



**Tin Hut to Marble Halls - from year 12 to parliament house
14 October 2009**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders) (15:16): As the 2009 school year draws to a close, and young people everywhere are contemplating their future after school, I am contemplating my career in politics drawing to a close. After some words of advice, I will tell my story from tin hut to marble halls.

To all students young and old, first, believe in yourself, set short and long-term goals, believe you can make a difference and embrace lifelong learning. When I was a school leaver, never would I have ever imagined that one day I would be a member of state parliament elected to represent the wonderful people living on Eyre Peninsula.

The first six years of my life were spent in Lock, initially living in a corrugated iron house, built in a day, I am told, by my father and uncle. It was located behind the garage my parents bought after dad returned from serving in Papua New Guinea during the war. Later, my father purchased a farm because he wanted to be a farmer, like his father. Sadly, his family farm near Port Broughton was sold when he was about nine, after his three brothers were killed in the First World War.

The Lock school went only to grade 7 in those days, so many children did not go beyond that grade. Even so, many have gone on to be very successful as farmers, fishers, businesspeople, professionals and academics—one even a judge. Despite money being very short, at the age of 12 I was able to attend Port Lincoln High School, boarding initially with my grandmother and later at the Bush Church Aid Hostel. I was desperately homesick, but I rarely went home as it was too far away and over dirt roads.

After school, I studied at Wattle Park Teachers College in Adelaide for two years and, in May 1966, as a bonded schoolteacher I was sent to Tumbay Bay. It was there I met and married Geoff, who farmed there with his father at the time. In 1969, we went to Papua New Guinea to fast-track ourselves in different careers. Over the next 6½ years, we had two children, worked and studied. I volunteered in a Cheshire Home for the disabled, and we both taught English as a second language. We also travelled for three months through Europe, Scandinavia, Britain and Ireland.

When we returned to Australia, we put our studies into practice and, for the next 10 years, I was the manager of our accounting practice, dealing with a wide range of people and businesses, and became director of several family companies. I started work by necessity as Geoff was being treated in Adelaide for cancer, but we had two small children, a house and an accounting practice to pay off.

Volunteering has always been part of my life, and I encourage all young people to volunteer their time and expertise. At the end of the day, by this experience you will get far more back than you ever give. You will have the opportunity to meet new people, work for those less fortunate and have lots of fun along the way, while gaining invaluable skills and experience.

Back in Australia, I was a volunteer secretary at Pioneer Park in Port Lincoln, and I became President of the Port Lincoln Liberal Party branch, as I realised that politics affects everything in our life. One of our successes included the establishment of the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme. Our branch put a resolution asking for government assistance for travel expenses to get country people to specialists in Adelaide for treatment. The Liberal and Labor

parties agreed and when the Tonkin Liberal government got in, the PAT scheme began, which is so appreciated by rural people to this day.

After 10 years in the accounting practice, I studied real estate sales through TAFE in Port Lincoln. I also started my own business in management, helping to develop one of the first micro computer stock and debtor control programs. I wrote a handbook for this system, used by Canon computer staff for training, which was the subject of an article written by Malcolm Newell in the business section of *The Advertiser* in the 1980s.

It was during a coffee break discussion when I was teaching a 'running a small business for women' course at TAFE when I discovered that country women needed better access to breast cancer scanning. From these discussions, I researched and eventually was put on to a doctor in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. From this contact, and the actions of many others, funds were raised for the first mobile breast cancer screening unit in South Australia, which later saved my life.

I joined the Lower Eyre Enterprise Committee, becoming chairman for a time. This committee was later superseded by the current Eyre Regional Development Board.

Every bit of knowledge I gained during those very busy years I have used during the 16 amazing years that I have been in parliament. It bemuses me to regularly be described as a former school teacher and public servant prior to being in politics, when those activities only accounted for about five years of more than 40 years in the paid workforce. Life, its experiences, our attitude to it and the choices that we make count for much more than the labels people put on us, as school leavers soon begin to discover.

I suspect that I have more experience than most people across a wide variety of fields, even if my grammar and pronunciation does not meet the approval of the current Attorney-General from time to time.

Time expired.

Rest of speech:

When I stood for Flinders it was because there were no males wanting to put their hand up. At the time, no one thought a woman could do the job, but I took up the challenge, set my goals and believed in my abilities. I have done my utmost to represent every person living in my electorate to the best of my ability throughout the past 16 years.

There have been many challenges along the way, including dealing with breast cancer, but there have been wonderful times too.

Like year 12 students, I am now leaving what I have known for a long time, but I look forward to the future and will embrace new challenges as they come my way. I encourage all school leavers to have the confidence to believe in themselves so that they can reach their full potential.

REDMOND, MRS I.M.
29 September 2009

Ms CHAPMAN (Bragg) (11:30): It is with pleasure that I move: That this house congratulates the member for Heysen on becoming the first female leader of a major political party in South Australia

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders) (12:01): In taking over the leadership of the South Australian Liberal Party team, the member for Heysen, Isobel Redmond, enters a long list of firsts for the Liberal Party in South Australia. It is a tribute to the confidence that the Liberal Party places in its women members, a confidence that I freely acknowledge needs to grow.

Liberal women have always been at the forefront of political and social action and were active in the movement that brought about the decision in 1894 to give women the vote and the right to stand for parliament. While New Zealand beat South Australia to the punch in giving the vote to women in 1893, South Australia was the first to allow women to stand for parliament.

Voting rights for women were introduced into international law in 1948 when the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 21 includes the statement:

Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly through freely chosen representatives. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Women's suffrage—that is the right to vote—is also explicitly stated as a right under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted by the United Nations in 1979.

When the Commonwealth of Australia was founded in 1901, some women were given voting rights because this right existed in South Australia. In 1902, the right was extended to all non-Aboriginal women. As far as I can ascertain, Aboriginal men always had the vote in South Australia and, when women were given the vote, that right included indigenous women.

Liberal women have always been involved in the community. In 1913, the Liberal Women's Branch Committee initiated a parliamentary delegation to the Women's Non-Party Political Association which, after seven years, secured the appointment of the first woman, Catherine Helen Spence, to the Destitute Board of South Australia.

In 1924, Agnes Goode (nee Knight) was the first woman to be endorsed by a political party. I was intrigued to find that she had a link with Eyre Peninsula. In 1896, she married William Edward Goode, a sheep farmer from Port Lincoln. She moved the family to Adelaide in 1915. One source said this was possibly because her husband was an unreliable manager.

In World War I, she was founding vice-president of the Women's State Recruiting Committee. She served terms as secretary and president of the Liberal Women's Education Association and, in 1916, became a justice of the peace and a member of the state Children's Council. From 1919, she presided over the state Children's Court and would have won the support of all who take up the catch cry 'tough on crime'.

Other achievements include being a councillor of St Peter's Corporation, an official visitor to the Parkside Mental Hospital, the Adelaide Gaol and its Convicted Inebriates Institution. Other groups and interests were poetry, theatre, Aborigines, housewives, unemployed women, travellers, local industries and kindergartens.

In 1955, Senator Nancy Buttfeld (later Dame Nancy) became the first South Australian woman in the Australian parliament. She was known for her advocacy of women's rights. It is said that, with the encouragement of Liberal Prime Minister Robert Menzies, she broke down long-established barriers in Old Parliament House by becoming the first woman to drink at the previously male-only members' bar.

The year 1959 was a stellar year for women in politics in general, and Liberal women in particular, with the election of Joyce Steele to the House of Assembly and Jessie Cooper to the Legislative Council, both the first women to hold those positions. My husband's mother was from the Steele family, and his family took a great interest in Joyce and politics in general. When we were married, his interest in politics became mine and probably led me to entering parliament in 1993.

Both Joyce and Jessie made their maiden speeches in moving the Address in Reply in July 1959. Some things have not changed over the years. Typically, the first thing Joyce and Jessie were asked by reporters was how they would handle their domestic duties and politics. Similarly, in some of the first articles that appeared about the member for Heysen in her new role as leader of the Liberal Party in South Australia, the reporter's interest in hairstyle and dress was at the forefront.

However, it is her standards of political behaviour as a role model for our community that is of more interest to me, and her stand on swearing I hope will be a watershed that will see better language standards adopted both state and federally. I and many Australians were disgusted with the poor example (as reported in the *Sunday Mail* on 20 September) recently provided by the Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, when speaking to his colleagues. His bullying and intimidating behaviour from the top gives licence to others, making them believe that it is acceptable in our society to verbally abuse others, including wives and children.

In the same newspaper on the same day, there was a report on the foul language used on radio by Bob Francis when speaking to an elderly lady, who was brave enough to complain about his language on air. That behaviour was brushed aside by his employer FIVEaa as 'typical of Francis' and by the man himself with the statement that his audience would not be offended because 'they know what to expect', which shows a lack of respect for other people and is blatant bullying and intimidating.

In the same edition, there was another article about a young father, Tim Hilfery, who was lamenting that he would not be able to take his young son to the soccer—which is desperately trying to promote itself as a family-friendly game—after witnessing the shocking language and behaviour of fans from both sides. He commented that the police—forced to stand in the middle of these two groups of posturing, snarling morons—seemed unable or unwilling to do anything.

Is it surprising when our standards of acceptable behaviour towards other people have fallen so low that even the Prime Minister does not see verbal abuse as a problem, thereby condoning it? No code of conduct in schools, sport and parliament can reverse the damage done by such acceptance, and I commend the member for Heysen for her stand.

The legislated male dominance in the South Australian parliament did not go down without a fight. Immediately prior to the 1959 state election Frank Chapman and a colleague challenged the right of women to stand for election to the Legislative Council on the basis that the use of the pronoun 'he' in South Australia's constitution must be interpreted as excluding women.

Five days before the election the court ruled that the issue must be decided by the parliament. Mrs Cooper won the election comfortably. The opposition then joined with the government of Sir Thomas Playford to pass retrospective legislation, enacted as the Constitution Amendment Act 1959, affirming women's rights to stand for both houses of South Australia's parliament.

Liberal women continue to achieve. In 1966, Liberal candidate Kay Brownbill was the first South Australian woman elected to the House of Representatives, and in 2006 Senator Amanda Vanstone became South Australia's longest serving female cabinet minister. And, now, in another Liberal first the party has elected a woman leader, Isobel Redmond, the first woman to lead a major political party in South Australia.

In Isobel we have a person with honesty and integrity and a strong interest, commitment and proven dedication to community. She has a strong sense of social justice, a quality instilled in her and her family from a young age that has been a driving factor throughout her life. Her experience in the legal profession, as a mother, a community person, as shown by her 28 years on her local hospital board, and since 2002 as a dedicated member of parliament representing the electorate of Heysen, have all shaped her in being the remarkable and diverse woman that she is.

Her knowledge across portfolio areas, including responsibility as shadow attorney-general, shadow minister for families and communities, housing, disability, ageing, justice, the arts, road safety and multicultural affairs, are all testament to her ability to tackle new issues with enthusiasm, passion and intelligence.

Mrs Redmond's understanding of both city and country issues come from her experience in living in the Hills community close to the city but working in a legal capacity in the city. In this role she provided legal representation for Aboriginal communities in the Far North-West of the state, where she is equally comfortable. Her approachability and ability to get to the kernel of a matter will be assets in the tasks she is undertaking, and her communication and listening skills are invaluable as a leader for the future.

The trust placed in her by her colleagues is an indication of the high regard that the Liberal Party places on women and on their practical involvement in politics, especially as members of parliament. The Liberal Party has a track record that we can be justifiably proud of. It will be interesting to read a retrospective of the life and achievements of our leader, Isobel Redmond, member of Heysen, in years to come. I congratulate her on past achievements, and I look forward to addressing her as 'premier' before long.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

JOINT COMMITTEE ON WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT
11 July 1996

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I congratulate the members of the Joint Committee on Women in Parliament for their comprehensive report, and I congratulate the South Australian Parliament for setting up and supporting this committee. Questioning the number of women in Parliament is recognition of a growing awareness of the mutuality of women and men in effective Government. Men and women often look at things differently; therefore, to have both views represented adequately is beneficial to the Government and the whole community. Traditionally, decision making (whether it be in the home, at work, in Government—at local, State and Federal level—in leisure or voluntary pursuits) has been a male province. It was a reflection of the idea that women and men did different work, with men's work valued and women's work devalued.

There have been many changes over the past few decades. The idea that certain jobs are not done by true men and that certain avenues are closed to true women is wavering—but it is still strong. We are seeing a change in attitude where some couples choose for the husband to stay at home and be a house husband, while the woman earns the family income. More people are coming to realise that this arrangement does not demean males nor does it disempower them; it is a visible recognition of partnering. Nevertheless, it is the women who most often bear the responsibility for family, thus ending up with a dual responsibility when they choose a parliamentary career or some other full-time work. As the member for a rural electorate, I must point out the additional stresses due to travelling and being away from home overnight—something with which urban members do not have to cope. It cannot be denied that children and family responsibilities work against a political career for women when children are young.

The committee has rightly identified the problems of juggling family life with life as a member of Parliament. Nevertheless, I do not believe that child care facilities and altering parliamentary sitting times will necessarily attract more women—particularly country women—to Parliament. The committee's recommendation on child care facilities and for space for members to meet with their families in sitting times relate more to city-based members and are largely irrelevant for country members. Nevertheless, I support the committee's recommendation in its interim report that space be made available for members to meet with their families. Parents make a considered decision to have children, and children should be given a priority of care until they move out of the family home or when they no longer require parental care.

It seems more appropriate for a couple to decide on who will be the main care giver for the children, particularly during the children's early years. What is required is a change in societal mores. While there have been isolated instances of change, such as the previous reference to 'house husbands', I do not believe there has been a widespread change in community attitude. What would advantage women is more male role models, whereby men could see that staying at home and caring for the children and home did not negate or destroy their manhood. However, I cannot name a high profile male role model in this sphere—although, on occasions, my husband Geoff has jokingly been referred to as Dennis, after Dennis Thatcher.

The heavier workload of a member of the governing Party has not been picked up in the report. The morning prior to the House's sitting is often devoted to meetings; therefore, changes to the sitting hours will transfer this work to some other time, possibly late at night, resulting in no effective change to the time spent in Parliament. Spreading sitting hours over more days would again disadvantage rural members, who would then be forced to spend less time in their electorates and with their families. I believe that a deeper and more fundamental change is required for women to consider a parliamentary career than tinkering with sitting dates or providing child-care facilities. While these can and do have an effect in some cases, they do not address the root causes of women's not being represented in Parliament.

I support the committee's recommendation that the Federal Government designate the cost of child-care as a fully tax deductible campaign expense. The Commonwealth Women's Parliamentary Group looked at the barriers to women's participation in Parliament and noted a recommendation from the Canadian Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing that I believe would be worth implementing in Australia, namely:

Ensure that all public and private employees have the right to an unpaid leave of absence, with non-salary benefits, during the election period to seek a nomination and to be a candidate.

I now turn to the issue of education about our parliamentary system. This is an area where change should take place. Our children should know how our system of Government works, including the process of selection and election of candidates and the work that members of Parliament do. When we talk about education there is an immediate fear that educators will use their influence and position to promote their own political beliefs and the Party they support. Unfortunately, there is substance to these fears. A teacher in Port Lincoln who was criticised for promoting in the classroom the Party he supported commented that he believed he had the right to do so in the school and that it was up to those with differing views to present

those views. Such an attitude does not inspire confidence in the school education system to provide a balanced, unbiased and non-Party promotional understanding of politics, yet ignorance does nothing for anyone. Therefore, the negatives have to be identified and negated, if not completely then as much as possible.

Children are influenced by the ideas that they absorb throughout their school years. One of the ways of increasing the number of women in Parliament is to present it as a career option for girls. Education about the parliamentary system can then guide a choice of study; for example, law, business and journalism are three valuable streams. I support the committee's recommendation on education.

I note the committee's feeling that the parliamentary bear pit is so alien to women that it is a barrier to women's standing for Parliament. I do not believe that that on its own is any more a barrier than that a career in correctional services would be anathema to some, while others would be unable to face the stress and blood of an operating theatre. In fact, some women politicians have shown remarkable aptitude for competing in the bear pit: Maggie Thatcher certainly had no problems. I was recently told of positive changes in attitude and behaviour in a football team due to the coach's philosophy of life and the value he placed on human relationships. Just one person can make a difference. It should not need 50 per cent of women to bring about such a change to Parliament. In moving from being a member of the public to being an elected member of Parliament, a candidate must win in two distinct areas. A prospective candidate must first convince the Party to select her and then convince the electorate to vote for her. These two areas are not the same and may even be contradictory. I quote from the committee's report, as follows:

One of the central issues of power as far as standing for Parliament is concerned is the decision as to who is to be selected to stand as a candidate for the political Party at the next election.

It is my experience that those in a Party entrusted with choosing a candidate go for the one who they believe has the best chance of getting elected. I believe that political Parties will continue as a major force in the Australian political system and that, therefore, Parties must be more responsive to the volatility of the electorate. Female candidates may be far more successful than male candidates in swinging electorates. Public support for political Parties is not as entrenched and unchanging as it was a few decades ago, and public opinion does influence what Parties do. I support the notion that candidates be given training in parliamentary committee work, speaking on the floor of the House and other parliamentary procedure. Even for those candidates not elected, a greater understanding of the working of Parliament would be an advantage to the community.

Of course, Parliaments are not the only source of power in our society, but they are a visible source. Therefore, the number of women in Parliament becomes important in influencing other, less public, power areas, for instance, company directorships. I do not favour a political Party setting targets for the number of women preselected. This can mask other factors and give the notion that a Party is performing well in this area when the reverse may be more accurate. For example, if all the candidates in marginal or non-winnable seats were women, the Party might well have endorsed a significant proportion of women. However, the underlying principle would be that nothing had changed. Parties must select women candidates for what are presumed to be safe seats, always realising that a safe seat at this election may be a lost seat at the next, particularly taking into account the redistribution of electorates. Any candidate, male or female, endorsed by a Party should have the confidence of the Party that he or she will be able to do the job well. The ultimate aim of any Party should be to have a balance of men and women elected to Parliament. No-one can know with certainty prior to an election who will and who will not be elected. Nevertheless, if about 50 per cent of candidates are women—a distinct change from what happens at present—then gender balance is more likely to occur. It may be that in a few years we will be asking for 50 per cent representation by men in Parliament in the same way as we are now seeking 50 per cent representation by women. I have been told that this has happened in some organisations where quotas were set for the participation of women in the decision-making process.