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Chapter 5 : Analysing speech examples

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CHAPTER 5: ANALYSING SPEECH EXAMPLES

Discussion exercise: Weddings, Parties, and Funerals

At times of great personal emotion at happy events like weddings, sporting triumphs and other major achievements, and at sad times like funerals, ordinary people who may not generally make speeches stand up before their friends and speak formally. Increasingly in Australia women give eulogies at funerals and stand up to speak at weddings. It is a mark of their equality that women, too, can speak formally in public and are not expected to sit and be spoken for.

Unfortunately, not all these speeches have much to recommend them but the genuineness of the speaker's feelings. The level of public speaking in Australia can be raised.

One way to learn how to do this is to look at good models. The following eulogy of the Honorable Justice Lionel Murphy was spoken by the Honorable Neville Wran QC and was recommended to me as "one of the great Australian speeches". You should ask other people for their nomination in this category and bring examples along to your tutorials.

Alongside this eulogy your attention is drawn to rhetorical devices which Wran uses to highlight his speech.

In his eulogy Wran paints a picture of a real and much loved person who was not perfect and yet could be remembered for the good that he did. There is a tradition that we do not speak ill of the dead, a tradition that is so old that it is expressed still in the once universally understood Latin phrase: *De mortuis nihil nisi bonum dicendum est* (of the dead, say nothing unless it is good).

Wran keeps to this tradition, not just because it is a rule of our culture and not only because he was Murphy's friend, but because it emphasises what he sees as the main point of Murphy's life, which is that bitterness is an evil to be avoided. Instead of being bitter we should try to ensure that "the good that men do" lives after them.

Dr Carmen Laurence's speech at a Women in Government conference on "Women, Parliament and Public Service" is an example of a speech that both informs and persuades. Dr Laurence uses stories from her own experience to add credibility to her suggestions as well as to keep her audience interested.

**EULOGY BY THE HON. NEVILLE WRAN QC
AT THE STATE MEMORIAL SERVICE
FOR THE LATE THE HON. MR JUSTICE LIONEL KEITH MURPHY
TOWN HALL, SYDNEY**

MONDAY, 27 OCTOBER 1986

Used with Permission

There could be no more fitting place in Australia for the noble purpose we are honoured to serve today—this hall of the people of Sydney, this hall of living history and living memories for all Australians.

Starts as does Lincoln's Gettysburg address with an emphasis on place.

It is, of course, a place which is very much part of the long history of the Australian Labor Party. But it is much more than that. It is a place to which generations of the ordinary men and women of this city and nation have come, in war and peace, to draw strength together for common purposes and to celebrate together.

Note the use of balance in "war and peace."

Today is such an occasion. And it *is*, above all, a celebration.

States a contradiction; in grief and loss there is yet a celebration.

It is a celebration of a great Australian life. But it is even more than that. It is a celebration of a tremendous spirit of life, of one man's affirmation of life, and his triumph over death itself.

*The audience waits for the speaker to unravel this apparent paradox.
Tricolon*

To the very last, Lionel Murphy held, with all the tenacity and courage of a great spirit, to the true meaning and message of his own life.

Use of parenthesis for emphasis.

Last Thursday in Canberra, his brother Bill told us Lionel's last message. It was a warning against bitterness. In particular, Lionel said: "Bill, don't let the boys grow up in bitterness because of what's happened to me. Don't let them grow up with that millstone round their neck."

Theme expressed as the words of the dying Lionel Murphy.

May that stand as Lionel's last charge to all of us.

The important thing is that the true message and meaning of his life—and the lesson we should draw from it—not be clouded or distorted by the bitterness which consumes—however hard that may be for so many of us. *Reiteration of the theme.*

For grief—and, let it be said, anger—are very different things from that kind of bitterness which can only consume. *Two emotions contrasted with bitterness.*

Our duty, now and in the future, is to try to make some sense out of it all— something rational and positive and constructive. Otherwise, all that terrible needless ordeal would have been well and truly in vain. *Main point.*

We owe that much at least to Lionel Murphy.
We owe that much to his family.
We owe it to ourselves. We owe it to Australia.

Lionel Murphy was never cast for sainthood. The very richness and zest of his humanity ensured that. *Tricolon emphasis*

There is no need for us, then, to cast him in a role which he himself would be the first to reject—the martyr’s role. His real achievement and the living lessons to be learnt from it are too great for that. *Disclaimer—captures attention.*

Yet, of course, the truth must be told and it must prevail. *Moves to a list of positive attributes.*

That was the faith Lionel Murphy held to the end—a faith in the people and their great institutions of justice and democracy. He held to that faith when many of us had lost it—or a time at least. *1. Faith in justice and democracy.*

All of us can attest to his infinite courage. But the most remarkable thing about that courage was its source. He drew his strength not only from his knowledge that he had nothing to answer. That was, of course, part of it. But even more important for him was his absolute confidence that the rule of law, its processes properly used, and the institutions which underpin the rule of law, would themselves provide his complete vindication. *2. Courage.*

3. Confidence in the rule of law.
Balanced contrast.

The law and its institutions did not fail. Only their misuse and abuse procured his ordeal.

Yet there can be no proper understanding of his tragedy – I use the word in its highest, grandest and noblest sense – unless we seek to understand the supreme paradox it enfold.

Tricolon

And it is this: it was the misuse of certain institutions and principles which none did more to promote and protect, yet which became the very instruments for his attempted destruction.

Second main theme.

No Australian parliamentarian ever tried so hard to give the Australian Senate a constructive role within the Constitution.

List of achievements.

No Australian stood more staunchly for freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

The use of the same format helps the audience focus on what is different about each statement.

No Australian judge championed the cause of trial by jury more consistently, based on his deep conviction that a jury properly instructed is the great safeguard for the accused citizen.

The brain is given time to process the new information which comes slowly.

No Australian Attorney-General did more, in a practical way, to establish the concept of true equality before the law.

Epic poetry, fairy stories and oral history all use this device of part repetition.

No judge insisted more forcefully on the abiding principle of the presumption of innocence.

No judge set his face more adamantly against guilt by association.

None stood more firmly for the protection and extension of fundamental civil liberties and civil rights. None stood more strongly against their abuse and erosion.

No-one spoke more vigorously, so consistently or for so long, whether as Senator, Attorney-General, or judge, against the whole apparatus by which those rights and freedom are attacked –abuse of police powers, invasion of privacy, illegal tapping and taping, closed inquiries and the rest.

Tricolon

Yet who would deny that Lionel Murphy, in a way and to an extent unparalleled in all our history, suffered from the reversal, subversion, distortion or at least temporary failure, of each and every one of these great institutions or principles.

Parenthesis

These are strong words –reversal, subversion, distortion, failure.

All these great issues are embraced in the principle of true equality before the law.

Yet Lionel Murphy became the first victim of a monstrous doctrine which turns that principle on its head—a sinister and subversive doctrine of jeopardy for men and women of distinction, unknown to our institutions, as we inherited or developed them for three centuries.

What meaning do you give to this when you hear it?

It has powerful echoes of Lincoln Gettysburg address. Read it aloud and work out what it means to you.

It is true that the first principle involved in equality before the law is that the poor and the weak must have equal rights with the rich and powerful. But it is now put forward, from the very peak of the Australian legal system, that prosecutions should be brought against persons in the public eye, even when such prosecutions deny the ordinary rules of evidence and natural justice—precisely because they are persons of note or distinction. This, it is argued, should be done to “clear the air.”

Balance

But the truth is that it is a prescription for the pollution of the whole body politic of Australia and the erection of false accusation into a way of life—the very antithesis of the Australian way of life, and all that Lionel Murphy stood for.

Third main point.

The man who faced, but triumphantly overcame, all these challenges was of the same clay as the rest of us. But he was of a different mould.

Balance

Metaphor of clay carried into mould.

And just as the things he most believed in, came to be used against him, so did one of his finest traits become a ground for his accusers. *Builds up anticipation.*

I refer to his infinite capacity for friendship.

He really did believe in helping lame dogs over the stile. He did suffer fools gladly—or rather, he believed that no fellow human being deserved to be dismissed with contempt or indifference. *Main point.*
Elaboration

And he did not, would not, could not, change when he reached his great eminence.

He refused to retreat into some ivory tower of judicial isolation. Better, perhaps, for his happiness had he done otherwise. But then, in the nature of the man, he could do no other. At the very core of his being and his ideals was his conviction that the law and real life were inseparable. *Contrast is used to show us that faults were virtues.*

And herein would lie the heart of tragedy for Australia—were we to fail to learn the real lesson of his life and career.

The Australian value, to be cherished and valued above all, is the openness and equality of our society. There is no ultimate meaning in our history, if it is not the struggle to break down the barriers raised against human fulfillment by differences of class, background, sex, colour and creed. *Claim*

For Lionel Murphy, it was the ideal which defined all other ideals.

And if we were ever to allow that value to be overturned, and replaced, as certainly threatened to happen in his own life, by attitudes of mutual suspicion, by the double standard, by the doctrine of guilt by association, then all that is really worthwhile in being Australian would be damaged irreparably, if not destroyed altogether. *Tricolon*

And were we to permit the erosion of civil liberties to continue, then all his work, and the central meaning of his contribution, would come to nought.

There used to be a good Australian word for the value of openness and equality in our society.

Repetition

I am proud I can still use that word for Lionel Murphy.

Elaboration

He was my mate.

Wran here emphasises the positive aspects of the term "mate".

And it is something of which I am immeasurably proud and immensely grateful.

Draws positive connotations out of a word newspapers used to denigrate Justice Murphy.

And that is what we can all celebrate today—our pride in, and gratitude for, the life of this unique Australian, a great Australian—a great judge, greatly to be judged.

It will not be for us who remain to vindicate the life of Lionel Murphy in the judgment of history. *He* is not on trial.

Rather, it is for us to vindicate ourselves before that judgment—he judgment of history upon us all, as Australians—who allowed, even if only by silence, a terrible wrong to be done— not, in that final judgment, so much to Lionel Murphy himself, but to something profoundly great and good in the spirit of this nation, for which we are merely the passing custodians.

Note the pausing and phrasing of this paragraph which uses the power of the voice to rouse emotion.

I spoke earlier of Lionel's matchless courage and the sources of that courage.

But the deepest source was his family, Ingrid above all.

Of that, I just cannot bring myself to speak in this hall. Nothing I could say could be remotely adequate. And I know there is no need for me, in this gathering, to attempt to do so.

Returns to the central theme of the eulogy—the warning against bitterness.

And for Cameron and Blake, nothing I could say, on your behalf, would mean anything compared with that message to Bill—his last thoughts—for you, for Lorel, for his family, for his friends—and for all Australians.

In that special sense, we share with the family an immense privilege and proud heritage.

For we are all his heirs—and, indeed, all the executors of a life work to make this a better place for the people and the country he loved and served so well.

Ends on a positive note – encouraging.

You can only fully appreciate a speech when you speak it or hear it. Neville Wran’s eulogy for Lionel Murphy was meant to be spoken. Read it aloud. Practice it at home and come to class ready to deliver sections of it aloud. Practice will help you become accustomed to the sound of your own voice.

Discussion Tasks

1. Does Wran’s style suit an eulogy you might deliver for a member of your family or a close friend?

Why? _____

Why not? _____

2. Does this eulogy differ from those likely to be heard in other countries that border the Pacific?

What differences are there?

What similarities are there?

How do you say “Don’t speak ill of the dead” in Japanese or in Malay?

Writing tasks (use the essay format on p. 72)

Analyse the eulogy by Neville Wran at the state memorial service for Lionel Murphy. Focus analysis on how Wran utilises metaphor, imagery, parallelism, repetition and other resources of language to enhance his meaning.

Explain how you would go about planning a speech to persuade an audience of the importance of conserving electricity and water, and to motivate them to act on their new attitudes.

WOMEN, PARLIAMENT & PUBLIC SERVICE

Women and Political Life

*Carmen Lawrence**

Like many of you here I am disappointed that our friends, the men of the community, are not with us today. Unless we change the minds of the men in our community, as well as the women, the goals that are being described and sought after in conferences like this will not be met. We all need to think of ways and means of encouraging, persuading - arm twisting, arm wrestling our colleagues, if necessary - to take these issues seriously enough to get off their backsides.

I want to talk about my own experiences, but I also want to draw some lessons from those experiences which may be of use to those who are contemplating a career in politics or are simply interested observers.

Alan Ramsey, a journalist who writes for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, is quoted in a article in *Ita* as saying:

There are rarely any free kicks for women in politics. No matter how much or how little ability they might have and whatever the expedient rhetoric of the time, men run politics and women get only what men allow them to have. Mostly they're manipulated, exploited and patronised.

It is a very strong statement but it is one I think can be endorsed, unfortunately, for most levels of government in this country.

I am not entirely pessimistic because I think there has been progress, but Ramsey's is not an unreasonable description particularly of national politics. What is clear is that participation of women in politics and in

parliament has not been a priority for our major political parties and, to the extent that women are represented in the minor parties now, forgive me for saying so, it is largely an accident. It has not been initially as a result of any carefully thought out policy. It has simply been that women have been more attracted to the Democrats and the Greens because of their political complexion, not because of the policies they have had towards the recruitment of women into politics. That followed rather than proceeded the fact that there are more women in those parties.

When I first became interested in politics women were seen as a political liability, not to be trusted to understand the cut and thrust of political life, unlikely to be embraced by voters, and, in the ALP particularly, it was said that a woman, especially a woman with an education, would be a liability amongst the blue collar blokes. You could expect to be well and truly rolled if, as a woman, you stood for a safe Labor seat at that time. But things have changed a little and it has been because women put their hands up, struggled, pushed, yelled, kicked, screamed and worked extremely hard, not because the political parties made any serious effort to recruit them and put them into parliamentary positions.

Sadly, the major political parties, Labor, Liberal and National, have *spoken* at length about how important it is to have women in politics, what

* Carmen Lawrence, Premier of Western Australia, 1990-93, and Leader of the Opposition, 1993-94, was elected to the House of Representatives in March 1994, and appointed Minister for Human Services and Health. Edited text of address to RIPAA (Queensland Division) Conference, "Women in Government", Brisbane, 6 October 1993.

an important asset they are, how good they are in marginal seats and how much credibility they bring to various roles they occupy, but they have *done* precious little.

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Bob Hogg, former National Secretary of the ALP, when questioned as part of the Recognition Seminar which was part of the parliamentary review leading to *Halfway to Equal*, said "I still go to meetings and hear the fine speeches, but when I look around to see where the wives are I invariably find that they are missing, fighting alone on the front line of domesticity. You can intellectualise prejudices away. It is much more difficult to put them aside in practice as attitudes are so deeply ingrained." There are solutions to this problem of attitudes, but they are radical.

At this stage of my political career, I have been in politics, as a parliamentary representative, since 1986. I am sick of being told that women should be encouraged, enticed and persuaded into politics. It is time for a change of the rules. There is no other way you can do it. In the Recognition Seminar to which I referred, the Liberal Party's Federal Direct, Andrew Robb, said very much the same things as Mr Hogg. Both he and Hogg comment on the fact that there is a huge gap between rhetoric and reality. There has actually been very slow progress indeed in improving the representation of women in Parliament. If you look world-wide, there is a very similar phenomenon of slow progress and, in some instances, actual decline.

We have had, right across the board, slow improvement from the 1970s into the 1980s. In 1975, 12.5 per cent of members of parliament world-wide were women; 14.6 per cent in 1988; in 1991, a slip back to 11 per cent; and 10 per cent in 1993. It is hardly something to celebrate.

We have seen wondrous claims being made about the importance of having women in politics but very little action. It could even be said that we are going backwards in Australia as well. And I put this point very bluntly, not as a political point, but as an observation about the political parties: to the extent that Labor governments lose, the number of women in politics will decline even further because the Liberal Party, after initially doing quite well, is not recruiting women into politics at the same rate as the Labor Party has done. But neither party can take comfort from the number of women that they have in politics at this stage.

PARLIAMENTARY CAREER

I shall first deal with my own experience. How did I get to be the Premier of Western Australia and now Leader of the Opposition? I can tell you how I came to be Leader of the Opposition! The voters decided it would be so. But my experience is rare and people such as myself are still novel. Indeed, when I first became Premier of Western Australia, my novelty was the *only* focus of attention in the media. But if I look at my own experience, it is typical, typical of the problems that women still face.

I first stood for Parliament in 1983, doing the right thing by the party, in a seat that could not be won, a blue-ribbon Liberal seat. In other words, I did the sort of apprenticeship that many people say is required. I had come up through the branch structure to the Electorate Council, to the Administrative Committee which is the body in Western Australia that runs the party between meetings of the State Executive of which I was also a member. So I had done my branch and party work and I also did my time standing in an unwinnable seat. I made sure that all the letter boxes got pamphlets in them and that people staffed the polling booths and that the Upper House member got the appropriate amount of the vote.

In 1986, I was, by then, more or less hooked and was persuaded that there was a parliamentary career for me. But the only seat I could get a serious look in was the seat of Subiaco. While I was happy to stand for it, since it was the area in which I lived, it meant I actually had to change what had been a Liberal seat for 27 years into a Labor seat. This was helped by the sitting member who was about to retire. He had gone out in a cloud of acrimony as an Independent Liberal. He was prepared to endorse me as an incoming Labor member and there was, at that

time, a fairly favourable attitude toward the Burke Labor Government.

The newspapers subsequently decided they did not like what had happened during that time but, in 1986, the Burke Government was on a rise so I thought there was a very good chance that I could win. But that was not a view that was shared by the party office nor indeed by most of the other parliamentary members - so we had to struggle from day one. The struggle did not include the battle for pre-selection - no one else wanted the job - so I put my hand up and when I looked around there was nobody else - a very similar experience to that I had on becoming Premier. I was the only one to stand in the firing line. So I had a very similar experience to many women in politics, fighting a highly marginal seat regarded by the party office as probably unwinnable, using the resources that we could muster at our disposal which were essentially local ones.

We did what many women do and ran an extremely professional campaign. We did the research; my background is in research - we knew every nook and cranny of the electorate, who lived there, what their background was, what their likely voting intentions were. We paid for our own polling. We undertook massive door knocks repeated over and over again. I started 18 months out from the election date and simply worked and worked and worked and this is all while working full-time. I also had a very dedicated and enthusiastic support team with me, men and women alike.

Over time there was clearly a move to accept that we were making ground and could possibly win the seat. We started number 15 on the list of targeted seats - there were 15 targeted ahead of us, remembering that it was a Labor Government at that time. In the last week we were given extra resources as acknowledgment that we were, in fact, number one on the list and, in the event, we were the only seat to change hands at that election, in our favour. We lost one in the country area and picked up one in the metropolitan area, and that was the seat of Subiaco.

I guess that in many ways my experience is typical of what happens to many women. I also meant that I was at a disadvantage for the next election. Fortunately there was a redistribution which was in my favour but even now I sit on a fairly uncomfortable margin of a little over two and a half per cent.

Something, I think, that is changing is that more women are getting into safe seats, particularly in the Labor Party, but that should not be taken for granted given the type and number of women. Typically, women are found in unwinnable and marginal seats and their fate depends on the fate of the government of the day rather than their own personal performance. When there are swings of 2 to 3 percent, you are out no matter how good you are seen to be. And that is something I think we should remedy as a matter of principle.

Having been elected to the West Australian Parliament and then leaving behind a perfectly good career and perfectly good reputation I suddenly discovered that I was a politician with all the negative associations that went with that. Parliament is one of the obstacles that I think most women point to when they contemplate a career in politics.

PARLIAMENT - LIKE BEING IN A TIME WARP

Having been through the process of pre-selection, and been elected - and I have cut short the real drama of that because it is an extraordinary process - I found myself in Parliament. For me it was an extraordinarily negative experience; it was like being in a time warp; the attitudes of the people there was so out of step with the rest of the community, I could not believe it. There was very little opportunity for serious debate and discussion. There was almost no preparation for what went into debate conducted in the Parliament; just opinion masquerading as fact. There was a great deal of personal abuse and vitriol hurled around the place and I suffered from an advanced form of jet lag, equivalent to serious terminal brain rot. I was not alone in that. It is something that happens to a great many members of Parliament and it probably has had irreversible effects!

I regarded the Parliament as a travesty and I think that is the way many people still see the Parliament. We forget when we have been there for some time how it is viewed from the outside. As a woman particularly, tension between the way you would like to behave and what is required to succeed in the Parliament is very great indeed. I feel that most intensely now as Leader of the Opposition.

My preferred mode of operation in the Parliament would be to reduce the number of sitting hours, to make the debates pointed and carefully prepared, to vote at an appropriate time rather than after hours and hours of time

wasting, to make sure that the argument is focused on the issues and not the person, and that you can express a point of view without being pigeon-holed or categorised. I remember very well on one occasion a member who is now in the Legislative Council interjecting when I was talking about the desirability of reducing the level of woodchipping in the southern part of Western Australia. I was told that I represented the worst of the left politics, although I am not particularly left wing. He described me as being part of a group of "limp wristed, hollow chested greenies". I looked down clearly enough to make him blush. That sort of characterisation of the individual rather than the argument is something that members of Parliament unfortunately engage in too frequently and it forms the image of Parliament for the wider community.

However, if you are not able to hold your own in that company, you will fail. You will not become a minister, you will not become Leader of the Opposition, you will not become a senior front bencher. And one of the things that is difficult for women in politics is the fact that they have, if you like, a disposition because of their upbringing, not because of their great virtue, I hasten to add, to be more polite, to be less critical, to be less rowdy, not to engage in interjections.

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All of those characteristics which should make for better, clearer, more intelligent debate can actually be a disadvantage in the Parliament. Can I give you an example which comes from Canada. In a recent parliamentary review there is an excerpt from a debate which was held on what was going on in the Canadian Parliament. I tell you it goes on in every parliament in the country, and I have been watching it in Western Australia from the Opposition benches because we do have a large number of women on our front bench in Opposition. This is the way it goes according to Marian Boyd of the Ontario Legislature:

Besides verbal attacks and the manipulation of tone, other forms of behaviour clearly discriminate but are harder to quantify. This behaviour comprises a range of efforts to humiliate and intimidate members, usually women (it's not reserved only for women I hasten to add) as they fulfill their elected roles in the House. Non-verbal tactics include significantly increasing volume - that is, more heckling, coughing and hissing when a woman rises to speak, introducing a wall of sound before she has even started her words, blowing kisses across the floor of the house] [I haven't seen that I must say] and mocking the higher pitched voices of female members [I have certainly seen that].

Video tapes of House proceedings provide ample evidence of these tactics. As such they are not the imaginings of overly sensitive women who cannot take the heat of the legislative kitchen. The fact that the noise level suddenly and regularly rises when women stand, especially women Cabinet ministers, means there is more than mere coincidence at work. These tactics are employed primarily against women in an attempt to intimidate us, diminish our authority and reinforce the idea that the House is not meant to be our home.

That is an experience I am sure that every woman member of parliament can point to. I am in some ways fortunate having a deeper voice with greater penetration than many women. If you are a light-voiced woman who has not learnt the theatrical techniques of pulling an audience with you and you rely on volume you can be drowned out very easily. There is nothing more humiliating than not to be heard. Nothing more humiliating in Parliament than not to be listened to and nothing more likely to lead to your failure than to have your colleagues see you being intimidated by the Opposition or the Government, whichever it happens to be.

That is a fact of life in the parliaments of Australia and it is one of the things that puts women off going into parliament. Parliament is not, unfortunately, a debating forum where issues are expressed and discussed and outlined and dissected but it is, in fact, a place where people engage in gladiatorial combat. Though I would wish that were not so, as long as the media and other in the community believe that this is a contest to the death and that unless someone is bleeding it is not an effective contest, then it will continue and we have to learn to adjust to it until we can change it.

I sometimes have to examine my own behaviour which I might say is sometimes less than perfect. But as Leader of the Opposition, if I do not perform with a level of aggression and assertiveness and loudness from time to time, then I would not be Leader of the Opposition for very long. It is a case of the institution demanding certain responses and the failure to provide them meaning that you will no longer be part of the institution. So for that reason alone it is absolutely critical that we have more women in parliament because they will not, when they are especially numerous, tolerate or engage in that kind of behaviour to the same extent as their male colleagues.

CABINET

I just want to talk briefly about Cabinet because it has been said that as a woman chair of Cabinet I must have had very different experiences from men. I can never know that because I only ever saw myself in that position. But I would have to say that with five women in Cabinet the quality of debate in Cabinet was always excellent. The support that I got from my colleagues, male and female, was superb. From time to time there were emotional outbursts, mainly from the men, and by and large there was no suggestion from any of my colleagues that they would deal with me differently because I was a woman. So I would have to say that I did not find any of the reservations in that relatively small group that might have been expected.

I think the bigger group, the more public the scenario, the more there is to show and display, the more chests can be puffed out and beaten, then the more likely you are to get some of the worst elements of that aggressive display behaviour which I am sure many members of Parliament could tell us a lot about.

WHY WOMEN SHOULD BE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

I will now talk about why I think women should be members of Parliament, why there should be more of them and why we should stop talking about ways of improving representation and simply insist on 50 percent. I have a lot of time for what Jim Carlton is saying although I think there are some impractical political elements to his proposal. [Jim Carlton writes about his proposal in this CBPA, 13-16. -- Ed.]

The argument is often put that women are more competent, that they should be in politics because they will bring in new skills and that in negotiation and commitment to community

issues, women have skills that are rarely seen in politics.

It is certainly true that ignoring 50 percent of the talent pool in our community is going to diminish the quality of representation. So if people say to me that having 50 percent less of women will diminish the level of effectiveness, or experience, or expertise or nous in politics, I say *rubbish* - it does not happen anywhere else. If you leave out 50 percent of the community you will get 50 percent less of what is available. So there is an argument that says if you include women you will get a better quality product overall because you are drawing on the full range of human talent available. But I do not think we should ever say of women that they are more virtuous, that is not a burden we need carry. We should be able to accept everyone, all women, including Bronwyn Bishop, as representatives of women in politics. They can be thoughtful, cautious; they can be people who are conciliators; they can be aggressive, loud and brutal. Why not? They are less likely to be argumentative and aggressive because of the experiences they have, but we have to be able to accept all women. So that while the argument that women should be the repositories of virtue on behalf of the entire human kind is likely to continue to enjoy currency, we should reject it. We are *not* the moral arbiters of this society nor should we want to be in politics.

So I say, yes, having more women in politics would improve the quality, *but* - and I shall come back to the "but". Another argument is that we should give more women an opportunity in politics because they have a greater understanding of issues that affect the family, that affect women and so on. That is true too because they have experienced them more directly but that is not sufficient argument either because there are plenty of men who understand those issues who would be prepared to speak up on behalf of women.

The first thing you will hear is that there will be - and I have just said it myself a moment ago - an improvement in the quality of behaviour in the parliamentary performance. I do believe that would occur, but even that is not sufficient reason to increase the number of women in politics. It is a "maybe, but" in any case.

The reason, the only compelling reason and indeed the only reason which *should* be advanced in discussing this issue is one of simple justice. Women do not require and should not accept a proxy voice. You do not need someone to represent you any more than I do. We make up 50 percent of the population so

we should occupy 50 percent of the seats - full stop. No because we are more competent, not because we are more knowledgeable about women's issues or any other issues. Not because we are more compassionate, not because we are more anything - but simply because we *are*.

And in a democracy which purports to represent all of its citizens, however imperfectly in the past, that is the only relevant observation: that we are here and we can speak for ourselves; we do not need proxy.

Women are half of the human race, slightly more, and should not be content with being interested bystanders or silent partners. A recent publication from the Interparliamentary Union Symposium on the Participation of Women in the Political and Parliamentary Decision-Making Process states:

... the political space belongs to all citizens, politics is everyone's business and affects the lives of each one of us ... the more women are associated, in numbers corresponding to their percentage of the population, in the political decision-making process ... the more they can be associated with this process as protagonists and the more they can change the modalities and outcomes of politics. Only then will the concept of democracy find concrete and tangible expression. Democracy and the participation of women go hand in hand and promote each other mutually.

Until 50 percent of our parliamentary representatives, State, Commonwealth, local are women, we do not have a democracy. We did not have one when there was a property franchise, we did not have one, and we do not in Western Australia, when there is a vote weighting or malapportionment. We did not have one when women were denied the franchise or when women were denied the right to sit in Parliament. We still do not have one in this country because women are silent.

There are few members who are asked to speak for the majority. That is not fair on them, that is not fair on you. So I would argue, there need be no reference to virtue, to competence, to representation of issues but simply to justice.

What we have seen in the past is the removal of legislative barriers but also in many cases the removal of structural obstacles to participation for all men. Now is you think of the struggle, first of all the property franchise was removed. All men were allowed to vote. Then people who became parliamentary representatives were

paid a wage: a very important step forward for people of the working classes on limited means. The payment of members of Parliament, was in fact, one of the three items on the original platform of the ALP in Western Australia: the original platform advocated only three policies - that members of Parliament should be paid; that there should be free, compulsory and secular education; and that trade unions should have a right to exist. I wish all platforms were as simple as that. But you can see how fundamental that issue was and it was implemented almost immediately in Western Australia upon the election of the first Labor Government, because the members well understood that as long as there were barriers to participation then they would not get working class men, they would not get people from less privileged backgrounds participating in our parliamentary system.

Women have been content so far to say, simply, "we've got the vote and we've got the right to sit". We now have to take the next step which is that we should demand 50 percent of the seats in parliament be reserved for women. There are two ways of doing that, one being the way that Jim Carlton has suggested which requires the good will of the existing parliamentarians, mostly male, to overturn their privileged positions. I am not optimistic about that, but I do not think we should shy away from the fight either. I was very disappointed at the reaction that many women gave to his argument.

Another way to do it, a way that I favour, and one we are working toward in several States, is to demand of our own party, in my case the Labor Party, that at least 50 percent of the pre-selections across all types of seats, safe, marginal and unwinnable, go to women. We have a rule that gives preference to trade unions - 60/40 it is called on the West Australian State Executive. I do not see any reason why we should not make sure that 50 percent of our seats in pre-selection are given to women.

And, finally I want to say that I totally endorse the thrust of what Jim Carlton is saying. Some women at the time he made his proposition, and some women have said to me, "you can't do that because that would mean women got the job without having reference to merit". Absolute balderdash! - if I can use a slightly Victorian expletive probably would not be suitable in this environment. What is required of a member of parliament that women cannot do? What is required of a member of parliament? The ideal is as John Stuart Mill has enunciated it, "what we require of a democratic society is enlightened

individuals who will be mature and responsible because they reflect upon the issues that face them." That is ideal: enlightenment, maturity, responsibility, a reflection on the issues that face them.

Let me say that unfortunately not all politicians in the country reflect that ideal. In a representative democracy, what is *actually* required is very little: you have to be seen to be legitimate - in other words people will vote for you, We have overcome that problem as I think I have outlined. You must be able to represent the electorate and their interests. In truth it requires 50 percent plus one of the votes. It does not actually require ability, it requires people to vote for you - not the same thing necessarily, and in the Legislative Council in Western Australia it does not even require equal votes.

As I said, being elected confers and reflects no particular ability or expertise; winning a position in pre-selection, winning a position in parliament requires no particular ability or expertise. Nor should it. This is not a meritocracy; it is supposed to be a representative democracy. You should have people from all walks of life, from all backgrounds. You should have people who are well educated and people who are less so. The one thing you do require of MPs is that they be committed to voters' interests, not that they have special training in management, not that they have a tertiary education, not that they have been through the union movement from A to Z, not that they have lived in your State forever. None of those things is relevant and none of them makes any difference to the ability of the politician when finally in performance.

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So politicians right now have no special training, they have no proprietary qualifications, they have no intellectual superiority, they have no particular skills in communication, we know that well in Queensland. I am not talking about Wayne Goss either, but a former premier. They are not required to be particularly diligent. They are not even required to show much commitment that I think is a necessity myself, but you can get away with doing very little, although I think you will find that the voters sooner or later will find people out if they are not smart and they are not working hard. They will eventually get ditched. But most people are unable to create a personal following based on their own individual characteristics of much more than one or two percent. So even if you are a diligent, careful member, you are not necessarily going to be someone the voters will immediately recognise as distinct from your party or group or organisation. That is not a problem but I simply want to underline the fact that there is very little evaluation of merit in politics. There is no qualification; there is no expertise required. It is a case of anyone who is interested should apply, and the problem that women have had is that they have thought that there was some mysterious quality that they did to have, that men did have, and this is why they did not get into parliament; that men knew something about the system that they did not.

That view is very convenient, very satisfactory to those who hold power. You can say to others, "what I do in this mysterious world of politics is something that you cannot do, either because you are too emotional or because you have not come up through the ranks, or because you are not tough enough, you are not loud enough or because you are not committed enough, you have family responsibilities". There are a hundred and one reasons why you will be told why you cannot join the inner sanctum. But in fact there is not a single reason other than institutionalised protection of power. Not a single reason and women now have to take the next step to challenge the status quo. They have the vote; they have the right to sit in parliament; they should now demand, *we* should now demand, that 50 percent of the seats by way of pre-selection or legislation are set aside for women.

There is no argument that stands scrutiny that denies us that position. There is no argument in justice that would be acceptable to people in this community who think about justice and yet women have been prepared to stand back and say: "but I don't think I can do it". My message

is simply this, and I have said it probably a hundred times in the last few weeks, "Do not exclude yourselves". There will be plenty of people seeking to exclude you. Put up your

hand, demand your rights, assert your authority and your ability because you cannot be worse than what is around at the moment.

Further sources of information

Lawrence, C. (1994). *Women, Parliament and Public Service*. Canberra: Bulletin of Public Administration, 76, 1-6.

Discussion Tasks

1. Use the speech evaluation form on p. 21 to assess the speech and bring this to your tutorial discussion.
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2. Compare your evaluation with others in a group.
-

3. What is Lawrence trying to persuade her audience about?
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4. Read the list of speech devices on p. 8. Which of these are used in the speech "Woman and Political Life"?
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5. Use Monroe's "Motivated Sequence" to analyse Dr Lawrence's speech. How does she:

- Get Attention and make her audience aware of the problem
-

- Show Need by showing how the problem affects the audience
-

- Demonstrate Satisfaction - explain how the solution she is advancing will meet those needs
-

- Use visualisation - to enable the audience to "see" the effects she is describing.
-

- Advocate action - Get the audience to do something as a result of hearing this speech.
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