



## City Of Sydney Amendment (Electoral Rolls) Bill.

**Ms SYLVIA HALE** [2.34 p.m.] (Inaugural speech): I commend you, Madam President, for affirming that a reference to a "maiden" speech is both archaic and anachronistic. It is equally inappropriate to confer on members of this House the honorific "Honourable". The term is an unwarranted remnant of our colonial past whose usage should be dispensed with. I am delighted that Ian Cohen, Lee Rhiannon and I have chosen not to adopt it.

I start by paying my respects to the Eora people, the original inhabitants of this land, who have suffered so calamitously at the hands of their white dispossessors. My dismay at their ongoing maltreatment is, however, tempered by the knowledge that three years ago this month a quarter of a million Sydneysiders walked across the Sydney Harbour Bridge to demonstrate their support for reconciliation and an end to the injustices inflicted on the traditional owners of this land. As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Commissioner Pat Thompson said soon after, "When people march in such numbers, I know which side of history I want to be on."

Six weeks ago the same determination to acknowledge and protest the suffering that was about to be inflicted on innocent people saw up to half a million people take to the streets of Sydney to condemn the United States-led aggression against Iraq. The obsequiousness of the Australian Government has brought shame and dishonour upon us all. Despite this I am inspired that so many Australians have been prepared to declare so forthrightly that what is being perpetrated is "not in our name".

The Greens are as determined in our principled opposition to the invasion of Iraq as we are in our defence of the rights of refugees and in our commitment to the aspirations of the Palestinian people. The clarity and forthrightness of Greens Senators Kerry Nettle and Bob Brown on these issues formed the backdrop against which the State election was fought. Their stand—the Greens stand—is based upon recognition that social justice, environmental sustainability and grassroots democracy are but different aspects of the one whole. All are inextricably interconnected; none can be achieved in the absence of the others.

In the current political climate, it is not only these issues that are under attack. Increasingly, those who advocate for change are faced with vicious assaults upon our very right to object and to organise. On every front, from oppressive so-called anti-terrorist legislation to the government-driven media campaign against peaceful protest and unions, the right of Australians to stand up for their convictions and to demand that the powerful be accountable is under attack. The Greens are determined to protect the fundamental right to protest.

Indeed, the Greens are the inheritors of a long tradition of radical dissent within the Australian community. The very name "Greens" stems from the green bans of the 1970s. The bans were an initiative by a coalition of unionised working people and community activists to prevent the sell-off of public space and the destruction of the built environment. It is fitting that Jack Munday, one of the initiators of the green bans, should now have joined the Greens. We welcome him, as we do all people who are prepared to campaign for social justice, environmental sustainability, and grassroots democracy.

In the 30 years that have elapsed since those first green bans, the Greens have continued to build and grow to the point where we are now the acknowledged third force in Australian politics. In this unbalanced Parliament we are in many senses effectively the Opposition. We are committed to making the Executive Government more accountable. Across Australia and around the world, the Greens continue to grow as the new voice for a just and sustainable society. I join a total of 17 Greens members of Parliament in the Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia, New South Wales and both Houses of the Federal Parliament.

Recent elections have seen our numbers grow dramatically, with the election of five members of Parliament in Western Australia, four in Tasmania and, in 2001, Kerry Nettle joining Bob Brown in the Senate. In October 2002 came the stunning success of the Cunningham by-election when the Greens broke through to become the first genuine minor party since the second world war to be elected to the Federal lower House. In January 2003 we welcomed South Australian member of Parliament Kris Hanna, who left the Australian Labor Party, denouncing it for having "lost its heart and soul".

The rise of the Greens as a political force is not a purely Australian phenomenon; we are a truly global movement, with about 100 countries having Greens parties. Among the most recent is Kenya, where Wangari Maathai was recently elected to the legislature. One week ago, on May Day, the Greens returned seven members to the Scottish Parliament. Now Ian Cohen has been re-elected and I have been elected. We acknowledge the work of thousands of Greens members and supporters who laboured tirelessly in the lead-up to the election and the more than 300,000 voters who made it possible for us to be here. Our vote almost tripled and we are now the largest non-major party in this Parliament.

My own path to the Greens has been long and sometimes winding. In the early 1960s I participated intensely in university political life, where the burning issues of the day were the Sharpeville massacre and apartheid in South Africa, racial segregation in the United States of America, missiles in Cuba, and increasing United States involvement in Vietnam. In this atmosphere I joined the Australian Labor Party [ALP] on my eighteenth birthday. It is somewhat ironic that I enter Parliament at the time when many of my contemporaries, although not allies, have left or are leaving it—Johnno Johnson, Ron Dyer, Deirdre Grusovin, Laurie Brereton and Peter Nagle. They pursued parliamentary careers; I got a life.

I have worked as a spot welder, a shop assistant and a clerk, and for four years I taught in the State's public high schools. But for the most part I have pursued a business career as well as being a mother, grandmother and wife. In 1977, in the aftermath of the defeat of the Whitlam Government, Roger Barnes, John Iremonger and I established Hale and Iremonger book publishers. The company last year celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary and it is, I believe, along with Currency Press, the longest-surviving independently-owned Australian publishing company. Our aims were to publish, among other things, in the areas of Australian history, politics, women's studies and urban studies. I am proud of its publishing record and of the contribution it has made to the cultural life of the Australian community.

Some years earlier, in 1965, my husband, Roger Barnes, and I established Southwood Press, now one of the country's larger specialist book printers. Ironically, in 1972, 10 days before the election of the Whitlam Government, Southwood was attacked by the then member for Northcott in this Parliament because the company had "won the patronage of the Australia Party, the DOGS—Defence of Government Schools—the Australian Labor Party, the Teachers Federation and a limitless host of radical organisations dedicated to the overthrow of the existing order".

It is irrelevant today to remark that at the time we also numbered the former Leader of the Opposition, Peter Collins, among our clients. But what is relevant is that the issues espoused by the groups for which we printed are still as pertinent today as they were then. The war in Vietnam has been replaced by the war in Iraq—both indefensible and tragic follies. The Teachers Federation is still battling to defend public education and the working conditions of its members. State aid to private schools not only continues but flourishes as both State and Federal governments shamelessly abandon their commitment to public education in favour of public subsidies to privileged private schools.

At the end of my time at university I left the ALP after head office—the infamous room 32—intervened to prevent the Left democratically gaining control of what was then known as the ALP Youth Council. Some things never change! Business and family commitments made further involvement in party politics difficult, but it was the proposed construction of the third runway at Sydney Airport that reactivated my party political involvement. If ever there was a planning fiasco it is Sydney Airport. It is patently irrational that 970 hectares of inner-city waterfront land should be used to house aeroplanes. And to knowingly and deliberately subject the surrounding, densely populated communities of Sydney to the risks of air crash, pollution and massive loss of amenity when alternative sites for an airport are readily available is to abdicate all pretence at planning.

The lack of space is the major constraint on the airport's growth. That the Deputy Premier, the former Minister for Planning and member for Marrickville, Andrew Refshauge, should have actively connived in the airport's expansion is contemptible. Despite his pious protestations that what was known as St Peters Park would never be handed over, the Deputy Premier did just that. In the late 1990s he granted the airport a 99-year lease on the land. That Marrickville's Labor-dominated council now proposes to effectively extend the reach of the airport by rezoning the former Tempe tip site for "airport related uses" is yet another example of the rank hypocrisy and betrayal of the community that so distinguishes Labor administrations today.

My election to Marrickville Council in 1995 as a member of the No Aircraft Noise Party was a direct reflection of the community's outrage at the construction of the third runway at Sydney Airport. The policies of the No Aircraft Noise Party and of the Greens in relation to the airport are identical, as they are on many other issues. My decision to join the Greens was met with the best wishes of many No Aircraft Noise Party members and activists, with whom I continue to enjoy a strong ongoing relationship. The No Aircraft Noise Party was yet another manifestation of the Australian tradition of radicalism, activism and protest of which I am proud to be a part.

I have already referred to the green bans of the 1970s, which were a response to a developer-driven push to remake the face of Sydney. Today when people look at Woolloomooloo, The Rocks, and Kellys Bush they pay tribute to the residents and unionists who were prepared to sit in, stand up and fight off Sid Londish, his developer cronies, and the police. At the time the activists were criticised and attacked on all sides. Today there can be few people who do not rejoice in the protesters' success. It is an object lesson for us all. Those advocating social change are so often vilified and reviled at the time, only to be lauded later on. The right to protest, to say that there are alternatives, to assert that this is not the best of all possible worlds, must be encouraged and supported, not denigrated and disparaged.

Unfortunately, over the last three decades pressure from developers has not lessened but intensified, as I can

testify from my experience as a local government councillor. I am only too conscious of the acute dissatisfaction within the community with the planning policies purchased by developer donations to the big political parties. The State Government has imposed medium density on councils but the same State Government has failed to provide the adequate public transport, the mechanisms to ensure high-quality internal and public amenity, and the social infrastructure that are essential if medium density policies are to work for the community and not just for developers.

State environmental planning policy [SEPP] 1 has been used to undermine council codes limiting height, density and open space requirements. Genuine community consultation into the planning process has been denied. Who can name one environmental impact assessment in this State that has recommended that a development not go ahead? And behind the entire planning debacle looms the malign influence of developers and their political donations. Perhaps the newly elected member for Rockdale and former Sydney City Lord Mayor, Frank Sartor, will draw the Government's attention to the shonky building practices, the incomplete walls, and the non-existing fire insulation that have followed in the wake of private certification of building work—that "recipe for corruption and homeowner nightmares", as Margo Kingston so aptly put it.

The new member might show some consistency and remind the Government of the deficiencies of the Land and Environment Court which, in the words of his publication, *Unwanted Legacies*, approved a development in 1993 "that breached the city's density controls by 50 per cent and height guidelines by 15 per cent, and which in 1999 granted substantial commencements on the basis of the construction of a column and a footing which were never approved and which were subsequently removed". Regardless of what the member for Rockdale does, the Greens will move to reform the court to permit third party appeals, to remove merit assessments and to oblige the court to comply with council planning policies. We will also seek to repeal SEPP 1 and to modify SEPP 5.

My years on council have also alerted me to the problems of councillors' pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests. I am familiar with and support the workings of the Pecuniary Interests Tribunal having inadvertently failed during my first year on council to declare a pecuniary interest on the second occasion on which a particular matter came before council. I have always been amazed that, as in the case of Marrickville, a mayor can debate and vote on a development application lodged by his architect business partner and never once declare an interest. I will therefore move at the earliest opportunity a local government amendment anticorruption bill that will broaden section 443 of the Local Government Act to require councillors to avoid situations in which a private or personal interest could prejudicially influence the performance of their public duties.

That is but one issue that I will pursue. Another is securing a strong and dynamic future for the technical and further education [TAFE] system as the dominant provider of vocational education and training. Australian society has been well served by its TAFE system, which has not only stood at the heart of wealth creation but also provided opportunities for working-class people to participate in the economic and cultural life of our society. However, these massive benefits are under threat from the failure of State and Federal governments to provide adequate funding. The Greens will move to secure pro rata working conditions for part-time casual teachers, and to ensure that full-time permanency is restored as the normal employment mode.

The Greens are also committed to a fairer and more effective public health system. We will speak out against the Howard Government's attempts to destroy Medicare. We will focus on those changes that will genuinely deliver healthier outcomes for all members of our society. In this Parliament, we will argue for health promotion and illness prevention, a redirection of resources away from luxury services for the wealthy, and improved pay and conditions for nurses.

During the election campaign I encountered many things that disturbed but did not surprise me, and I will detail a few. The natural environment of far western New South Wales remains under threat, with exploitation of the brigalow belt forests and the goldmine at Lake Cowal posing threats to the ecosystem without delivering sustainable growth and employment opportunities. Aboriginal sacred sites are also being wantonly destroyed in the process. Many hundreds of non-government community organisations face closure at the end of this year because they are still unable to afford public liability insurance. The notorious TICA default tenancy database still operates. It is maintained by real estate agents and effectively blacklists tenants and prevents them from obtaining private rental accommodation. TICA's victims often lack the resources to appeal against their inclusion or to check the accuracy of the information contained in the database.

The women's refuge at Mittagong closed in November 2002 with little prospect of reopening. There is still no other source of crisis accommodation in the area and there was a crisis even before the refuge closed. In 2001, of the 343 women and children seeking assistance from the refuge only 81 were able to be accommodated, and that is one of the wealthiest areas of the State.

State and Federal governments have consistently failed to provide adequate public transport and open space for the people of Western Sydney. Nowhere is this made more obvious than by the proposed redevelopment of the Australian Defence Industries site at St Marys, where an opportunity for a centennial park for outer Western Sydney has been passed over. Most depressing of all, I learnt that homelessness is, in itself, not a qualification for any form of crisis accommodation. If the measure of a civilised society is how it treats its most vulnerable members, the presence on our streets of the homeless, the disturbed, the alcoholic and the destitute is surely the

most damning of indictments.

If there is one thing our society should cherish, it is the right to protest and speak out against such injustices. In the past week, the police and the magistracy have fulminated against the supposedly inadequate fines imposed upon Greenpeace anti-war activists who attempted to delay the departure of HMAS *Sydney* for Iraq. The Government, in keeping with its entrenched conservatism, is proposing to increase penalties for public protests on water. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 16 September 2002 noted that the rate of phone taps in Australia in 2001 was 20 times greater than the rate in the United States of America, and that figure does not include Australian Security Intelligence Organisation taps.

This federally facilitated attack on the right to privacy is consistent with this State's disregard for its citizens' civil liberties. Only the State Government is worse. In its shameless pursuit of electoral success, this Government enacted late last year the Tourism (Police Powers) Act, which allows children as young as 10 to be strip searched without a warrant and with no requirement that a parent be present. Under the Act, police can act on the merest suspicion, and they are effectively immune from legal challenge or review.

Defending the human and civil rights of people is a central concern of the Greens, as is the promotion and preservation of the rights of working people and unions. The last Parliament witnessed the disgraceful so-called reforms to workers compensation legislation. I pay tribute to Lee Rhiannon and Ian Cohen for their consistent opposition to the legislation and their refusal to cross the picket lines.

In that context, I wish to draw attention to the picket line that has for the past eight weeks surrounded the Arncliffe factory of drum manufacturer Morris McMahon and Company. The company has refused to pay award penalty rates or allowances and has rebuffed attempts to negotiate a certified agreement with its workers, most of whom are paid less than \$12 an hour. On my visits to the picket line, I have spoken to the striking employees, many of whom are process workers of non-English speaking background. I wish to publicly acknowledge their determination, solidarity and commitment in the face of major financial and physical hardship. These people represent all that I admire in the Australian character: a refusal to be browbeaten, intimidated or coerced in the face of daunting odds.

I am proud that my family has had a long association with such traditions. My great grandfather's opposition to the Boer War is reputed to have cost him his living as an Anglican minister. My grandmother, in the midst of the Great Depression when work was hard to find, quit as housekeeper to a Catholic priest in Oberon when she heard the priest berate his flock for not contributing more to the collection plate. She knew that parishioners went without while the priest was kept well fed by donations of chickens, peas and other produce. In the 1930s my mother, Jean Heathcote, worked in the offices of the Unemployed Workers Movement. A fine public speaker, she would regularly draw larger crowds than Labor member of Parliament Eddie Ward, the "firebrand of East Sydney", when she spoke at Friday night meetings outside the Darlinghurst Fire Station.

When a sign proclaiming "Hales are communists" was daubed on a wall near the small cake shop my parents ran in Newtown, my father resolutely refused to paint it out. He believed it was important not to yield to intimidation. Neither of my parents was ever a member of the Communist Party, although they were both proud to call friends those who were members as well as those, such as Jack Kavanagh, Guido Barrachi or Jack Henry, who had been expelled from the Communist Party. They were tolerant, radical, sceptical people who actively supported those who fell foul of the establishment or established dogma.

My father is dead but my mother's activism has continued unabated. Long before the oppression of the people of East Timor became well known, she campaigned, wrote letters, and attended vigils and meetings in support of East Timorese independence. When I look at my daughter Alison, my son Chris and their friends and comrades, I am proud to see that the tradition of activism and commitment to building a fairer and more just society is alive and well. There is cause to believe that the inequities and injustices of this age will continue to be opposed. I have been labelled a radical and a troublemaker. I make no apologies for my opinions, nor do I resile from my admiration for such people as Nick Origlass and Issy Wyner, who for many years so determinedly and successfully converted words and principles into deeds. I am proud to locate myself firmly in a tradition of activism, independence and dissent from received orthodoxy, whether it be of the Right or the Left.

I find it somewhat incongruous today to be a member of Parliament, an institution that many see to be a bastion of the existing order. In my youth I would have agreed with Paul Keating that upper Houses were composed of "unrepresentative will". But such is not the case today. I am here because members of this House are elected on the basis of proportional representation. Were a similar system and multi-member electorates introduced into the Assembly, the true strength of popular support for progressive politics would be immediately apparent.

The planet is in the midst of an ecological and social crisis. Climate change, depletion of natural resources, species extinction, growing social and economic inequality, the prevalence of war, brutal military dictatorships and the rise of corporate power challenge the values and assumptions of our society. The Greens are part of a growing voice that calls for community-based empowering solutions that redistribute wealth equitably. We recognise the important role of government intervention in the economy and public ownership of resources and

institutions. We recognise that global challenges require both local and global solutions. This Parliament has an important role to play in creating a just and sustainable world. This Parliament has the opportunity to create laws that could locate this State at the forefront of respect for human rights and diversity, ecological sustainability and community empowerment. Yet, as a Green, I am reminded that although laws are made by Parliament, history is made on the streets. I know which side of history I want to be on.

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