



Speech by

PHIL REEVES

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

Hansard 4 August 1998

FIRST SPEECH

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (2.30 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I second the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply moved by my colleague the member for Bundaberg. I congratulate her on her first speech, which she has just delivered. The people who know me well would believe it is entirely appropriate for me to speak after the member for the area that produces one of my favourite products.

I thank His Excellency the Governor for his Speech. I sincerely thank the electors of Mansfield for honouring me by electing me to be their representative in State Parliament. As an Upper Mount Gravatt boy born and bred, it is indeed a moment of intense pride and a great honour to rise for the first time as the member for the electorate of Mansfield, the electorate in which I have lived for my entire life.

I begin by paying respect to the traditional owners of the land on which the Parliament and the electorate of Mansfield are situated, the Jagera people. Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on your election as Speaker of the House. I also extend congratulations to the Premier and the other members of the new Labor Government.

In the days following the election, when I waited to hear the updated count, it was not lost on me how important it was that I be successful—not just for me but also for the economic and political stability of Queensland. It is satisfying to know that I did not disappoint. It may surprise some people that I had a very privileged upbringing—privileged by the family and friends that I have; not by wealth in monetary terms, but wealth in the form of love and support.

Both of my parents, Ron and Terry, are the greatest role models that one could ask for. Mum and dad illustrated to me, not by words but by action, the benefits of volunteering for community work—the personal benefits and the benefits that we can give to others who may need it. Whether it was through the local P & Fs, sporting groups, St Vincent De Paul or the Catholic Women's League, they showed me that to get total fulfilment in life one cannot be just a mere spectator; one should choose to become an active community member—get involved—and not leave it up to some other mystery person.

It should not have been a shock to my parents when I joined our family's beloved Brothers Rugby League and soon after became secretary of the juniors and later the senior club, or when I joined the Australian Labor Party and became closely involved in our local branches—as a consequence I am here today. I was just following the role model that they set. I am eternally grateful to them for all of their love and support throughout my life.

I sincerely thank my brothers and sisters, Tony, Kevin, Donna and Anne; my brothers-in-law, Chris and Peter; my nieces and nephews, Nicholas, Madeleine, Michaela, Daniel, Helen and Christina for their support in the good times and the bad. I especially thank my brother Tony for introducing me to the Australian Labor Party.

The south side electorate of Mansfield occupies some 88 square kilometres. I wish to talk about neither the land nor the bricks and mortar of the electorate but about its greatest asset—the people within it. Mansfield has one of the most diverse populations in the State. With over 26% of the population born overseas and with 17% of its entire population born in non-English speaking countries,

the diversity is there for all to see. One need only go to our local schools to see how great it is to live in this diverse area. The Mansfield electorate is a fine example of an area that shows the true benefits of multicultural Australia.

That diversity can best be illustrated by informing the members of this House about the functions I attended the weekend before last. At lunchtime on Saturday I attended the 80th Mount Gravatt Show, the only show of its type in the city. That afternoon I attended the opening of the Islamic Mosque in Logan City, at which over 400 Mansfield families will worship regularly. That evening I attended the annual dinner of the Taiwan Women's League of Queensland. The next day I attended the Belmont State School Fete. That afternoon I was invited to the opening of the \$1.4m music centre at the Redeemer Lutheran College. I finished off my weekend with a meeting with Rochedale residents regarding the Brisbane landfill. When I arrived home from that weekend, I realised how honoured I am to represent such a diverse community that is a part of our multicultural State and country. I will continue to tell anyone who will listen how proud I am of that ethnic diversity. I know that all members of the Labor Government fully support our multicultural society.

The Australian Labor Party is a political party that has and will outlast any other parties. It is an institution with principle. That is no more evident than in the election just held. It is a party that believes Governments have a vital role to ensure that all people are given opportunities to reach their full potential irrespective of their sex, sexual preference, race, colour, religion or disability. The Labor Party's greatest assets are its members and supporters. These women and men are the heart and soul of our party. We on this side of the House must not ever get into the position whereby we forget or stop listening to our heart and soul. We would do that at our peril.

My success in Mansfield can be attributed to a number of factors. The No. 1 reason is that I had many of these "heart and soulers" campaigning with me. Although I do not have the ability to list everyone, I wish to thank every single person who committed time, effort, money and resources to my campaign. I do, however, wish to acknowledge some special people. My campaign director, Scott Zackeresen, and my assistant director, Peter Allen, were two good sounding boards and gave the campaign the direction it needed. I offer my heartfelt thanks to my fellow members of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union, under the guidance of Don Brown. The enthusiasm and youthfulness of Jenny Simpson, Stephen Gay and my other friends from the QUT Student Guild gave the campaign the grunt it needed.

I appreciate the support and effort from start to finish of the members of both the Mansfield and Cresthaven branches of the ALP. I need to make special mention of the effort of party members Maggie Newlove, Shirley and Len Fallows, Pat O'Leary, Steve Axe, David Bates, Robin and Kevin Bianchi and family, Michelle Boyle, Peter Wood, David Anthony and family, Cameron Dick, Paul Burton, Kerry Rea, Neil and Judy Bennett, Peter McAuliffe, Stewart Fyfe, Terri Birrell and Shaun Gordon. The assistance from party office was first-class. To Mike Kaiser and the team, including the campaign organisers who had faith in me, I offer my heartfelt thanks.

Linda Holiday provided me with excellent advice and support from preselection till post-election and, in fact, is still giving unselfishly. Words cannot describe my appreciation of her. I say a big thankyou to many members present today. I offer extra special thanks to the member for Mount Gravatt, Minister Judy Spence; the member for Sunnybank, Stephen Robertson; the member for Lytton, Paul Lucas; and the member for Yeronga, Minister Matt Foley. I hope the member for Yeronga has recovered from the bus ride up Mount Gravatt Mountain.

Throughout my life I have been blessed by the friends I have had. They have come from a variety of backgrounds—the neighbourhood, Telecom, football, Leisure Studies, my business, Phantom Races and many other places. My friends and relatives are my heart and soul. Without their friendship and support throughout my life, I would not be standing here today.

I wish I could mention everyone personally, but that would be impossible. However, I need to acknowledge a couple of people. I thank the "real" John Howard and Danny Reihana for their friendship and support over a number of years, including today. I say a big thankyou to a close family friend, Ted Glass, for not only helping through the campaign but also for his long friendship with our family. I can confidently tell the House that Brothers are odds on to win the premiership this year.

I say to John Coakley that we went through a few trials and tribulations through the campaign. However, this was a positive as now we have become closer friends. I thank my long-time Labor friends in Canberra— Detlef Jumpertz, Kim Connolly and Geoff Allan—for their moral support. I say to my close friend Mark Eaves: we came from different sides of the river. However, we found we had a number of things in common—Brothers and the ALP. He showed me a great lesson in life: if one has a dream, do not die wondering, do it. He had a dream of Phantom Race Calls, and the rest is history, with a highly successful business. I had one, too, and here I am. I will miss the close working relationship we had and those endless hours of driving up and down the coast. However, I know that our friendship will remain.

The Labor Party is often criticised because of its links with the trade union movement. The trade union movement and the Labor Party have a right to feel justifiably proud of their relationship. The trade union movement has as its goal to protect and improve the working conditions of all Australians. This has been the very foundation of the Labor Party from formation.

As a member of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union, I am proud to say that I am fully supportive of the trade union movement and I will continue to ensure that workers' rights are a fundamental goal of this Government. In April this year I stood as one with 3,000 other trade union members and supporters very late on a cold Sunday evening at Brisbane port. That evening highlighted that Queenslanders have a fundamental desire to address unfair actions by employers and Governments. I will continue to fight for all Queenslanders and to protest against the wrongs that have been done them.

When one is discussing people's rights, one must not forget those of the indigenous people of our State. On 3 June 1997 I sat in the public gallery to listen to a motion moved by the now Premier. The motion was designed to provide an apology to the indigenous people for past policies under which their children were forcibly separated from their families. In his speech, the member for Brisbane Central quoted stories from the report on the stolen generation. Unbeknown to him, family members of the children of that stolen generation who were mentioned in those stories were sitting next to me in the gallery. The tears of hurt were apparent for all in the gallery to see. To the gallery's anguish, the Government of the day voted against the Labor motion. To my disappointment and to the disappointment of those whom I have been elected to represent, the former member for Mansfield, who had promoted to anyone who would listen that he had the highest of Christian morals and beliefs, voted against the motion.

Members of this House who use their religion as a political selling factor should ensure that their words are matched with actions. Put simply, if they are going to take the high moral ground, they should make sure that they are consistent and do not push it to the background when there are political or personal considerations involved. One of the first Christian principles that I learnt was to ask for forgiveness and say sorry to God, yet the former Government and this former member forgot that on 3 June.

I am very lucky to be here. My luck comes not just from being elected after such a close contest but from being able to make choices throughout my life. I was lucky that, after attending St Catherine's and Clairvaux College, I was able to choose to leave school at the age of 15. This choice could be made as there were jobs available. I was lucky that, after being retrenched at the tender age of 18, my family, the CES and Social Security were there to assist. I was lucky that I was able to choose to do a Public Service/Telecom examination to apply for entry and I was lucky that Telecom was employing and not retrenching at the time.

I was lucky that I was able to choose to leave Telecom to better myself and study for a tertiary preparation certificate at Redlands Community College, now known as Bayside—lucky because Austudy was still in place to enable me to make that choice. I was lucky that I was able to choose to do a Bachelor of Leisure Management at Griffith University—lucky because back in 1972 the Whitlam Labor Government was elected, which opened up free access to our universities. I was lucky that, at the conclusion of that course, I was able to choose to set up my own business.

It is unfortunate that, if I were 15 today, I would not be able to make those choices. Instead of having Governments which enable people to make choices, we have Governments which want to put the entire burden onto people and their families. While my parents would have supported me, there is no way they could have or should have been expected to. I am happy to say that, at least at State level, progressive government has been returned. We now have a Government that understands how important it is for people, particularly our young people, to be able to choose their future. I do not believe that it will be too long before we have the return of a progressive Federal Labor Government.

At the same time as young people are not able to make the choices that most of us were able to, we hear many statements such as that young people have more freedom today than they ever had. Let us examine this so-called freedom. Have they really got freedom? I have already expressed the lack of freedom in choice of career development today. Do people allow their 16-year-old daughter to walk from Garden City to Mansfield on their own today? Is it safer today in our schools? With the youth suicide rate so high, is it safer? Are there fewer racial taunts on our young people today? To all those questions I think the answer is: no. Is this what more freedom is? I regard these statements about young people having more freedom as just populist fantasy. In fact, our young people have got much less freedom; they do not have choice or certainty. It is the duty of all of us in this place to ensure that we address these problems. To offer them freedom, we must give our young people the opportunity to choose and to feel safe in our society. The statement that our young people are our future is a false one; they are our present.

I now wish to discuss the composition of the 49th Parliament. Contrary to media reports, this Parliament contains 23 new members, with another two who have been returned from the 47th Parliament. With over a quarter of this Parliament's members being new, we have been given a unique opportunity to change the way things have been done in the past. The One Nation members do not have the sole right to be disillusioned with the past. If we continue to dwell on the past we will not be doing our job. Our role should be to make improvements in the future. We all need to work together to ensure that the people of our electorates regain respect for Parliament and its politicians—and yes, we are all politicians, whether we like to admit it or not.

As the Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary says, a politician is one who is interested in or engaged in politics, especially as a profession. I firmly believe that we must illustrate to the community in the House, in our committees and in our work throughout the electorate that we are committed to ensuring a better future for our constituents and their families. If we continue to make personal attacks and look backwards, we will lose the moment. To use the words from that great movie *Carpe Diem*—we all need to seize the day. I do not believe that this opportunity will present itself again.

I have set five personal objectives to achieve in my term as the member for Mansfield. The first is to ensure that we introduce some real and long-term effective strategies to fix up the traffic problems experienced on Mt Gravatt-Capalaba Road. Secondly, I will continue to work closely with the local community in its attempts to gain a young people's community centre. Thirdly, I want to help establish a south side events committee made up of people from sports and community groups, local businesses, schools and churches, and the local residents. Fourthly, I want to facilitate the holding of a number of "meet your neighbours" activities throughout the electorate to assist in the community development of our suburbs. The last objective is more of a goal regarding the Labor Government. It is to ensure that, for the length of our term, we do not allow the hijacking of our policies by the economic rationalists of this world. If they try to, we must be prepared to fight the fight against the perpetrators. We must put people before large profits.

I do not profess to be a Rhodes scholar—no offence to the Treasurer—or the most articulate person in this House. However, I do believe that I can communicate with people from all walks of life and that I understand the different trials and tribulations that they may face. I am ready, willing and able to assist the people of my electorate to gain their full potential. I will not try to pretend that I am someone else; I do not have the traditional wife and two and a half kids, so what you see is what you get. In three years' time I will put myself before the people of Mansfield and ask them to judge me on my performance. In the meantime, I will give them my best.
