



Legislative Council
APPROPRIATION BILL

10/11/76

Second Reading

Extract

The Hon. J. R. JOHNSON [6.13]: Mr President, at the outset may I express appreciation to you, all honourable members, the parliamentary staff and officers of the Parliament, who, since my election, have extended to me all possible courtesies and help. I offer my congratulations to the Hon. W. J. Sandwith who preceded me in the debate and to all other honourable members who have made their maiden contributions in this session of Parliament. My fellow party members who assisted my candidature for pre-selection by my party are legion. However, some are due for particular mention. The president of the party, the Hon. J. P. Ducker, along with Mr Barrie Unsworth, the assistant secretary of the Labor Council of New South Wales, whose help and guidance over many years are particularly appreciated, have my profound gratitude.

Being a sentimental bloke I should like to make some particular reference to people who have had a profound effect on my life. My parents of whom only my mother is now living, along with my wonderful wife and four chosen children, gave every encouragement and help. My duty compels me to make special mention of four wonderful women who, during my formative years, had a lasting effect on my thinking. All are nuns of the Lismore Presentation Order. I refer to Sisters Mary Kieran, Aiden, and Koska and the late Sister Mary de Sales Daly, of very happy memory. For as long as I live their thoughts and actions will influence me. They have left a lifelong impression on me. I shall never be able to repay their outstanding service to me and to the community generally.

I well recall in my early life news media reports of the atrocities of Stalin and Hitler. They almost pale into insignificance when one considers the millions of dollars being made by so-called men of medicine who destroy life in the womb. There are, within our community, new Herods who propound the evil philosophy of easy abortion on such spurious grounds as the mental health of the mother or possible defects in children yet unborn. They have reflected that killing of a baby not yet born, but already an autonomous and viable human being, only on the grounds of suspicion—and not certainty—of it being deformed, justifies the murder of any other deformed person.

Recently the *Australian* ran a feature article in two parts by Sandra Jobson which to me brought home the subtle way the community is being softened up. The article is headed:

One in Five is being Aborted—Sandra talks to Angela as she goes through the decent and dignified process which is abortion today for 50,000 Australian women.

When was the taking of innocent life "decent and dignified"? "One in five". One in five what? Fish or human beings? My concern is great, along with the majority of our community, at this continuing evil practice. The governments of the world spend on children every year what they spend on armaments every two hours. Where is our sense of values? Surely, this is the final absurdity. I urge that in the not too distant future, our Government should fund properly serviced pro-life clinics for the future welfare of countless unborn Australians.

It is my belief that governments of western democracies like our own should be funding election campaigns. I believe the electoral laws of our State should, as they pertain to electioneering, be amended to provide from Treasury funds amounts of money for just and equitable campaigns and, indeed, for the efficient running of democratic political parties.

The escalation in the cost of conducting election campaigns in New South Wales has reached proportions that a few years ago would have been undreamed of. We find that since the introduction of decimal currency the position has gone from bad to worse, when one considers that supporters who may have

given £1,000 now give \$1,000. The donations are received in dollars and the accounts are paid in pounds.

Dialogue and debate on electoral laws are in progress in many countries of the world. Some have already acted. As a result of Watergate, the recent presidential candidates in the United States were each funded by the public purse to the extent of \$21.8 million. In 1972 President Nixon spent \$60 million on his re-election campaign and his Democratic opponent, George McGovern, spent \$30 million. The United States now has laws that restrict the amounts to be spent by individuals and, indeed, individual donors are restricted to only \$1,000 per donor to a specific presidential candidate.

Since Watergate, an enormous amount of work has been done to clean up the mess of election funding. This is all to the good. It could be said that this is a case where out of major evil came good. For ten cents a copy one can obtain from the electoral office in the United States a certified printed list of the donors, their addresses and occupations. It concerns me that public disclosure of the sources of funds to political campaigns are not mandatory in this State. When one looks at the budget papers, which reveal that the proportion for parliamentary elections in 1975-76 was \$1.6 million, and then contemplates that the political parties would have spent more than that amount on the recent State election, the enormity of the problem facing political parties of this nation can be seen.

In Canada, for instance, grave penalties are imposed if donations in excess of \$100 are not disclosed. Legislation in Canada has restricted the amount a candidate can spend. A candidate is limited to \$2 for each of the first 15 000 eligible voters in the electorate, 50c for each of the next 10 000 and 25c for each elector over 25 000. Political parties are limited to 30c for each eligible voter in the country. Penalties for over-spending go as high as \$25,000. May I quote Mr O'Connor, the Leader of the Progressives of the Canadian House of Commons, who said:

Above all, these limitations will reduce the discriminatory effect of wealth on the system. The wealthy person will not be permitted to spend their way into office nor will they enjoy the substantial advantage that money formerly held over the less well-to-do candidate.

From 1965, Sweden provided funds from the public purse to political parties which have 4 per cent or more of the votes cast. This tends to cut out the ratbag element. I fully support this concept. The Swedes have funded political parties for some fifteen years through their youth groups. They and the Canadians have set up investigatory bodies. They do not restrict themselves to campaigns; their activities extend also to the operations and recognition of political parties. The Swedes have for some time grasped the nettle in recognizing that their society depends very largely upon the viability of sound political parties. In Sweden, for each member returned his party receives \$16,000. It is not restricted to that. A total amount of \$4.5 million was distributed to political parties on the basis of their percentage vote in the previous two elections. If in this State we were to allocate from the public purse an amount equal to that in Sweden on a population basis, the fiscal problems of all of the responsible political parties would be over.

When it is considered that the following nations are now funding political parties—Finland since 1966, Denmark since 1969, Sweden since 1965, West Germany since 1959, Austria since 1961, Norway since 1970, Italy since 1974, poor Puerto Rico since 1957, and the province of Quebec since 1963, we can no longer justify not making funds available from State sources.

The mass media in Australia, with their biased views, have placed enormous threats to the viability of some political parties. Their actions can be countered only by effective purchased advertising at election times. I look forward to the day when the bagmen of the political parties are put out of business and a more reasoned approach to election funding is forthcoming. It has come to my notice that the United Kingdom Government has set up a committee to look into all aspects of political campaign funding in that nation. The quicker we do it the better it will be for democracy to grow and flourish in this nation. As one who has engaged himself in fund raising on behalf of his political party, I am convinced that some people consider shrouds have pockets.

From the nadir of despondency late last year to a new epoch from 1st May this year, our party rejoices that it has reached the Treasury benches of this State. A rich new future is assured in which not wealth nor privilege matters, after eleven years of a legislative miscellany of injustice rendered by accident or

design. If we are shown to be perfidious, that perfidy deserves the vengeance of the elector. This I know—indeed I pray—will not eventuate. We have been given a duty of care in the strictest application for the common good that will be pursued with all vigour.

In conclusion, Mr President and honourable members, I trust that my sojourn in this House will not at any future time be looked back upon in anger by anyone.