



INAUGURAL SPEECHES

The PRESIDENT: I welcome to my gallery this evening the family and friends of the Hon. John Ruddick, including the Hon. Ross Cameron, former Federal Member for Parramatta; the Hon. David Clarke, former member of the Legislative Council; Mr Tim James, member for Willoughby; Ms Tanya Davies, member for Badgerys Creek; Mr Craig Kelly, former Federal member for Hughes; Dr John Humphreys, founder of the Liberal Democratic Party; Mr Paul Barker, national president of the Liberal Democratic Party; Mr Robert Cribb, former president of the NSW Liberal Democratic Party; Mr Nathan Thomason, former president of the NSW Liberal Democratic Party; Mr Lyle Shelton, national director of the Family First Party; and Mr Michael O'Neill, leader of the Informed Medical Options Party. Most importantly, I welcome Mr Ruddick's family: Kelly, Daisy and Ruby Ruddick, and Caixin Xhao. You are all most welcome.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (18:00): There was another occasion I was to speak and the strict convention then, as now, was that I be heard without interjection. That was my inaugural speech at the Young Liberal Council a few blocks from here in 1994. I think that was just before your time at that forum, Mr President. But despite being a newbie, I launched into the most bitterly contentious factional brawl of the day. That no interjection thing was wantonly discarded.

Thus began 27 years of a highly dysfunctional relationship between the New South Wales Liberal Party and John Ruddick, multiple candidacies for the Young Liberal presidency, multiple candidacies for State and Federal party president, endless violation of that party's prohibition against speaking to the media, dozens of unsolicited emails to the entire membership about one righteous cause after another, multiple expulsion attempts that were all deftly dodged, and two constitutional reform battles that went on for years and climaxed in apparent triumph only to see the factions soon devise ways to skirt the new rules. To top it all off, in 2018 I wrote a book explaining how everything the Liberal Party organisation was doing was completely wrong. But I do sincerely thank my colleagues here from my former party for their warm welcome to this place. There is no surer way to mend years of factional strife than quitting for good and joining a better party. I feel like Switzerland—peace with all!

I first heard of the Liberal Democrats in 2012 when Clinton Mead, who is here tonight, was elected a mayor. I devoured their website and said, "Hallelujah". I was tempted to defect a few times but did not quite bite the bullet, still betting that the best bet for small government was reform of the Liberal Party. In mid-2021 that changed. State and Federal Liberal governments did four things that made me throw in the towel. The first was the authoritarian COVID police state—all over a bad flu. Bad flus are bad. Bad flus happen from time to time but we treated COVID as though it was Ebola. The COVID fatality rate in New South Wales was 0.13 per cent. While it was at the upper end of what we expect each winter—maybe a little bit more—to call COVID a pandemic was an insult to pandemics.

The average age of a COVID fatality in Australia is higher than the average life expectancy. The New South Wales Government locked citizens in quarantine just for being near a COVID-positive person. Many want to move on from COVID; I do not. Elements in the media tell us there is another pandemic around the corner and that it will be worse than COVID. I am sceptical. But if true, surely we need a royal commission into the last time a pandemic was declared so we can learn. Sweden alone resisted the hysteria. Masks, lockdowns and vaccines were recommended but not compelled. Sweden trusted its citizens and Sweden has had Europe's lowest increase in excess deaths over the past three years. I have respected Peter Costello and Tony Abbott for most of my life. Both have now spoken out forcefully about the COVID madness, but the Liberal Party's best only found the courage to do so after the crisis had passed. The police, and even the army and helicopters, forbade us to leave our homes to get sunshine, fresh air and exercise, but that radical right-wing newspaper *The New York Times* told us in July 2021 that not one person in the world had caught COVID in an outdoor environment.

The second disappointment was vaccine extremism. On 26 July 2021 the Liberal Premier of New South Wales announced a two-week lockdown. Two weeks morphed into many months and a diabolical catch was added: We will not let you out until you take multiple injections of not only a rushed vaccine but an entirely new class of vaccine. Most relented, but everyone got COVID anyway. Last year NSW Health published weekly data showing the fewer vaccines you had, the less likely you went to hospital or an intensive care unit. The fatality rate was similar for the vaxxed and the unvaxxed. Since the vaccine rollout there has been a 15 per cent to 20 per cent increase in excess deaths in nations like Australia that had the mass mRNA injections. Is it the vaccine or the bitter hangover from locking people up for so long? We do not know. But either way, it is almost certainly the result of poor governance and yet another reason for a COVID royal commission.

The Commonwealth Government is still recommending a fifth vaccine, but barely anyone is listening. Too many know of others who had bad reactions. I suspect few even in this Chamber have lined up for their fifth injection, so they are now doing what we were scolded for doing—thinking for oneself. Ivermectin is a medicine made from the compounds found in the soil of Japan. Prior to COVID Ivermectin had been prescribed for humans not four million times but four billion times. It is such a wonder drug that the inventors won the 2015 Nobel Prize for Medicine. Soon after COVID arrived various researchers around the world began noticing Ivermectin may be unusually helpful in treating COVID patients. But Big Pharma was alarmed. If Ivermectin worked, it was too cheap to make squillions from. So Big Pharma told politicians to not only ban it for sale but also claim Ivermectin is only a horse dewormer.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration [TGA] is a Commonwealth agency that has the authority to say whether a new drug is permitted to be sold in this country or not. I assumed the TGA's funding came from taxpayers, but I recently learnt that 97 per cent comes from pharmaceutical companies. This is a textbook example of a conflict of interest. The TGA's website today admits it has received over 137,000 COVID vaccine injury reports. Many drugs are pulled from the market after 137 injuries. For any drug the number of reported vaccine injuries is a fraction of the actual injuries.

In the gallery today is Stephen McDonald, director of the Australian Firefighters Alliance, who represents firies who are still not able to work because of COVID vaccine mandates. Stephen Kelly and Roland Crystal, longstanding police officers who were sacked for not submitting to the Big Pharma State, are also here. I understand new police recruits are not asked about their vax status but those stood down are not yet reinstated. John Larter, a paramedic of 25 years who was sacked for not taking the vaccine, is here too. He represents many other paramedics. Tony Nikolic is also here. He has heroically defended those people and many others in the legal system. It has been a thankless task but one day when the COVID fog has lifted I will nominate Mr Nikolic for an Order of Australia. I urge the Minns-Sharpe Government to follow the lead of jurisdictions around the world and remove those pointless, cruel vaccines.

My third disappointment with the Liberal Party was government debt. Historically Liberal governments have generally had a good economic record, but the recent State and Federal Liberal governments racked up eye-popping public debt which will weigh down New South Wales and the nation for years. When Labor handed over power in this State to the Coalition in 2011, it left a modest debt of \$7 billion. The new Government inherited a projected debt of \$187 billion. It is a similar story in Canberra. It is all appalling. My fourth disappointment was that despite most Liberal parliamentarians privately acknowledging a net-zero carbon economy is a reckless folly, they capitulated anyway because the polls said so. Real leaders do not follow polls; they change them. I must put on the record that with all the disappointments of my former party, the Labor Opposition in most cases criticised the Coalition for not being more disappointing.

Yes, I am encouraged by the rhetoric of the new Government around budget repair. But sorry, I am sceptical. There have been very few Labor figures since 1901 who cut spending, deregulated industry and had a pro-free enterprise approach. But when they have done so, such as Bob Hawke, Paul Keating, Peter Walsh, Michael Costa and ALP-ish Joe Lyons, their governments enjoyed electoral success. There is a free tip to the Government.

When I showed up at Liberal Democrat meetings, I found what I had always hoped to find in a political party. Libertarians are widely read, extremely diverse, big-picture thinking and passionate about a better future, plus there is an oversupply of supreme intellectual know-alls who think nothing of having a two-hour argument about whether Ayn Rand is better than Milton Friedman. Spoiler alert: She is. The Liberal Democrats are a libertarian party. We libertarians are plotting to take over the world so we can leave you all alone. Libertarianism can be summed up in two words: Power corrupts. We believe in the inherent morality of capitalism simply because that is what people will spontaneously do when left alone. The worst atrocities of history were not the result of drought, flood, pestilence or plague but of big government throwing its weight around like an elephant stomping on ants. Scepticism of government does not make you a conspiracy theorist; it makes you a history buff.

The relationship between the State and the citizen is a Yin and Yang. The bigger the State is, the more stunted citizen potential. The smaller the State, the more dynamic the citizens. Today's gold medallist in the libertarian Olympics is Switzerland. It is not a libertarian utopia, but for generations the Swiss have enjoyed the least intrusion from government and thrived on all fronts. The Swiss economy is the second most deregulated in the world behind Singapore and has one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. Switzerland has the fourth lowest tax rate in the OECD. Free speech is constitutionally guaranteed. Unlike Australia, the Swiss have a true federation.

Switzerland has a population similar to New South Wales, but power is devolved down to 26 States or what they call cantons. Most political power is held by the cantons, which experiment and learn from each other. Our State governments are largely welfare dependents off a central government far bigger than what the now forgotten but noble Federation-sceptics who dominated this Chamber in the 1890s feared Federation would lead to. Contentious laws in Switzerland are decided by citizen-initiated referendums. We prefer citizen-initiated vetos, but I will leave that for an adjournment debate. The Swiss Government has nothing to do with health care, except for giving low income earners a voucher that they use to purchase insurance from a dynamic private marketplace. Over 99 per cent of the Swiss have health insurance and—surprise, surprise—enjoy the world's best health statistics in the world.

The Swiss are cautious with social reforms, but cannabis is becoming legal. Libertarians make no moral judgement on the rights or wrongs of cannabis. We want public debate, but we do not want a busybody government threatening punishment over cannabis use. To the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham I say, "When you need a vote on this issue, you have one locked in." Swiss households have one of the world's highest firearm ownership rates, but Switzerland also has the world's lowest murder rate. Those firearms deter criminal behaviour, government overreach and invasion. To my colleagues in the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party I say, "When you need a vote on that issue, you have one locked in too."

What libertarians like most about Switzerland is its 500-year-old tradition of staying the hell out of war. Barring a brief Napoleonic incursion, Switzerland has not been invaded. When the armies of death marched across Europe during World War I, World War II and the Cold War, they did not think to invade Switzerland. Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky recently addressed the Swiss parliament and demanded the Swiss renege on their ancient tradition and fund his side of the war. Half the Swiss parliament walked out and rightly urged all sides in that conflict to agree to peace talks immediately. Perhaps Switzerland is so successful because it has not sent its finest young men out to get slaughtered every second generation.

The Swiss are, however, stellar global citizens. In the nineteenth century a Christian businessman from Geneva, Jean-Henri Dunant, was on his way to a meeting in Italy when he came across a horrific sight: 40,000 dead and wounded lay where a battle had just been fought. No-one was providing any care. Dunant cancelled his travel and spent days doing all he could to alleviate suffering. Deeply disturbed, he returned home, called a meeting of other Christian businessmen and gave the world the Red Cross, which today has 16 million volunteers. The Red Cross was not an initiative of the Swiss Government but of private individuals and is the most successful charity in human history. Government programs come and go but the Red Cross demonstrates the best of Christianity and the best of privately organised welfare.

This is a State Parliament, Mr President, but please indulge me to make a point about a foreign policy matter that has the potential to cause catastrophe to New South Wales. Libertarians are concerned at the endless arms build-up in the Asia-Pacific. Our leaders tell us that China is muscling up and expansionist. Chinese leaders tell their citizens that the West is muscling up and expansionist. Both are correct. I fear a July 1914 succession of events that sees the Asia-Pacific stumble into a pointless war. With today's weapons and Asia's population, the death toll from such a war could exceed that of World War II. Assuming Australia was not reduced to rubble in the process, we would be overwhelmed with millions of refugees.

I am sympathetic to former Prime Minister Paul Keating's concerns about our monstrous spending on weapons that are designed not to defend but to attack. The most dangerous person on earth, we are told, is Julian Assange. But if journalist Assange was free to publish his criticisms of the world's war machines, we would all be safer: #FreeAssange. The two American presidents in my lifetime who the experts said would be the most dangerous on the world stage were Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump. But both defied the foreign policy establishment and reached out to historic adversaries, became friends with once hostile leaders and calmed geopolitical tension. Libertarians are not pacifists. When a delusional regime says they want world domination, like the Nazis, Imperial Japan or the Soviet Union, then they obviously leave us no choice. But we agree with Winston Churchill that jaw-jaw is almost always better than war-war. Australia is a proudly western nation with Asia-Pacific geography. We are therefore best placed to lead the campaign to de-escalate superpower tension in the Asia-Pacific.

Another reason libertarians do not like big government is because mankind is from time to time subject to irrational, harmful mass delusions, especially when melded with big government. COVID is merely the latest case study. One of the benefits of separating church and State was that if a religious grouping did get delusional at least the delusion was contained and not magnified by State power. Let me tell the story of William Buckley, an escaped convict who was warmly adopted by an Aboriginal tribe in the Geelong area. Buckley spent 32 years living in the Australian bush and then walked into the Port Phillip Bay colony in the 1830s. Buckley expected to be punished by the English group for being an escapee, but the English were fascinated by his account and employed him to foster good relations with the Aboriginals.

Buckley wrote a gripping book that contains an episode where his tribe and the surrounding tribes were in a mortal panic. Those tribes held the supernatural belief that the world was held up by a powerful man who used ropes to keep things in place at the end of the world. There was panic because the word had gotten around that the strong man was getting weary and, if every tribe did not immediately send him all their food, tools and weapons, the world would definitely implode. Buckley's tribe and others around furiously obeyed and handed over everything they had and then raced atop a mountain, hoping it might provide some protection if the implosion came. Buckley wrote of the episode:

... but who the knowing old juggling receiving thief, I could never make out. However, it is only one of the same sort of robberies which are practised in the other countries of what is called Christendom.

Buckley was correct: Mass delusions are a universal phenomenon. The pyramids of Egypt are impressive, but the Pharaohs likely concocted an apocalyptic delusion to con countless poor souls to spend their lives in backbreaking work to build fancy graves. Half a millennia ago, the then all-powerful church convinced the peasants of Europe their relatives were suffering in hell, but if they handed over money to the church then they would get an escape pass. "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs." This indulgences scam went on for centuries. It was a powerful elite tricking and robbing the poor and laughing in luxury.

I know this is not the view of this Chamber but please hear me out because, occasionally, minority positions are vindicated with time. Is the global warming orthodoxy yet another mass delusion, turbocharged by big government? We are not allowed to question global warming science but, if we cannot question it, is it science or propaganda? Those who insist on questioning it are not just told they are wrong; they are heretics who must be punished. Since the 1980s we have been bombarded with predictions around rising temperatures, rising oceans and shrinking ice caps. These predictions are not materialising. At most, it is a zigzagged, one degree Celsius rise in 150 years. This is a remarkably stable era for temperature compared to the geological record. Every time there is a natural disaster, we are told that this is proof of global warming but, in every case, a sober analysis reveals these calamities are in line with natural cycles.

Surely, if we are going to embark on re-engineering the world's energy supply, we should ask the hard questions. Why was global warming rebadged as climate change? Is it because the warming did not arrive? We were promised cheaper energy through privately funded renewable energy, but we have ever-soaring power prices despite endless government subsidies. That trendline is unending. Why are the promoters so hostile to nuclear energy when everybody agrees nuclear is the least carbon-emitting energy source? Is it because the promoters are not invested in nuclear? Should we blindly listen to characters like Al Gore and Greta Thunberg, who have zero qualifications in this field? Gore has successfully cultivated an image. He is a Gandhi or Mother Teresa type of figure but, over a decade ago, *The New York Times* speculated that Gore was the world's first carbon billionaire. Gandhi and Mother Teresa, of course, led penniless lives. Are carbon credit schemes the indulgences of our time? For 130 years the Labor Party has striven to defend low-income earners—the battlers that today are struggling while making rich people richer.

When it is pointed out that perhaps the science is not as settled as we are told, some get upset. But surely it would be a good thing if we were not facing a global warming apocalypse, wouldn't it? It seems like some want to press ahead regardless of reality because it is in their commercial and political interests to do so. The 1960s saw the rise of a new movement—environmentalism. That once-fringe movement has won the debate around clean energy and protection of what is left of our natural world. I fear that that good movement has been conflated with and hijacked by a money-making scheme called global warming.

In 2009 I found myself not far from here in a reasonably friendly private debate with a high-profile climate change activist. In the middle of her berating my scepticism, she casually threw her cigarette butt on the street. It was a small incident, but it revealed so much. The climate change movement has become disconnected from real-world environmentalism. The political forces across the western world who spent the twentieth century advocating for the big government utopia of socialism, disappointingly, did not learn from the collapse of socialism in the early 1990s and, overnight, morphed into "Let's now have a big powerful government to save us all from global warming." They have forgotten that the nations with the most degraded natural environments are the once-socialist utopias. My preference would have been for environmentalism to have branched out into advocating for animal welfare and the protection of endangered species and native forests. But there is no money to be made in those noble causes.

Human domination of the planet is, on balance, a good thing. We are the only species smart enough to protect all life from asteroid impacts et cetera. But, that said, we have established safe domains for our families now, so we do have a moral obligation to protect the remaining species and untouched pockets of nature. When I fly interstate, I insist on a window seat. I see endless productive farms that sustain us all. I see some untouched native forests and bush, and I want my descendants, for the next millennia, to enjoy and learn from those sacred places. Okay, Mr President, we are into the final stretch and, yes, I have saved the best for last.

I want to make the most radical statement said in this Chamber's 200-year history. There is an element in my party that advocates for an entirely government-free society—a movement, founded by Murray Rothbard, known as anarcho-capitalism. It could also be called libertarianism on steroids. Anarcho-capitalists believe the best use of this beautiful Chamber is as museum—privately owned, of course. It is, at first glance, a shocking view, but one I am increasingly open to. Would a government-free society based on voluntary interaction be more humane, safe, vibrant, diverse and successful? I think it might, and it is definitely worth exploring. Anarcho-capitalists are not revolutionaries; they certainly do not want social chaos. Even when my party wins towering majorities at the 2027 State election, government would be something that would be steadily phased out over decades and with democratic consent.

Government gets its power over the people courtesy of its control over a massive supply of weapons. Elections merely confer control over those weapons. If someone, for example, refuses to pay a humble parking ticket, eventually government will force payment or incarceration under threat of violence. This is what underpins the state—legalised coercion. All government executive action is done by people—people who are paid to act with money taken from taxpayers under duress. Anarcho-capitalism envisions a more moral society underpinned by voluntary actions and agreements. It is hard to measure the size of government today but, when Federal, State and local government is collated, it is likely around 50 per cent of our GDP. This is getting us ever closer to George Orwell's nightmare. It may well be that, after a few decades of steadily shrinking the government, we get the government down to say 5 to 10 per cent of GDP, but then the democratic consensus is that we cannot cut any further. To find that sweet spot we should set out on the journey with the goal of a 0 per cent government.

Here are some of the initial steps we would take. Firstly, libertarians win every State and Federal election over the next four years. We would then abolish all forms of middle-class welfare. Few government programs are more perverse than taking money from taxpayers, churning it through the bureaucracy and giving part of it back. I always thought that, when I came to this place, I would be voting with the Liberal Party 90 per cent of the time. They keep trying to support middle-class welfare, so I hope they can get back to their original founding principles. We would adopt a Swiss-style healthcare system, which I mentioned earlier. We would abolish the Department of Education and replace it with a school voucher system, which has been successfully rolled out across the United States—just over the past year or two. The police may be more efficient and responsive if they were private firms that people pay for via an insurance premium. Our court system is woefully slow, inefficient and expensive. It mostly serves the wealthy. But what if those entering a contract agree to what private court has jurisdiction to settle disputes? Private courts would compete for business by building a reputation for wise, impartial judgement and efficiency.

But how would the poor be cared for? The current big-government welfare programs do not have a great record in lifting the poor out of poverty. Anarcho-capitalism would result in most people being significantly wealthier. Good people would come together, pool resources and employ talented staff whose objective is not to tick a bureaucratic box but to genuinely get people back on their productive feet. It may even be possible to have a sufficient defence capacity organised via voluntary contributions and private businesses—but that is, obviously, questionable. What is not questionable is the superiority of the innovative and efficient Uber over heavily regulated taxis. There are other government services that anarcho-capitalists believe will deliver an Uber-style upgrade in the quality of service delivery.

Anarcho-capitalism has a favourable view of human nature and an unlimited belief in our potential. One thing is certain about this planet: All stars have a finite life span and, one day, our fabulous sun will stop shining and we will need another planet. We need to maximise human brilliance and reach for other worlds in the millennia to come. A million years ago, one of our genius ancestors worked out how to start a fire, and since then we have invented the internet, split the atom and explored the solar system. What can we achieve in the coming million years? I am increasingly attracted to the view that we will tap humanity's highest potential via a government-free voluntary-based society.

Within libertarian circles it is said, "Everybody agrees with us in hindsight." Here are five examples. One, Western political parties spent most of the twentieth century split between democratic socialism and Keynesianism. It was the fringe libertarians who articulated the benefits and the morality of free enterprise. Socialism in its various forms killed 100 million people in the twentieth century and Keynesianism gave us stagnation, but Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, Ayn Rand and others in the 1960s and the 1970s began winning public support, which triumphed in the leadership of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Between 1979 and the 2009 subprime crisis, free enterprise dominated the world's economics debate, and it lifted billions out of poverty.

Two, libertarians make no judgement on gay marriage, but we campaigned in favour of marriage freedom when Barack Obama and Julia Gillard were publicly opposed. Three, I was initially wrong on this one, but the libertarians were against this century's catastrophic Middle Eastern wars of choice. Four, we were against taxpayers recklessly bailing out banks in the subprime crisis and lumping us all around the world with debt, which has only ratcheted up since. Five, we are instinctively on the side of minorities being bullied by the State and popular culture. If we are correct in the rear-view mirror, surely libertarianism should be given some degree of deference going forward. Mr President, I ask my parliamentary colleagues, who are now convinced they too should become a libertarian, to form an orderly queue out the front of my office where I will help them complete a membership form. Thank you.

Members and officers of the House stood and applauded.

The PRESIDENT: I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 8.00. p.m.