



Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR CARNARVON

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FIRST SPEECH

Mr SPRINGBORG (Carnarvon) (3.10 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise for the first time in this Chamber to deliver my maiden speech. I do so with a great sense of humility, having achieved the honour of representing the people of Carnarvon. It is certainly a goal that many strive for but few achieve.

I wish to take this opportunity to associate myself and my electorate with the message of loyalty to Our Most Gracious Sovereign, Her Majesty The Queen, a truly diligent and dignified person who continues to unite peoples and nations throughout her realms within the Commonwealth of Nations. The Queen is most certainly the catalyst for the healthy continuation and growth of democracy in this State and the Commonwealth. I wish to place on record my confidence in and support for her representative in this State, Sir Walter Campbell, for the way he carries out his duties in such a dignified and unassuming manner. I also wish Sir Walter and his good wife, Lady Campbell, a long and happy life.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I congratulate the Speaker on his election to the Chair of this Chamber. May I say that he will not have too much trouble from me. By all accounts from both sides of this House, he will be a very honourable, decent and impartial Speaker possessed of a deep sense of justice. I hope that his stay in the Chair will be a fulfilling and happy one.

I point out to members present here today that I have never written a speech in my life and I do not intend to start now. I feel now that it would be appropriate for me to talk about a few of my helpers in the electorate of Carnarvon, those ever so important people who helped me achieve this high office.

I refer first to my wife and family. As a few members in the Chamber may be aware, I was married on 28 October last year, only one month before polling day. My wife is sitting in the public gallery. I can only place on record my confidence in and admiration for her, because the day after we were married, I took her back to the electorate, put her on one side of the street and said, "Go up there and start door-knocking. I'll do this side of the street." My efforts paid off, as honourable members are patently aware.

To the other close members of my family—I thank my father, my mother and my three sisters for all the support that they have given me over the last five or six months, from winning the National Party plebiscite through to winning the seat of Carnarvon for the National Party. At the outset, my father was a little bit dubious because, since leaving school at the end of 1982, I was the main man on the farm. Subsequently, my father started to slow down a little bit. After I had reassured him that he had not lost a son and that I would be back on a regular basis to help around the farm, he became a little bit more confident. Now I must say that I can even detect an element of pride. I can only say that my mother is what one would describe as a typically adoring mother.

To my helpers in Carnarvon—I thank particularly my campaign chairman, Mr Lester Dawson from my local branch of the Young Nationals, for the work and the help that he put into my campaign, through firstly the winning of the plebiscite and, secondly, the winning of the election for the National Party in Carnarvon. I am sure that members on both sides of the House appreciate that it is those unsung heroes who play an important role in our election to the Legislative Assembly of Queensland. In my attempt to elicit support so that I could win the National Party plebiscite, I travelled around the

electorate for 8 to 10 days. Lester travelled with me for part of that time. He drove the car and sat in the hot sun while I got out and talked to people. I am sure that I can rely on his support in the future.

To Jim and Beth Goodrich, the electorate council chairman and his wife—I can only thank them for the great assistance they were to me during the campaign. They were like another family to me. I am sure that over the next few years while I am in this place I can rely on their support and their advice.

As honourable members may be aware, Peter McKechnie is the man whom I have succeeded in this place. As I travelled around the electorate of Carnarvon, it became patently obvious to me that Peter won the seat of Carnarvon through his own personal vote and not necessarily a vote for the National Party. Carnarvon has a hard core of Labor voters. However, Peter is well liked by people of all political persuasions. I believe that that stems from the fact that Peter, like other members in this Chamber, takes a genuine interest in the issues in the electorate and the issues affecting people on both sides of the political fence.

Because of his dedication to his family and because his wife was suffering from a grave illness, Peter McKechnie decided to retire from the Legislative Assembly. Mrs McKechnie came down with this new-fangled disease known as ME. I can only say that I thank Peter McKechnie and his good wife, Jeanette, for the great support they gave to me during my campaign for election to the Legislative Assembly. I wish them a long and happy life together.

Carnarvon must surely be one of the oldest electorates in this State. It was created by the Electoral Districts Act 1872. Since its creation, it has been represented by 10 members, excluding me. As honourable members can see, there is a great tradition in the electorate of Carnarvon for members to represent the area for a considerable period. I hope that I will be no exception to that rule.

The main industries of Carnarvon are the growing of stone fruit and apples, wheat, fodder crops and mohair; wine-making, grazing cattle and sheep, saw milling, and, ever increasingly, tourism. The major towns in my electorate are Goondiwindi, which has a population of 4 103, according to the 1986 census; Stanthorpe, which has a population of 4 139; Texas, which has a population of 817; Inglewood, which has a population of 966; and Wallangarra, which has a population of 413. The smallest town in my electorate that received recognition by the Bureau of Statistics is Yelarbon, which has a population of 232. To my knowledge, there is one smaller town, Leyburn, which has a population of just under 200. The overall population of Carnarvon is 18 599. Of course, that figure fluctuates as visitors come and go.

My beliefs and objectives are based on family values. I believe that, over a period of years, those values have been slowly eroded throughout the nation. I believe that maintaining strong family units will result in people belonging to a strong society. I believe that that is the position to which Queenslanders have to attempt to return.

I also believe strongly that this nation is yet to reach its full potential. Throughout the vast areas of Australia, there are unlimited resources. I do not believe that people should be overly pedantic on the issue of mining Australia's natural resources, full stop. However, when carrying out mining, developers have to be environmentally minded.

I have no doubt that this nation was founded on the sheep's back, as you, Mr Deputy Speaker, would be only too well aware. Although primary industries will continue to be important in the future, people must not become overly reliant on them. I say that although I have been associated with primary industry for a long period and will continue to be for many years, even after I have ceased to be a member of this Parliament. It is extremely important that the fields of science and technology be developed in this nation. Australia's south-east Asian neighbours—countries such as Japan—are following the path of developing their technologically-based industries. The treatment received in Australia by scientists and technology-minded people—people who may be able to go out into the marketplace and invent products, thereby making a worthwhile contribution to this country's progress—has been absolutely abominable. One only has to look at the present Federal Government's treatment of the CSIRO, which has working for it some of the world's most brilliant minds. It is about time those scientists' skills were used, or Australia will be in danger of becoming a banana republic. It is as simple as that.

More students should be encouraged to undertake studies in science. As soon as they leave high school, they should be encouraged to take up scientifically based careers. An attractive wages and career structure should be provided for them. Obviously, the effects of the humanities have crept in and influenced too much of society. Although there is nothing wrong with lawyers and academics, it must be remembered that society needs only a healthy balance. That is evident now in Japan. Hopefully, that trend will be evident in this nation in the near future.

During my period of representation as the member for Carnarvon, I will be pushing a number of issues. Among them will be the decentralisation of all secondary industries and the location of some of them in my electorate. Unfortunately, many companies that wish to establish industries tend to locate their businesses in the south-east corner of the State. I can understand their belief that the south-east

corner of the State is where major transport and other infrastructure facilities are located. However, in my electorate there exists a fairly reliable water supply and a cheap supply of electricity. I would be only too happy to receive deputations from interested groups that wish to establish secondary industries in my electorate.

Earlier I mentioned tourism, which is of increasing importance in terms of Queensland's economy. I will be approaching the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing in the hope that he will be able to assist me in the establishment of more tourism-based industries in my electorate. Carnarvon boasts the Girraween national park, the apple and grape festival, and wineries, which are located at the eastern end of the electorate. They attract a large number of tourists, and will continue to do so. The tourism potential of this State and other parts of Australia has not yet been touched.

I turn now to a topic that has received widespread attention throughout Australia. I make a plea for better roads to be constructed in Carnarvon. Over the next few years, I would like to see the roads in my electorate upgraded. To achieve that goal, it will be necessary for Queensland to receive a greater proportion of fuel tax revenue and spend those funds on roads. Unfortunately, there is no will on the part of the Federal Labor Government to increase the proportion of those funds received by Queensland. I point out, however, that because of the abominable state of Queensland's roads, peoples' lives are at risk. This is becoming increasingly the case, even in the more centralised areas of the State. The Government must be prepared to spend more money on roads. Recently, I almost became a victim of one of the bad roads in my electorate.

Mr Gibbs interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The next time I am in a similar predicament, I will invite the honourable member for Wolston to join me.

I look forward to the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Housing visiting my electorate on 31 March to open the Goondiwindi Community Centre. At that time, I will point out to the Deputy Premier that many towns in Queensland need more housing. I endorse the sentiments of the member for Brisbane Central that housing is becoming an ever increasing and more important issue. Considering the number of inquiries that I have received, the provision of an additional 100 houses in Goondiwindi might not be enough.

I wish the Government the very best in its review of ambulance services. It is an issue that has always concerned me. When the Government and the members of the committee examine possible recommendations on ambulance services, I implore them not to consider regionalisation. That would mean that local ambulances would lose autonomy. We do not want our local ambulance having to ring Toowoomba in the middle of the night to ascertain whether a particular emergency case deserves their services. Ambulance services must be available immediately.

I propose that the review of ambulance services could investigate a concept in which emergency services are funded by the State Government, and taxi operations, such as people being taken to hospital for X-rays, are funded by subscriptions.

In the near future, I would like an indication from the Government of its stance on the Broadwater dam near Stanthorpe in the eastern part of my electorate. For my electorate to reach its full potential in the area of primary industries, particularly small crops and fruit trees, more water is needed. That dam was approved by the previous Government just before it lost office. I hope that the present Government will continue with that project.

Daylight-saving is another topical issue. I am extremely pleased to see the member for Mount Isa in the Chamber. The member for Barron River has just left the Chamber. Last week, I was not surprised that they did not support the concept of daylight-saving. There is no doubt that in western Queensland daylight-saving interferes with people's way of life. Although in south-east Queensland the people achieve more leisure time, the people in the west do not. They might be required to play tennis locally at 8 o'clock at night. However, many farmers and primary producers work from when the sun comes up to when the sun goes down. Because the sun is still up, they cannot attend sporting events. As well, a problem arises with children who return home from school in the heat of the afternoon. Daylight-saving affects many families in the west. Furthermore, I cannot be convinced that the problem of putting children to bed when the sun is up is caused by a lack of discipline. I cannot go to bed when the sun is up. Children operate on biological time.

It is a pity that the Minister for Land Management has left the Chamber. He intends to carry out a review of freeholding and to implement rent increases on Crown land. I inform him that not all people on the land can afford to pay large increases in rent. I wish that certain members of the Government worked on the land. If they did, they would discover that, with high interest rates, a lack of incentive and low commodity prices, it is difficult to make ends meet. People on the land cannot afford to pay increased rental.

The Minister can conduct his review of freeholding, but he should not put an end to freeholding. Many people have been on land for 50 or 60 years. In future, when they can afford it, they would like to guarantee themselves security of tenure by freeholding their properties.

The subject of one vote, one value will be raised in this Chamber frequently in the next year. Opposition members do not know what EARC will recommend. However, from my experience in the last few months in my electorate, I sympathise with the honourable members for Gregory, Mount Isa, Cook and the other large electorates in Queensland. They must spend a great deal of effort and money in travelling throughout their electorates. Stanthorpe has about 100 community-based organisations. Each of those organisations expects the local member to attend its change-over dinner. As well, I have about 30 schools in my electorate, and it is a relatively small electorate.

Prior to the election, National Party members were consoled by the belief that the Labor Party required more than 51 per cent of the vote to gain Government in this State. However, it received 50.8 per cent of the vote and managed to achieve more than 60 per cent of the seats. The claim of a rigged electoral system in Queensland was one of the greatest furphies that was ever perpetrated in the history of Australia.

The Labor Government has been given a mandate by the people of Queensland to change direction and to clean up perceived wrongs. I implore Government members not to embark on vindictive campaigns in an endeavour to get even for events that might have occurred in the past. The people of Queensland want to see good, open, accountable government.

As I move around in my electorate, people continue to complain to me about the lack of accessibility of some Ministers. Although I admit that I have been able to get replies from some Ministers, I must say that some of them have not been responding as quickly as I and many other people in the general community would like. That is one part of its act that the Government could improve on immediately. It would do the Government the world of good to be magnanimous in victory.

My attempt to gain a seat in this place began at a very young age. At a time when a lot of the people around me—the so-called armchair experts—were complaining that politicians were ruining the country and making all the wrong decisions, I resolved to do something. I felt that perhaps there was something that I could achieve. So I immediately began campaigning to win a seat in this place. Admittedly, it happened a bit sooner than I expected. I expected that it might happen when I was about 30 or 35 years of age. That was not to be the case. However, let me say that I am just as ready now as I will ever be, and I believe that I am just as competent now as I will ever be. I realise that I have a lot to learn. However, I cannot be convinced that because one comes into this place at 40 or 50 years of age, one knows everything. That is not true. One never ceases to continue learning until the day one dies. Even a person who has been in this place for 40 years continues to learn. It is an ongoing process.

My views, my opinions and where I am going will be shaped by the people of my electorate and by members on both sides of this House. It will be a learning experience for me. I do not intend to stay in this place for a long time and to break records of 40 or 45 years as a member of Parliament. If I can stay around for 15 years, notwithstanding the redistribution, that might be enough for me. Retirement at 35 years of age is a great scenario.

The Westminster system of Parliament is extremely significant. It is the whole basis of our democracy. Although it may have run off the track on some occasions, I believe that the National Party has tried to uphold the basis of democracy. The Labor Government will find itself in exactly the same position as the previous Government. Governments are not perfect. They are destined to make mistakes. I will be prepared to give this Government a bit of credit where credit is due. I hope that Government members will be prepared to give the Opposition a bit of credit and listen to constructive suggestions, opinions and ideas that members of the Opposition may put forward.

In conclusion, I thank all honourable members for listening to me with few interjections. I hope that my stay in this place will be a fulfilling one and a long one, and that I will be able to achieve a lot for the people of Queensland and for the people of Carnarvon.
