



Speech by

BILL FELDMAN

MEMBER FOR CABOOLTURE

Hansard 16 November 2000

VALEDICTORY

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (8.11 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to participate in the Valedictory debate of this Parliament. As the previous speaker said, there is a history to this debate. I am proud to be part of the more recent history of that. Not that I want to enter into a debate tonight with the previous speaker over whether the new millennium commenced on 1 January 2000 or will commence on 1 January 2001, but it cannot be denied that the year 2000 was welcomed with unparalleled enthusiasm. The dawn of the 21st century was upon us and, as the 49th Parliament, it was my hope and my prayer that we would leave a positive impression on the pages of history, especially as the year unfolded. I guess whether it is positive or not will of course depend on interpretation from learned scholars down the track who will reflect on history long, long after we are all in the sod. That reminds me of that famous quote from Dr Martin Luther King when he said—

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter."

This is one thing that City Country Alliance holds dear, and that is the right to freedom of speech as expressed by our Constitution. Let no man be silent on the issues that matter to his heart.

As much as I love the sound of my own voice, I will not talk for as long as did the Premier or the Opposition Leader in this debate; I will not tarry too long.

Mr SPEAKER: We are grateful for that.

Mr FELDMAN: Mr Speaker, you had a thankless job this year, and I know it was heavy going. You stood your ground and you weathered the storm of criticism. As a matter of fact, Mr Speaker, I doubt I heard you thanked once this year in this place. So in keeping with the Christmas spirit, Mr Speaker, I thank you. I wish you and your good wife a very pleasant Christmas and a joyful New Year and commend to you the words of Benjamin Franklin as a jewel instead of a present—

"Any fool can criticise, condemn and complain, and most fools do."

City Country Alliance had its foundation in this Parliament as we threw off the cloak of despair at the intrigue that One Nation became.

Mr Beattie: Bill, we're really warming to you.

Mr FELDMAN: It has only taken you two years, Peter, and I love the warm smile.

Two and a half years come and go in this place, and we thought we were coming to what was a pompous show, not knowing particularly what was going to go on. I said in my first valedictory in 1998 that it was pleasing to see how many members were more than willing to tell us where to go, and that has not changed. They are still more than happy to let us know and to tell us where to go. I did not have a description of what robust debate was when I first came into this place. I watched the toing and froing across the Chamber, but it was not until the Premier used those words to describe a conversation that took place over a barbecue in Rockhampton that I actually knew what robust debate was. I am so glad that robust debate in here is just a little less robust.

I thank most sincerely the Premier and the Opposition Leader for the courtesies they have displayed to us in this place. It has been my pleasure to support the comments of both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in commending the service of the parliamentary staff. Parliamentary leaders of all parties appreciate the loyalty, the hard work, the dedication and the professionalism of all

staff in this place. I do wish to pass on to Mr Robert Doyle, the Clerk of the Parliament, my thanks for his courtesies and the wisdom he has passed on to us.

We always receive in quantity and quality from the staff in Parliament House, and it would indeed be a very cold and unpleasant place at times if it was not for the heartfelt and generous support of its staff. They look after our many needs, and we certainly do appreciate it. In fact, because of the extent of their electorates and the inability to obtain flights, the member for Burdekin and the member for Whitsunday are often left here for longer periods of time than most. They are very appreciative of the support of the staff in this place.

I am especially thankful to the staff for their courtesies, and in particular I want to commend the parliamentary catering team, as have other speakers. The highlight of my son's rather infrequent trips to Parliament House is the warmth and generosity displayed to him, especially in the dining room where his etiquette skills are just beginning to blossom. He thanks them very much. I personally thank Jaakko and all the staff there. I say a big thankyou to Mary from Luke. To those staff: have a very happy and a very holy Christmas and a prosperous New Year from the boys in the corner, the City Country Alliance Queensland.

We would like to thank the staff of the cafeteria and the restaurant for their help in keeping us fed, the staff who do security patrols who keep us protected and safe, the night staff who keep us safe and keep our House neat and tidy and spotless and make this a home away from home, and the staff who administer our pay and the accounts that are vital to keep us out of financial hot water and forever in the black. The staff of the Parliamentary Library are always on call and provide us with the necessary and useful information we need in this place.

We would also like to thank the Hansard staff. Without them, I doubt that the Premier would ever get our name correct: it is City Country Alliance. I have to repeat it again: City Country Alliance. We do not know whether it is fear that chokes the Premier or those Cabinet documents he so well remembered us eating, but please no more choking: it is City Country Alliance. If it was not for the efforts of the Hansard staff, I doubt that anybody would know that anybody is here in this place. It would be remiss of me if I did not mention the valuable work put in for an insufferable amount of years by our retiree this year, Mr Alan Watson, whom I did not get a chance to thank personally and put on record my thanks before his retirement.

Then of course there is the media. It has had a few changes this year. Lisa Millar has taken over the reins of the media throng. While they are not on the payroll, I know they are ever present in our minds. Even though perhaps sometimes we do not wish they were there, we do wish them a very merry and happy Christmas.

We can never forget our personal staff who equip us for our duties in this House and who keep us on the straight and narrow at all times. I include both our parliamentary staff and the staff back home in our electorate offices—those who meet the public, answer the phones, work the fax machines and help build and maintain our essential public image as servants of the people. To Mary and Dianne in my Caboolture office, I thank them very, very much. To Cathy in David Dalglish's office in Hervey Bay, I know that he fully appreciates what you do there. To Kim in Harry's office in the Whitsunday, thank you. To Lyn in Jeff Knuth's office in the Burdekin, to Anita in Jack Paff's office in Ipswich West and to Cheryl in Dr Peter Prenzler's office in Lockyer, I personally wish you a very happy and a very holy Christmas. Even the Library staff at Parliament House have commented on the volume of work they do. They have endured a lot with the change to City Country Alliance, and we thank you all. I wish also to place on record my thanks to Jan Fawcett, our sessional secretary, for her unflappable character, her nimble fingers and indeed her computing skills. We would be lost without you, Jan. Thank you very much.

My best wishes go to our dedicated City Country Alliance parliamentary staff—my senior adviser, Ian Petersen; researcher Mr Rod Brown; and secretary Cheryl Proctor—who work extremely long hours and climb the highest mountains to bring us the essential professional services well beyond the call of duty. Thank you for your assistance in pushing our cause.

We sadly said goodbye to Vanessa this year, only a couple of months ago. To Vanessa, I also wish you all the best in your new family life. Thank you for the hard work you did for us during the year.

I also wish to place on record my thanks to the Independent members of this House. We often find ourselves all on the one side of the Chamber, as we did tonight. It does not get lonely, because they are great people to be there with. I sometimes think, "Well, if everybody else is on the other side from us, gee, we must be right." But I will leave that to history to decide.

There is one thing that I cannot get away with, and that is not thanking our wives and our families, who put up with us, firstly, and who are ever there in a supportive role, attending public meetings and so on for us. It would be very remiss of me if I did not personally thank my beautiful wife—who is sitting in the gallery waving to me—for her understanding. Gail, I thank you.

Mr Borbidge: She's getting hungry.

Mr FELDMAN: No, she is not getting hungry. She loves listening to my voice, don't you, Gail? She absolutely loves it. But a big thankyou from me to Gail for all those functions she has attended on my behalf. I know that you love Caboolture as I do, and I thank you for the support that you so freely give.

To all of those who serve us, I say thank you. They are appreciated, they are wanted and they are not taken for granted by us—not at all. I thank you one and all.

There is one thing I want to pass on before I finish tonight. I was not able to attend the function for the 6th RAR with the Premier today because I had to attend the funeral of a very gracious and a very good Christian man from Caboolture, Father Francis of St Michael's Church. The church is commonly known as the abbey and it is just off the Bribie Island Road. The crowd in attendance for the funeral today was over 1,500 people, and that was only a fraction of the lives that Father Francis touched. That crowd spoke more than any eulogy could have. It is just one thing I want to place on record tonight.

Father Francis was one of the first of many who rang me after my election victory, and I thank him for his support and his prayers over the years that have followed. He started the abbey and church there some 40 years ago, and his legacy will live on in the children he has taught, the baptisms and the weddings he has performed and the funerals he has attended. He was a truly godly man who has returned home to be with his Father. I know that he is at peace. Those he left behind will truly miss him, but we who were touched by his presence will never forget him.

This brings me to another quote of Benjamin Franklin: whoever will introduce into public affairs the principles of Christianity will change the face of the world. Father Francis, you did indeed change the face of a good part of the world in Caboolture and Bribie Island. Sleep well, my friend, and au revoir until we meet again.

To all the staff and the children at St Michael's, I will pray for you the peace of Christ at this time of grief and loss. I pray upon you the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:24-26. Bruce Jarvis of Traditional Funerals, your eulogy was touching, and Father Francis would not think any less of you for having to read it through your tears.

In closing, I want to say to one and all: we in City Country Alliance wish both sides of this House a very merry Christmas and a very prosperous new year in this approaching season of the Prince of Peace. May his spirit move upon you and among you, blessing you one and all. In closing, I wish all members a very heartfelt, a very happy, a very holy and a very blessed Christmas and a very bright and blessed new year.
