



Speech by

Mrs J. GAMIN

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

Hansard 4 August 1998

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Mrs GAMIN (Burleigh—NPA) (5.15 p.m.): In joining the Address in Reply debate today I confirm, as always, my loyalty and allegiance and that of my constituency, to Her Majesty the Queen, and to her representative, His Excellency the Governor. I have already congratulated Mr Speaker on his elevation to high office. It is my habit to conduct myself with decorum in the Chamber, so I would not expect to have difficulties with the Speaker's rulings. I would expect always to conform with the Speaker's rulings.

It is only a week since I spoke in this Chamber on the motion of confidence, and I spoke then very seriously about many matters of practical interest and concern in my electorate of Burleigh. I will not repeat them now. In a less serious vein, however, this evening I would like to tell the House something about the background of the electorate of Burleigh, in particular, and about the history of the Gold Coast in general.

Electoral boundaries were changed in 1992 and the former South Coast electorate, which I had the honour to represent, albeit briefly, in this Parliament between 1988 and 1989, disappeared entirely. The new electorate of Burleigh was formed, and it is basically an urban electorate of about 32 square kilometres in size. It comprises the suburbs of Palm Beach, West Burleigh, Burleigh Heads, Burleigh Waters, part of Miami, Andrews and most of Stephens. Its residents cover a wide cross-section of occupations and income levels and encompass all age groups. It is a very family-oriented electorate. It has always prided itself on providing beach holidays for family people. Family holiday-makers return to the seaside towns of Miami, Burleigh and Palm Beach year after year and from generation to generation. We are developing a growing and impressive industrial and manufacturing base.

I do not want honourable members to think that we are parochial in the Burleigh electorate; it is just that we consider the central and south Gold Coast to be the best part of south-east Queensland. The electorate contains the magnificent Burleigh Headland which runs down to the sea, the national park and the Tallebudgera Greenspace Network, and many hectares of undeveloped land now permanently set aside for purely environmental purposes. Environmental matters are well handled in the Burleigh electorate, and I take this opportunity to pay tribute to that great naturalist Dr David Fleay who came to Burleigh more than 45 years ago and set in train the preservation of so much of our natural heritage.

When my husband and I settled in Burleigh with our young family 30 years ago, David Fleay was our friend and neighbour. Some years before his death, and in order to preserve his fauna reserve from predatory developers, he sold it to the former National Party Government for a song. Although there have been some management problems, the fauna reserve is controlled by the Department of Environment and will remain as part of our national environmental heritage.

Throughout the Gold Coast and its hinterland there is now a wealth of published history as we are starting to pay attention to our beginnings, to document them, and to put together our history for those who will follow us. Captain Cook had noted Mount Warning on his voyage up the Queensland coast, but the earliest of the other coastal explorers missed completely the Tweed, Currumbin and Tallebudgera entrances and the great major entrance to the Broadwater. The very early settlers to the Gold Coast came other than by sea.

Red cedar—those magnificent trees that are now sadly very rare in the hinterland forests—and convicts were the main factors that brought about settlement of the Gold Coast hinterland. Of course, the Gold Coast was never a convict settlement, but from the south up through the Tweed came the timber-getters—roughest of rough, rum drinkers to a man. Some of them would do well in this House. Many of them were ticket-of-leave men, emancipists or runaway convicts. From the north, from the harsh penal settlement of Moreton Bay, came military patrols hunting other runaway convicts. The infamous Captain Logan established a post at Point Danger for this very purpose. Later on, farmers came to work the land, particularly for dairying, beef and market gardens. Around the early 1840s timber camps were set up, firstly along the Tweed and then in the Nerang Valley. Cedar was their first find and then pine. Logs were floated down the rivers and creeks or carted down by bullock dray. As farming developed, the little hinterland townships started to establish and take hold.

These days, census figures and results are used for all sorts of analyses. Some of the records of more than a century ago are also interesting. In 1879 at Nerang, there were 39 inhabited houses containing 138 males and 49 females. At Mudgeeraba, there were five houses containing 20 males and 13 females. At Tallebudgera, no houses were listed, although there were 21 male and 15 female residents. At Currumbin Creek there were two males. The little coastal towns were also starting up. In 1875, 30 people lived between Southport and Broadbeach, eight between Mermaid Beach and Burleigh Heads, and 14 between Palm Beach and Coolangatta, making a total of 52 permanent residents along the actual seaside section of the future Gold Coast.

For anybody in the Chamber who has been adding up the figures, I point out that the total comes to 310 so far, and there were approximately another 100 or 150 north of Nerang up to Oxenford and Coomera. This gives a grand total of about 500 people who lived in the greater Gold Coast area during the 1870s. Even if my figures are a bit out, that was not many people, but over the next 100 years the population simply exploded. When the Albert and Gold Coast councils were amalgamated in 1995, the new Gold Coast City from Beenleigh to the New South Wales border contained 320,000 residents. The prediction for the year 2010 is one million people for the Gold Coast corridor.

During the very early days of coastal settlement, anyone who lived close to the sea ventured onto the beach only to fish or gather oysters. However, the firm beach sands were also considered ideal for horseracing, and Burleigh was considered to be a great place for racing between the two headlands. Tallebudgera village was well in place before anything got started at Burleigh. The Tallebudgera farmers had shops and a church in their township, and were unique in having their own beach racecourse at Burleigh: a two-kilometre stretch, about a mile and a half—just the right distance for racing.

The arrival of Cobb & Co opened up the whole area. In 1875, there were services six days a week from Brisbane to Nerang and Tweed Heads. That was a pretty rough and bouncy ride. The horses were skull-dragged over the creeks and the passengers were ferried across in boats. In 1882, the service extended into Southport, and that town started to go ahead. Blocks of land quickly increased in price from 20 pounds in 1878 to 50 pounds in 1883. Schools opened up in Southport—and churches. The Star of the Sea Convent opened nearly 100 years ago. There were boarding houses, and advertisements appeared for holiday excursions. The railway arrived, and surfing became fashionable.

In 1885, the Southport and Nerang Divisional Boards, which were the forerunners of the local councils, passed by-laws that attempted to enforce swimming costume standards on men and women—neck to knee, of course. Body surfing was described by a Brisbane newspaper as a "daredevil pursuit". Sixty or seventy years later, those early councillors must have wriggled in their graves when Paula Stafford's bikinis appeared on the beaches.

By the 1920s, hotels and guesthouses were scattered right along the tourist strip, including the famous Cavill's Hotel and zoo in Surfers Paradise. The old hump-backed Jubilee Bridge was built in 1925 and not replaced until 1966. Motorists started to brave the long day's journey from Brisbane. It took all day, with a picnic lunch on the way, of course. The original railway line came down to Ernest Junction, which is now a big industrial estate at the back of Southport. Then it branched to the Southport line, right into the town, or else it went south through Nerang, Mudgeeraba, West Burleigh, Elanora, Tugun, Bilinga and Coolangatta.

There was a pub beside the railway line at West Burleigh. It burned down in the sixties. It became a fashionable competition for young blades to dash down from the train, see how many quick beers they could sink, and hop back on the train before it started to move off again, hopefully not getting left behind. We lost the railway in the 1960s because the Government of the day, in its wisdom, decided that road transport between Brisbane and Coolangatta was the answer to transport problems. We now have a new electrified rail link to Robina, which opened on 1 June, and over the next few years we will get our railway line back down to Coolangatta.

In the 1920s, blocks of land were selling in Burleigh Heads for 15 pounds. Burleigh Heads started off as a camping village—a township under canvas. Eventually the tents were cleared from the foreshore and the Norfolk pine trees were planted. Those Norfolk pines are a most distinctive feature of

our foreshore and home to many thousands of noisy lorikeets. By the 1930s, we had established beach resorts along the coast, with businesses to service the needs of local residents as well as visitors. Some of these businesses were started off by old pioneering and farming families whose descendants are still scattered throughout the Gold Coast. Indeed, some of those very early businesses are still operating in the 1990s.

Lifesaving clubs were formed, and the earliest clubs came about from the efforts of visitors. For instance, Burleigh beach was serviced or cared for by some visitors from the suburb of Mowbray Park in East Brisbane, and to this day the club on the beachfront is called the Burleigh Heads/Mowbray Park Surf Lifesaving Club. The Neptune Lady Life Savers Club was formed in 1928 to give summer recreation to the lady members of the Brisbane Gymnasium Club. New fashions started to appear in bathing suits. We were getting away from neck-to-knee costumes. At Coolangatta, men were not allowed to wear topless bathers or to walk in the streets in their bathers unless modestly covered by a beach robe or dressing gown. It was perfectly ridiculous to see grown men getting around in Griffith Street wearing dressing gowns but in bare feet. However, Southport was much more tolerant of modern fashions, and men could roll down the tops of their bathers. This incensed the Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, Archbishop Duhig, who really castigated them from the pulpit—half-naked savages, he called them. Eventually, because of Coolangatta's tough rules on beach wear, Coolangatta found that it began to lose seaside business to the more emancipated beaches of the northern Gold Coast. The local councillors gave in, Coolangatta decided it had better treat the matter in a commercial rather than a moral light, and business picked up again.

Money was tight during the Depression, and mass entertainments became the fashion—free amusements and free beach concerts. In the 1930s, blocks of land at Mermaid Beach—the R. G. Oates estate—were selling for five pounds. "What an outrageous price", people said. "Who on earth would want to buy a block of land right down there?" The coast started to boom in the 1950s. The boarding houses at Coolangatta came into their own, and Coolangatta became the great place for honeymooners. Some members of this House have told me that their parents honeymooned there. Coolangatta was also the home of that dance called the hokey-pokey and the song that went "If it's hot in Brisbane it's Coolangatta".

Land speculators moved into Surfers Paradise. The old Lennons Hotel went up at Broadbeach, looking really silly, sticking up out of the sand all by itself—a great white elephant in every sense of the word. It has gone now, of course—replaced by the Oasis Shopping Centre. The old Chevron Hotel has gone, too, as has most of the original Surfers Paradise. There were great pyjama parties—

Mr Barton: I used to go to the Pink Elephant Bar.

Mrs GAMIN: Is the Minister too old for pyjama parties? There were the great pyjama parties at Bernie Elsey's Beachcomber. How modest they were when we look back. The police would be called, there would be sensational stories all over the front pages of the Gold Coast Bulletin, and all the time the party goers wore their swimsuits underneath their pyjamas. The parents of some honourable members were also pretty keen on those pyjama parties.

It has taken a long time for us to learn some lessons on the Gold Coast, particularly in terms of building straight onto the beachfront. Earlier settlers and local councillors simply did not have the faintest idea that building straight onto the sand dunes would cause so much damage. Beach erosion is an enormous problem right along the eastern seaboard of Australia. On the Gold Coast, both the State Government and the local council have poured literally millions of dollars into beach restoration and beach protection, sand pumping, boulder walls and beach protection fencing to hold the remaining dunal systems together.

We no longer send bulldozers onto the beaches to mine for mineral sands, and I hope we never will again. All our beaches were mined from the 1940s onwards, starting with World War II, right down into northern New South Wales past Kingscliff. Mining was still taking place only 30 or so years ago in front of the Kurrawa Surf Lifesaving Club at Broadbeach. It is only about 10 years since the old tin shed and mining operations near Elephant Rock closed down. Every time the dozers moved in, the protesters came out and lay down in front of them. There are still prominent citizens in Gold Coast City who first made their public profiles by blocking bulldozers. Although the restoration of those areas was done as well as possible in the circumstances of the times, we certainly do not want to see it all happen again. I will lie down in front of the bulldozers myself if necessary and so will hundreds and thousands of others, because we cannot afford to have heavy machinery excavation of our beaches ever again.

People want to come and live on the Gold Coast: they like us, they like our climate and they like our lifestyle. The Gold Coast has its knockers, of course. That is because we have grown so quickly. There has been massive growth over 150 years, so perhaps we are a little bit brash—at least that is what our detractors say. Of course, we quiet steady locals do not agree. All sorts of people live on the Gold Coast now—settled permanent residents, quiet families, retired people from the unkind climates of the southern States and working families with children.

Most of us who live on the Gold Coast do not choose to live in the fast lane; we leave that for the tourists. Our economy, though, needs the glitter strip with its sun, surf and sand image. Many others come for peaceful family holidays to the little seaside towns of Miami, Palm Beach and Burleigh Heads, which in many ways are still like villages or small country towns. In fact, the Gold Coast is made up of a whole series of little country towns linked together.

The Gold Coast economy is based on tourism. Our service industries rely on tourism. Our building industry is geared to providing accommodation for visitors as well as locals. It is pleasing to see that we are now broadening our economic base and extending into manufacturing and high-technology industries that will bring permanent benefits. Simply because of our wonderful climate—and quite apart from the current generally depressed national economic conditions—in common with Cairns and Airlie Beach, we have the downside of the visiting unemployed. Street kids and homeless youth are an increasing problem. Welfare services and the marvellous voluntary agencies are working to the limit.

We are a city now, and we have all the problems suffered by other major cities. However, we also have the advantages of the infrastructure of a major city. It is all there for us. We no longer have to rely on the State capital for our goods and services and our professional or commercial facilities. To us, the Gold Coast is our home; to others it is a playground with its cafes, bars, restaurants, international hotels, motels, high-rise apartments, casino, cabarets and clubs. We have superb sporting facilities, including an enormous number of golf courses. We have museums and art galleries, beautiful long beaches, churches of all denominations, excellent schools—both public and private, first-class tertiary establishments, some of the best shopping in Australia and major tourist attractions. It has all happened in just over 150 years. Newsworthy events happen on the Gold Coast. Successful investments have attracted more investments. Those days will come again, although we hope without some of the extravaganzas of previous boom times.

I am proud to represent the electorate of Burleigh on the southern Gold Coast. My constituents have done me the honour of electing me for a third term to represent their interests. We work hard in Burleigh. We take care of our families. We worry about our kids and whether they will get jobs. We watch the specials in the supermarkets. We try to take care of others less fortunate than ourselves. We make our visitors welcome. Historians tell us that, before the white man came, our local Aboriginal tribe was made up of very gentle people. They were so far from warlike that they actually made visitors from other tribes welcome. So back in those far off times before the white man came, the tribes who inhabited Tallebudgera Creek and Burleigh headland lived there and enjoyed the climate, the water and the seafood, and kindly allowed outsiders to visit and enjoy local facilities. That is just what we do today. Burleigh is an interesting and diverse electorate. Those of us who live there and enjoy it make others welcome too. I hope that all members of this House who come to the Gold Coast will take the time to visit the electorate of Burleigh; it will be a delightful experience for them.

Finally, it is appropriate that I record my sincere thanks to all those people who have helped and supported me not only through this last election campaign but also over many, many years of public life. My husband and family come first, of course. I could never have achieved any success at all without their loving support. I am so lucky to have such a hardworking and forceful committee. I have many hundreds of wonderful friends who have worked and supported me over all these years. I pledge my loyalty to my constituency as a whole, to all residents of the Burleigh electorate. During the coming term, I will continue to listen to their problems and difficulties and, as always, do my best to find solutions for them. My Burleigh constituents' wants and needs, hopes and aspirations are always foremost in my list of priorities.
