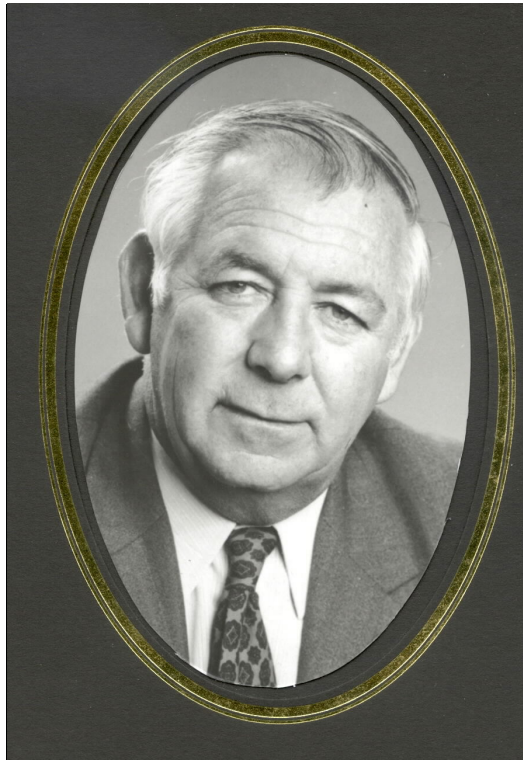




## **PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

### **VALEDICTORY SPEECH**



**Hon Harry Walter Gayfer, MLC**  
**(Member for Central)**

Legislative Council

Thursday, 15 December 1988

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## MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT — RETIREMENT

*Member for Central*

**HON H.W. GAYFER** (Central) [2.31 pm]: I suppose one could quote —

“The time has come,” the Walrus said,  
“To talk of many things...”

That is what has happened. After 27 years in this place—12 in the Assembly and 15 in the upper House—I am leaving. I am virtually being sacked from Parliament. I had no intention of leaving, but Parliament saw otherwise. I viewed the electoral Bill as indifferently as Hon G.E. Masters, who spoke previously; however, the same consequences have come to both of us. I had three years left to serve, which I would willingly have served. I had a contract with the people and the Government to serve that three years but regrettably that contract was broken. Whether I think it was broken rightly or wrongly does not matter; it was broken. Be that as it may, during the last 27 years—they have been extremely happy years as far as I am concerned—I worked with and served under six Premiers: Premier Brand, Premier Tonkin, Premier Court, Premier O’Connor, Premier Burke and Premier Dowding. I am proud that on more than one occasion I went to the polls without any opposition at all from either the Liberal Party or the Labor Party. As a matter of fact I cannot think how many times that happened but it happened and it is something of which I am very proud and will treasure. That is, that in the Assembly as well as in this place I received no opposition from either party.

I loved my electorate work. I thought it was really great. When I first started in politics I had six shires but now Hon E.J. Charlton and I have 28 shires in our electorate. I used to pride myself, and tell the young chaps who were coming in to Parliament that if one wanted to get re-elected one had to really farm one’s electorate, and get in there and work it. One had to work it as though one were ploughing and cultivating a paddock; one had to keep one’s lines straight. Everything had to be right and one could not afford to make one mistake. On the other hand, if one liked doing it, the end result would and did show. I used to claim that at one stage I knew everyone in my electorate. My electorate was not like a city electorate; it was fairly widely flung. The Avon Valley was Liberal when I won it, and I respect and love the Avon Valley. I have the respect of people from the Avon Valley too. I am not saying that boastfully, but I know they are great people who have stuck by me. I found out later on that getting to know everyone in one’s electorate became just about impossible when one had to cover 28 shires. It did become impossible. I am worried about how the members of the upper House will not only know their electors, but be known by them. When I look at the electorate Hon Eric Charlton and Hon John Caldwell wish to represent—and most certainly will represent—I worry for them because in my opinion they will be taken away from the people. That is what I did not like about the electoral Bill. They will become aloof, much as our senators are now. How often does one see one’s senators around the place? One never sees them. That is what will happen, particularly in the upper House. Hon Jim Brown, Hon E.J. Charlton and others will find it difficult to keep that personal contact which I believe is absolutely paramount in State politics, rather than Federal politics.

I do not want to argue about this but I have a firm belief that it cannot be done properly. Certainly I think trying to keep up with the aids and everything else necessary to enable members to do so will be a great expense to the State. I have tried to be impartial in this place, Mr President, as long as you agreed with me and as long as you believed that the country was supreme to the city. I have always been impartial.

Hon Kay Hallahan: And men were superior to women.

Hon H.W. GAYFER: The Minister knows what I have often said: There are two places for women—the kitchen or the bedroom. The Minister can take her pick.

Hon Kay Hallahan: Would you like to clarify that?

Hon H.W. GAYFER: It is with great sadness that I leave this place, with its lofty ceilings and hallowed halls. I came here as a young man. I do not claim to be old now—take note, Minister—not too old, at any rate. When I walk these corridors I pause and hear the remarks of the greats of yesteryear. Members here are the greats of today. I do not draw any distinction but I distinctly remember the times I walked down these corridors and really believed in the system. I have a feeling for this place which I know is shared by my friend, Hon Robert Hetherington. While we might appear at times to roar at each other across the Chamber on numerous subjects, in one we have commonality. Hon Robert Hetherington would agree with me on that. I well remember the happy days. I recall Bert Hawke, who

would say, “We even tame lions in this place.” He was right; one does get tamed in this place. It does not mean that one gets tamed beyond doing anything in which one believes but, instead of having a chip on one’s shoulder, one finds that there are many ways of doing things.

I warn members sitting on the Government side and, perhaps, those on the Opposition side, that they will find when they change sides everything is totally different. When I was in Government for a while, it was beautiful and I got things done without any trouble at all; but when I was in Opposition I could not even get a toilet built in Avon. When one first gets into Opposition it is good for one, but, by God, after 12 months one cannot wait to get into Government again. That is how I found it.

I well remember the characters with whom I have worked. The only man senior to me in this place—he has not really been in continuous service as long, but he is senior in years of service—is Billy Grayden. He is an infectious and loveable character. I remember Herbie Graham, Arthur Bickerton and Tom Hartrey. What a fabulous character Tom Hartrey was. I remember him, Mr President, in another place making his maiden speech and saying that yes, he was the President of the United Australia Party in Bayswater, and proud to be, but that he had to join the Labor Party if he wanted to be a member of this place and represent the people of Boulder. Those are the priceless statements which one remembers and which go down in history. There are other priceless remarks that I have heard in this Parliament, which I think of and remember. The late George Cornell once said that if all the cocks in the metropolitan area were caponised, thereby being bereft of all desire, they would have nothing left to crow about. I can remember the exact words. They were happy days.

I have seen the frustration of one termers. They come into this place full of hell fire and, within no time at all, are frustrated. I can remember one member of my party who, after three years, could not wait to get out of the place. I can remember also one Liberal Party member of Parliament who used to be a newspaper reporter, who actually talked himself out of his seat. I can also remember a Labor man who did exactly the same thing. The frustration of the machine—this system that we are in—got to them. I used to say to them that if they could weather the first three years and get re-elected for a second term, at the end of the second term they would be right and on their way. It is like a university: One needs six years to get to know the place and what it means.

In spite of what my friend and colleague, Tommy McNeil, would say, I have served on quite a lot of committees in this place. I have served on the Hansard committee—the Printing Committee—and the House Committee. There were several more. I started off with Hon Bob Hetherington on the Delegated Legislation Standing Committee. The one I most enjoyed serving on was the CPA, on which I served for 25 out of 27 years, which is not a bad record. I remember one very important committee that I was selected to serve on, with Hon Des Dans and Hon Des O’Neil, to choose a wine which was fit to drink at the tables of Parliament House.

Hon D.K. Dans: I don’t remember that.

Hon H.W. GAYFER: We did. We spent three weeks on the committee and eventually settled on the first wine that we had tasted three weeks before. To be perfectly honest it was, I think, the only one we could remember. It was a great committee to serve on, and Hon Des Dans will remember —

Hon D.K. Dans: I don’t think I can remember some of that.

Hon H.W. GAYFER: — going out every Wednesday. I will not tell anybody what Rikki said on a couple of occasions. I was lucky, I was down here on my own.

One has memories of one’s greatest achievements here. When one looks back, apart from material things like schools, hospitals, etc one often wonders whether one has accomplished much. One of the strangest things I remember was working with Premier Tonkin, when I was on the other side of the Chamber in the Assembly, and I was the Whip of the Country Party. We hurled abuse at each other, especially with Herbie Graham who always got up on a Thursday night. If one got up before eight o’clock on a Thursday night one provided enough stuff for the reporters to print over the weekend. He was brilliant at that. He always used to speak at half past seven on a Thursday night, and used to give us the gun. Of course, by interjection, we used to give him it back.

I remember, after all this, going into the Premier’s office and working with John Tonkin in trying to see how we could borrow \$30 million overseas, in deutchmarks, in order to build the Kwinana silos and export terminal, which is there now and of which we are all very proud. I remember how the R & I Bank was established in London because of that move, and how Western Australia became known by the nine biggest banks in the world. I remember how it was the biggest loan ever to come into Australia, the previous biggest loan being \$28 million borrowed by Sneddon in yen, back in the late 1960s. That involved a great deal of cooperation and was rather exciting. It was all hush hush, but these are the sorts of things which Governments have to do to make way.

My greatest disappointment was the fact that the 1946 comprehensive water scheme, phase 3, was disallowed by the Federal Government in 1969 after the proposition had been put forward by the Government of the day. The Federal Government, in 1969, said there was a downturn in agriculture, no future for that industry and, therefore, money would not be needed for water. That was the finish of the famous 1946 comprehensive water scheme because, once the ball stopped, we were never to get it rolling again.

The other thing I was disappointed about in respect of water is the years and years that I spoke of piping water down from the Ord River, or damming the Fitzroy River, and finally bringing it in in parallel lines, and at one stage mixing it in with the gas pipe. It would have cost \$2 500 million then but, in my opinion, that would have been well spent. This is going back 10 or 15 years and a lot of members will remember that I used to plug that, and plug it hard.

It is my greatest regret, and I want the younger members to remember this, that when opportunity came my way in this place I gave it away. I do not suppose I had any other course to adopt. I well remember being a certainty for the Deputy Leader under Crawford Nalder, at about 38 years of age. I feel now that possibly I should have availed myself of that opportunity. As Gordon Masters said, I had three opportunities to be a Minister; the cock only crows thrice, as the Bible says, and it did for me but I had refused each time.

The greatest charge I can give members is the care of Western Australia. In my time here I have gradually seen State rights whittled away and I do not believe our Federal politicians have entirely helped that situation. Even blind Freddy would know that other States are not interested in Western Australia. We should fight to go our own way to a greater extent than we are fighting at the moment. When Western Australia pulled out of the Grants Commission, I thought we had gone a long way to achieving a greater tenure on our State's rights. I remember Sir Keith Watson in this place saying years ago—Hon David Wordsworth would remember—that when we gave away our taxing powers in the 1940s we would never get them back and we have not. We should get them back. There is no reason at all why this Government should not have control over its taxation. This is the State Parliament of Western Australia, a body controlling what happens in one third of Australia, and the State should be run from here. We should not have to go cap in hand to our Federal colleagues to ask them to support us on issues involving Western Australia. If the trend continues, there will be no need for this place; Western Australia will be truly governed from Canberra, by people who have lived there for two and three generations and who have no conception of what is happening 4 000 kilometres away.

Whichever party is in power should listen to the people. I remember one famous politician who did not listen to the people and tried to pull down the Barracks Arch. He was a most popular politician. However, nine of his coalition colleagues, one of whom was me, voted against him and I was very sorry to do it. We all received letters; I framed mine. However, he was doing the wrong thing. Legislation was passed recently by this place which I believe was not the will of the people. Mr Pandal, Mr Charlton and others who will be returned to this place should keep their fingers on the pulse because the day will come when their electors will remind them that they are the bosses.

I advise all members—I wish Sandy Lewis were here—to keep their fingers out of the wheat industry. The industry has survived successfully for 40 years and is happy with its progress today. Politicians set up the industry following the requests from the industry. Politicians of today should make sure that they do not tear it down in spite of the industry. I will be working down the road and watching each and every member of this place.

As usual in this place, the Press is noticeable by its absence. I do not care; I have not chased members of the Press once in 27 years because I do not believe I should have to run after them. However, journalists should write about the important things that pass through this place and listen carefully to the debate. The media sends kids to report this Chamber and all those rookies can report is sensationalism. Important speeches on legislation debated by this House are ignored, no matter which side of the House introduces it. The Press should remember that all of what is debated in this House means something to somebody. Yet, it turns a blind eye to those debates. It was interesting to read in last Saturday's *The West Australian* a half page article on how a politician hurled invective around the Chamber. That is not right. Journalists should look at the names carved in the bench in front of them, names which include Don Smith and Bon Uren. They should take a leaf out of their book, report the facts about legislation and other matters that pass through this place and everybody would be much better off. Politicians need the media to report impartially debates in this place. I will receive a decent sort of write-up after these Comments.

Hon D.K. Dans: You will probably get one line.

Hon H.W. GAYFER: I do not care.

I wish to thank my wife and family. My wife, Mais, has worn out five motor cars in 27 years of running around and helping me. My colleagues know that she is a great girl. My family also has stood by me, especially my son, Harry. When I came to this place my children were fairly young and I had to send them all to boarding school because I knew that there was no way that we could be at home together and it was the only thing to do. I am aware now that two of them went away a little early in their lives.

City members do not understand the plight of country members. In 27 years in this place I have averaged four nights a week batching in the city. Our home lives suffer or perhaps improve because we are home only three nights a week. I went for 18 years without a holiday and still spent four nights of every week in the city. My office has always been here because I believe that that is where it should be, but that is another story. City members should sympathise with country members.

I have a great deal of respect for all my colleagues, both within my party and without it. I have never had an argument in this place. I have many friends. Hon Sandy Lewis and I abuse each other a little, but we are still great mates. That is the way of this place. I advise members to make their points, but for heaven's sake to keep their cool. All members of this place are fine people. I have made many good friends and I will forget no-one.

Hon Tommy McNeil should stop telling yarns and bringing this place down around our ears. Often when I am trying to make a speech he passes me a note with a funny crack on it which completely distracts me. Obviously, Hon Eric Charlton is to be my successor. Interestingly, another leader was not elected after I resigned and I believe I am still the leader. Hon Phillip Pendal once said to me, "Why are you sitting at the back; you can never lead your troops from the rear." I quite agree, but I had no intention of moving to a front seat. I have sat here for quite a long time and I do not intend to vacate my seat. I wish all my colleagues well.

I put the staff at Parliament House first because my office has been here all those years and I see these people most of the time. These are the people who look after my mail, run around and really help members when they are down looking after electorate matters. I thank all of them, although I will not go through them individually. I thank also the executive officers, Laurie Marquet and Ian Allnutt, and others who have been before them. They have all been a great help.

I would like to say a couple of things in passing about a few of my colleagues whom I well remember and who are no longer with us. I know what eventually killed them. What happened to Tommy Hart can happen to members here if they take things too seriously. Hon Des Dans and you, Mr President, would know what happened to him. People have to be able to turn off. They have to be able to stop somewhere along the line. A member can give everything he has, but if he takes my advice he will not. I am fit, but I always knew when to turn off and not let things worry me. Of course, if members tell the truth all the time and believe in what they are saying they will have no worries. As long as they can go to sleep without using a powder to send them to sleep they will be doing all right. Once they start smoking their heads off, drinking, worrying or walking around in a circle like a couple of people did, they are gone. I think a lot of Tommy Hart, Jack Heitman and, above all, my very close friend, Kenny McIver who pushed himself to the limit and finally, when he was not in office, paid the price of a lot of work in the Parliament.

Finally I say thank you to my faithful Meg, secretary of 15 years, who is shortly to hang up her boots. Electorate secretaries would be the only ones to work diligently for such a long time without being recompensed by today's standards. I can but wish Meg and her husband, Brian, and the bairn she carries all the best. Thanks a lot, Meg. I could not have done what I have done without you.

Finally, Mr President, you have been a good friend and you and I know the extent of that. I wish you and all the people who return with you next time good luck. It has been very nice to know you. I will just finish with a quote that shows the feeling that I have about my life. It states —

For good undone and deeds misspent and resolutions vain,  
'tis somewhat late to tarry. This I know:  
I'd live the same life over if I had to live again,  
and chances are I'd go where most men go.

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