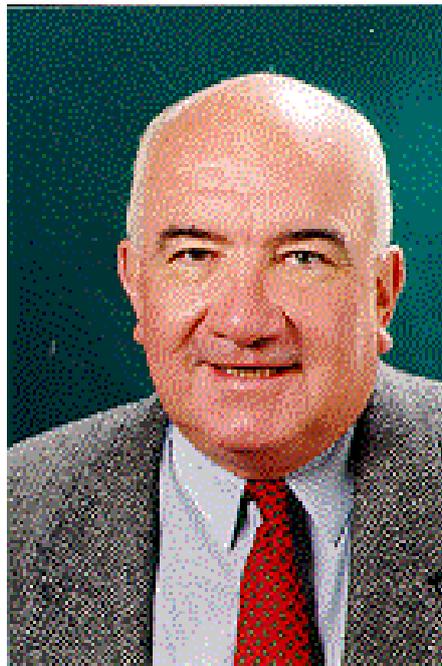




PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

VALEDICTORY SPEECH



MR EDWARD CUNNINGHAM, MLA
(Member for Girrawheen)

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 23 November 2000

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MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, VALEDICTORY SPEECHES

Motion

MR CUNNINGHAM (Girrawheen) [10.21 am]: I stand here today with many of the same feelings I had some 12 and a half years ago when I delivered my first speech in this House. On that day in 1988 I was filled with an overwhelming sense of pride and humility. I stood here proudly representing the seat of Balga after a very tough by-election campaign; yet at the same time it was a truly humbling experience as I dwelt upon the trust that had been placed in me by both the electors of Balga and the Australian Labor Party. It was a trust that was to be bestowed on me for a further three pre-selections and three general elections. I went on, as history records, to represent the electorates of Marangaroo and Girrawheen.

I was privileged to follow one of the most remarkable politicians of our time. It was upon the resignation of my good friend Brian Burke, as both Premier and member for Balga, that I was endorsed with his support for the Balga by-election. Brian Burke was a master politician. He was charismatic, an excellent communicator, a genuine and effective local member and an excellent grassroots politician. Having won the Balcatta by-election by a handful of votes, Brian Burke built up his margin to some 10 000 votes. Unfortunately, his personal following was not passed on to me at the Balga by-election, when a 22.5 per cent swing saw that majority reduce to 2 500 votes. This set me a huge challenge. Undaunted, I, together with my electorate officer, Carmel Macri, have worked hard in the local community to build that majority back to just over 6 000 votes. Like my predecessor, I have prided myself on being a hardworking local member, always ready to assist those in need. I have tried at every turn to represent my electors to the very best of my ability.

At this point I express my gratitude to Brian and Sue Burke, Terry and Luci Burke and all the Burke family for their support and friendship over many years. I am extremely confident that my successor, Margaret Quirk, an outstanding candidate for the Australian Labor Party, will further increase my margin.

We are all fortunate people to be members of Parliament, and I have never taken my position for granted. It is indeed a great honour to be elected to represent those people who put trust in me. I believe that I have fulfilled that trust, and I am grateful to the people of those three electorates.

Nearly 13 years as a member of Parliament has brought many highs and many lows. The highs are memories a member will always appreciate and treasure, and a member will try very hard to forget the lows. Next year will be my forty-fifth year as a member of the Australian Labor Party. When I joined the Labor Party in Toowoomba, Queensland in 1956, the party was in turmoil. We are fortunate today to have such fine leaders as my dear friend and the federal leader, Kim Beazley, Dr Geoffrey Gallop, Bob Carr, Peter Beattie, Steve Bracks, Jim Bacon, Mike Rann and Clare Martin - a far cry from the mid 50s, when I first joined the ALP.

No member of Parliament can be successful without loyal and supportive staff, friends and family. I have indeed been very much blessed to have had that support. The sayings "when fortune is fickle, the faithful friend is found" and "one can do without people, but one has need of friends" are so true. The most important saying that I cherish is "without friends, the world is nothing but a wilderness". There is a question that is often asked in politics: Is there such a thing as a real friend? I believe there is. When one's world is about to collapse, a true and faithful friend will stand up and be counted and will attempt to keep any darkness at bay. There are many friends to whom I am indebted. I have always considered staff, ALP branch members and the many faithful advertisers in my pride and joy - *The Leader* - a part of a group of friends that has made my position as a member of Parliament so much easier. Many people have been instrumental in assisting me in the electorate of Girrawheen, such as those wonderful supporters who continue to advertise in my community newspaper, *The Leader*; people like Con Jury; Sonny Hua; Danny and Vicki Kapinkopp; Jerry and Katie Gastev from the Princess Road Tavern; Tony Naughtin from the Satterley project, the "New North"; Tony and Vicky Calabro from the Girrawheen Tavern; Brett and Annie Clugston; my long-time friends, Bob and Slavka Tanasoski; Joseph Stojanovski of Sunshine Pest and Weed Management; and John and Lois Hooper of Westin Fitness Warwick. These are only a few of the advertisers who have given me great support. Bob Tanasoski and Batong Pham have also been exceptional in their loyalty, support and assistance in my electorate.

To those loyal supporters who have assisted me since my by-election in 1988, I am forever grateful. A very special and dear friend who was one of those supporters was Maria Liau, as well as her mother Pat and sister Cheryl. They have been a delightful family and have given me much assistance. I will always appreciate their kindness and loyalty.

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I also thank Jenny Gately, a dear friend whom I know I can call on any time to assist; Keith Mynard; Laurie and Bryce Hills; Cam and Virginia Gilmour; Jack Victorian; Brian and Chris Fisher; Sam Macri; Marino Salinas; Dennis and Barbara Cooley; Seamus and Natasha Cassidy; David Willett; Rudy Francis; Billie Callaghan; Evelyn Greenwood; Greg and Valma Watson; Darren Klarich; Billie Loo and Maria; Mike and Pauline McMullan; Max and Mayette Renwick; Dr Roger Wearne and Nancy Wearne; Brian Christie; Emi Barzotto; Martha Zedlak; Con Anastissiou; Tony Dyson; the Marcello family; Vic and Elizabeth Mitrevski; the Naumchevski family; Roger and Jackie Stanton; Phil and Sandra O'Neil; the Mooney family; Ann and Tom Robinson; Frank and Theresa Vincekovich; Hilda and John Deardon; the Pham family, a wonderful family in Ballajura; Jim Apostokdovski; Cane and Peter Rasmovski; Chris Necovski; Wayne Nelsen; Taffy Banfield; Paul and Kerrie Allen; Graham Madigan; Bill and Judy Barrett; and Neville and Patricia Catchpole.

From the trade union movement I give special mention to people like Paul Kelly and Jock Ferguson; a special thanks also to Mike Dean from the Police Union, who has been a good supporter of mine. I give special thanks to Pastor Rex and Faye Gabrielson, Bruce Miller, Paul Price and Alan Hlaing from the Girrawheen Baptist Church; to Reverend John Ramsbottom of the Girrawheen Uniting Church; and to Philip Baker of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Thanks also to Father John Jegorow from the Ballajura parish, Father Tom Gaines from Our Lady of Mercy Girrawheen, Father Don Sproxton of the Balga and Mirrabooka parishes and Pastor Bruce Mumm from the Assemblies of God.

I give special thanks also to City of Stirling Councillors June Copley, John Italiano, David Boothman and, especially, to the hardest-working mayor in Western Australia, Councillor Tony Vallelonga, and his delightful wife Mary. Special thanks go to the Chief Executive Officer of the City of Stirling, Mike Wadsworth, and to City of Wanneroo Councillors Maureen Grieson, Alan Blencowe and Judy Hughes, and from the Shire of Swan, Councillor Maria Haynes.

A special thank you is also given to my extended family - my brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, nephews and nieces. I will mention only their Christian names because I will take too long if I add their surnames, although 90 per cent derive from the Matias family. They are Tom, Bing, Susie, Jomar, Maila, Mena, Lillett, Richard, Gualberto, Karen, Doris, Jo-anne, May, Marites, Julian, Madeleine, Llewellyn, Ricky and Tony - they have been a very special family.

Mr Pental: No wonder you got the majorities you did! You are setting a very high standard.

Mr CUNNINGHAM: To my brother John, his wife Jill and their wonderful family, to my sister Veronica, her husband Eddie and my dear niece Teresa, thank you for your encouragement and support. These people, and so many more, have been great foot soldiers. They have been my inspiration.

I have been fortunate to meet so many young people from different walks of life - some politically, many through social justice, others through drug awareness and some through Young Vinnies and Cry for Life. I met a special young person two years ago - Clare Pike - who will one day grace this Parliament or Federal Parliament. This young lady is the most exceptional person I have ever heard speak on the front steps of Parliament House. During the abortion debate - at the age of 19 - she spoke publicly with passion, feeling and authority. The Clare Pikes of this world are very scarce. I will continue to encourage young people like Clare Pike.

One of the highlights of my parliamentary career was my selection as Opposition Whip in 1997 - it was a great honour. I thank my colleagues on this side of the House for their trust. I have no doubt that the next Labor Speaker - sorry, the next Labor Whip - I saw someone who wants to be Speaker and got mixed up - will sit on the opposite side of this Chamber, on the government benches.

Mr Ripper: Hear, hear!

Mr CUNNINGHAM: Another highlight of my parliamentary career was the opportunity to have an hour-long meeting with the Governor of Arkansas and his wife Hillary, with the members for Stirling and Warren-Blackwood, the former member for Bunbury and Doug Carpenter, the Deputy Clerk, during a visit to Little Rock, Arkansas, with the Select Committee on the Right to Farm in 1991. Sixteen months later, Governor Clinton became one of the most successful presidents of the United States. It was also a highlight and great honour to be selected to visit China in 1992 with former Speaker Mike Barnett, the current Deputy Premier and the member for Greenough. I have many personal stories to tell from both trips; however, time will not permit me to share them with the House. In some respects, I could be a very lucky person that there is little time. I thank the member for Collie and the Deputy Premier because I had a small problem, which became a large problem, while I was away.

Another special forum that I was fortunate to attend was the second World Congress of Families in Geneva in 1999. At that event I represented the Western Australian Leader of the Opposition, and Madame Acting Speaker, the member for Carine, represented the Premier. The member for Carine and I prepared a joint statement - I think it is the only one to have been done in this House - that was accepted and appreciated throughout the wider community. The member for Carine and I have made contacts with many family organisations since our report was published. I reiterate the remarks I made in this Assembly in November 1999 that I appreciated the professional assistance of the member for Carine, which helped produce that excellent report. I do not seek to embarrass dear friends, or to embarrass Madame Acting Speaker at all; however, there is a belief in the wider community that members of

Parliament from opposite sides of politics cannot be good friends. Earlier this year I was deeply honoured by the member and her husband Kerry when they approached me to be the godfather of their beloved son Carl, through confirmation. Both my wife Julie and I are proud to count the member and her family as part of our family and as very dear and special friends.

Mr Court: You have been very gracious in those comments - before and now.

Mr CUNNINGHAM: I will always be gracious in regard to the member for Carine.

That World Congress of Families brought home some telling points. The sad truth is that many families live in less than peaceful circumstances. They live with tension - sometimes work pressures can keep them apart. All members have experienced those pressures. Peaceful families are created in a positive, caring and accepting environment. Members of Parliament sometimes unwittingly and unintentionally neglect their beloved families because of the pressure of commitments. Some of us are busy looking after other people's problems and neglect our own. The pollies' prayer can be, "May your family so live in peace, that from you peace may spread throughout the whole human family."

The most important parliamentary committee that I ever served on was the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Intergovernmental Agreements, which reported on organ donation and transplantation less than one hour ago. Two extremely important issues which were always at the forefront of my parliamentary career and which involved the preservation of life were the drug and abortion issues, in which I was extremely proud to play such an important role.

My greatest success was undoubtedly the naming of drug dealers in this Parliament 16 months ago. At that time, our community was awash with drugs. At a recent breakfast I was told by one of the assistant commissioners of police - who criticised me at the time - that, in retrospect, I was probably correct. I will never doubt that had I accepted the advice of the police and left the matter to them, nothing would have been accomplished. Girrawheen, Balga, Koondoola and Mirrabooka still have many problems with drug leeches who peddle filth to youth. The scale of those drug problems in my electorate is less today than it was 16 months ago; however, we should never give up on those leeches who kill our youth.

My greatest disappointment came during the abortion debate, when pro-life members from both sides of this Parliament could not convince this Assembly with their arguments. It is a disappointment that some of the scars from that debate still exist, although only slightly.

Many initiatives were accomplished while I was a government member. These included the truancy program, the off-campus program, the automotive skills program, the Marangaroo and Dryandra Family Centres, the Ballajura Family Centre, the installation of traffic lights at Marangaroo Road, Wanneroo Road, Mirrabooka Avenue and Marangaroo Drive, and the many roundabouts throughout my electorate. My success with the installation of roundabouts in my electorate earned me the fond nickname Roundabout-Ted.

I recall the various problems that have existed in many parts of my electorate from March 1988 until today. Many improvements are due to the "new north" development. I have been very happy with the continuing progress of Nigel Satterley's "new north" program under the brilliant leadership of Tony Naughtin and his understudy, Robert Wallman. The "new north" program has put so much pride back into our suburbs. I am very thankful and appreciative that the Government selected the electorate of Girrawheen. I am also delighted that Nigel Satterley was selected, instead of the developer the Government had in mind. If it were not for the member for Nollamara and me, a different developer would have been chosen for Girrawheen, Westminster and Balga.

I now say thank you to the wonderful staff of Parliament House. I say thank you to the officers of this Chamber. They are very professional and dedicated staff. I thank the switchboard staff - Cathy, Marilyn, Rosalie and Leslie. They are the life of this Parliament. They are a most competent group of professionals. Many thanks go to the library staff. They are a dedicated, respected and helpful group of people. Many thanks to the dining room and bar staff under the leadership of Andrew Gardos. Many thanks for all the assistance given to my guests and me. The staff are a great credit to the Parliament. A very special thank you to the security staff for the assistance they have shown to my many visitors and guests. Thank you for a job well done to the groundsmen who tend the Parliament's beautiful grounds. A special thank you to two extremely professional people, one of whom is still with us and one of whom has left Parliament: David Klemm and Sheila Mills from the Parliamentary Education Office. David is still with the Parliament. He is a brilliant education officer.

In my 13 years in this Parliament there are no people that I have appreciated more than the Hansard staff. These brilliant people make some members look as though they are geniuses. Most of us are not. I am a person who has always known his own capabilities and I greatly appreciate their able assistance. I always knew that I would not reach genius status. Thanks a million to the Hansard staff.

I would like to give a special thanks to my colleagues, especially the member for Bassendean, who is a Whip's dream and can speak at a minute's notice. He is a true professional. Special thanks to my very loyal Deputy Whip, the member for Rockingham. He has a great leadership future but he has to bide his time. I have been very fortunate to

make so many friendships. I have always listened to the member for Nollamara and opposition Leader of the House; I have always respected his judgment. I appreciate his and his dear wife Stephanie's support. A million thanks go to the Leader of the Opposition and member for Victoria Park and his dear wife, Bev; to the member for Peel and his beloved Ros; to the member for Midland and her wonderful husband, Greg; to Hon Bob Thomas and Carol; to Hon Ed Dermer and Sylvia; to Hon Nick Griffiths and Rhonda; and to all my parliamentary colleagues on this side of the House for all the assistance they have given me. The next Parliament will see a Gallop Administration; I have no doubt about it. It will be the most professional and caring Government for the new millennium.

I am in much debt to Senator Jim McKiernan and his staff, especially Sue Reid, who have given my office staff tremendous assistance in federal matters over the past twelve and a half years. Many thanks go to my very good friend Stephen Smith, the federal member for Perth. Stephen and I go back 20 years. We have been in many scraps together. I hear on the grapevine that we will continue to be in further scraps. Be assured, I will not fade away.

It would be remiss of me to not mention the impartiality of the Speaker and his dedication to making the Parliament a place to which all members are proud to bring their guests. I wish the Speaker a pleasant and happy retirement. May the members for Greenough, Wagin, Perth, Eyre, Cockburn and Kimberley also enjoy their retirement in health and happiness.

In conclusion, there are always very special people who must be acknowledged on the record. I have thanks to five very special people to place in *Hansard*. They are wonderful people to whom I want to say a special thank you: First, to my very dear loyal friends and wonderful supporters, advisers and workers, Bob Tanasoski and Batong Pham. They have been loyal and supportive for many years. I owe them very much. My special thanks go to each of them. A special thank you goes to my very dear special friend and confidante, the member for Midland. She always listens and gives me brilliant advice. I will always treasure our friendship and will always remember our early political meetings many years ago in Victoria Park. Special thanks to my ever efficient secretary, Carmel. She has been a faithful and talented partner in our role of looking after our constituents. We worked together and my success as a local member is her success. Without a good secretary members are nothing. I wish Carmel much peace and happiness in her retirement, which starts at midnight on election night.

Special thanks go to the most important person in my life, the person who has assisted me so much in my political and parliamentary career, the person who is always there. That very special person is my very dear wife, Julie. It is easy in this occupation to take people for granted. Julie has been a godsend to me and each day I give thanks for her presence in my life. Julie is a very special person, a great inspiration, and has educated me so much about life. I look forward to our retirement together. A very dear friend and former leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and a former Deputy Premier, Ian Taylor, describes Julie as a living saint who one day will be canonised because she has had to put up with me for 34 long years. Some people get only six years for murder! To all the wonderful people who have been of such great assistance to me for nearly 13 years, I give my heartfelt thanks. To my colleagues on both sides of this Assembly, I say thank you for your friendship. May you all have a peaceful and happy Christmas with your loved ones.