, but it was very interesting - a real task of balancing what needed to be done against the different requirements of people and the State, previous commitments and contracts, and the social aspect of the issue. It was a real challenge, as was the inquiry into the western rock lobster industry, which allowed me to indulge my intimate interest in the fishing industry. I participated in other inquiries into subjects such as the sale of Westrail Freight, in which I was interested through my background in the grain industry. There is a need to consider and balance other sides of the argument when making decisions, knowing full well that in many cases we are dealing with a 55:45 satisfaction rate, which is the best that can often be achieved. There is much turmoil in the system, but we cannot deliver half a result. There will always be people who are not satisfied, and as a consequence some people make judgments about our position in representing them.

The thing that has given me more satisfaction than anything else is being involved with Max Trenorden, the member for Avon in the other place, in bringing the community banking movement to Western Australia. We worked long and hard at that. It was not thought to be a goer - perhaps another flash in the pan - but over time it has delivered a service to people in very small communities, and has worked, against the odds and against the advice of all the gurus. Community banking is expanding at a rapid rate now and it has a life of its own. I have made some terrific friends and met people in the communities I have been involved with who have worked out how to run businesses and banks. I have seen the natural benefit to the total community that has had to the extent that not only the banking services have benefited but also the whole community-building process.

Through being in this Parliament, those are the sorts of things that members are likely to be involved in. It is a privilege to have had that opportunity and to have met the people I have worked with in the process. One is disappointed when a matter does not go one's way, but members know the rules by which they must play when they come into this place. As a good friend of mine in federal politics said, members cannot sack the voters. One must get on with life. When one door shuts another one opens. A great many opportunities have been created for me in my time in this place, giving me a different outlook and a great many more opportunities to look forward to than many other people who have not had the privilege I have had of being in this place.

I thank the people involved in this place and the people who went out of their way to help me and welcome me here and who tried to help me understand how things worked. I doubt that I know how everything works and I am sure that process does not happen overnight, as I tried to explain to other members. Experience is something that one gathers over time and uses to work towards knowing what is going on, who is who and what makes the place work. Obviously, I would like to have continued that. However, I thank everybody who has helped me, including the President, the staff and everyone else involved in this place. Being a member of the former coalition Government meant that life was not always a bed of roses. However, there is a purpose for all parties to exist and members must work within that arrangement. I am happy to say I have enjoyed working with all members and I look forward to

maintaining the friendships I have made. I wish the Government, the Opposition and the minor parties all the best because in the interests of the State and everybody in the community there must be a good Government with a good Opposition and robust debate, as a good friend of mine in the federal arena used to say. I wish all members all the best and thank everybody for the opportunity to participate in this Parliament.

[Applause.]

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