Inaugural speeches in the New South Wales parliament

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INTRODUCTION

What used to be called 'maiden speeches' but are now referred to as inaugural or first speeches play an important part in the parliamentary life of a Member of Parliament, a moment of achievement, a setting off point, as they step onto the parliamentary stage for the first time. At times these speeches suggest the career that is to follow; a reflection of the intellectual scope of the speech and of the debating skills and style on display. For the historian, too, first speeches occupy a particular niche, as they offer insights into a member's values and philosophy, their policy interests and concerns. Not every inaugural speech is a triumph. Sometimes first speeches may set a false trail, when expectations are not realised. In the reverse, great careers have been built on the foundations of a shaky or mundane start. Yet that, too, is of interest, from a biographical and historical standpoint.

Discussed later in this article is the inaugural speech of Millicent Preston Stanley, the first female member elected to the NSW Parliament, whose speech was subject to several interjections. Writing on its website , the Australian Women's History Forum comments:

> But on the day of her first speech in the parliament she deflected such distraction by delivering a powerful speech worthy of the history she was making. Her maiden speech, like Edith Cowan's, was a manifesto of the causes women so long pleaded for outside the parliament. Like their Western Australian colleagues four years before, the NSW MLAs abandoned the convention of silence for maiden speeches.[2]

However, was that the case in fact? In NSW, since the establishment of responsible government in 1856, there have always been first speeches, as new Members made their original contribution to debate in some form or other. Yet from when did the practice of making 'maiden' speeches start? Also did the practice date from around the same period for both Houses? Currently, inaugural speeches comply with the conventions that they are generally heard in silence and, while uncontroversial, are given wide latitude as to content. Has that always been the rule? The argument of the article is that, in their modest way, inaugural speeches provide a window on the evolving parliamentary culture in NSW, along with the broader political context in which it operates. For the Legislative Assembly, as a narrative spine this paper uses the first speeches of many of the Premiers of the State, tracing the record back to around 1860.[3]

As to terminology, Grove's *NSW Legislative Assembly: Practice, Procedure and Privilege* refers to 'inaugural (formerly first speech or maiden speech)',[4] whereas the relevant sub-heading in *NSW Legislative Council Practice* by Lovelock and Evans is to 'First (Maiden) Speech'. In this paper, the two terms are treated as interchangeable.

NSW LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Historical overview: As in other comparable Westminster Parliaments,[5] in the NSW Legislative Assembly inaugural speeches were traditionally made, from the 1880s onwards, during the address-in-reply debate where some acknowledgement was made of the relevant conventions mentioned earlier, even if those conventions were not always (or even usually) adhered to in many periods. In particular, those speeches moving and seconding the adoption of the address-in-reply tended to be treated with some decorum, while contributions to the debate itself and the reception they were given varied depending on the speaker. Up to the Second War and for some time afterwards these speeches were exclusively political; some were relatively short and modest in scope and content, whereas others were very different, taking a wide ranging brief and courting controversy because of their abrasive manner and content. Very few inaugural speeches were heard without interjection, a requirement occasionally mentioned at appropriate moments in the Assembly but one that was rarely complied with in practice. Interjections were common up until the late 1950s.

There has been a noticeable shift in the content of inaugural speeches, towards a more public sharing of personal background and experience. The influx of women into the House, albeit modest by some international standards, has had some direct influence on this process.

Outside the address-in-reply debate inaugural speeches were often, but not always, treated as part of the ordinary business of the House, and hence were subject to the same give and take of political life in the chamber. The Hansard record suggests that often a speech on a bill was simply not recognised as an inaugural speech, a situation which seems to have lasted well into the 1930s. It was certainly very rare to even remark on one's constituency in such speeches, when made on a Bill for instance, and rarer still for the speech to be proceed without interjection.

After World War 2, both the intensity of the political atmosphere and, for want of a better word, the 'larrikin' nature often on display in the Assembly, declined. In part it may have been the result of post-war prosperity and the culture of greater civility and respect for parliamentary norms engendered in the post-Lang years.[6] Interjections were still common in the 1950s, but they seem to have died down after that. It is also the case that, while inaugural speeches remained strongly political and trenchantly argued, the abrasiveness of the earlier period also declined. The pressure cooker that had been the Assembly in the 1920s and the early 1930s became a bubbling pot, not tame by any means, but a little less explosive.

Procedurally, the mid–1990s were something of a tipping point in respect to inaugural speeches. Now the usual practice is to make a set piece inaugural speech which is clearly identified as such in Hansard. The content of the speeches have also changed in recent years, becoming more autobiographical and anecdotal.[7] Their building blocks are reflections on electorates, their history, character and concerns; political motivations, influences, role models and viewpoints and thanks to supporters, staff and family. This reflects a broader shift in political culture in which family and personal history are openly acknowledged. Deborah Brennan suggests that in the 'Bear Pit' of the Legislative Assembly, inaugural speeches have become more personally revealing. She points out that, among other things, 'The speech provides an opportunity for thanks to be given publicly to family and friends, many of whom attend Parliament for the event'.[8]

Pre-federation: Focusing on the first speeches of the Premiers of New South Wales , the changing face of first speeches are illustrated by reference to selected examples. James Farnell (St Leonards), Premier from December 1877 to 1878, was first elected in May 1860 to the State's Third Parliament. Asking two questions in June 1860 of the then Premier, John Robertson, neither question bore any of the hallmarks of inaugural speeches; the same applied to Farnell's contribution in October 1860 in the debate in committee on the Crown Lands Alienation Bill.[9]

As for the address-in-reply, in the fractional era, when governments lived on their wits, these debates tended to be more testing in nature, procedurally tough and seeking to tease out confidence in the Ministry. While new members moved the adoption of the address-in-reply, any scope for making what we would recognise today as an inaugural speech was very limited; the same was true of the ensuing debate. For example, at the opening of the Third Parliament in September 1859, where land reform was the big issue of the day, the adoption was moved in short order by the new member for Darling Downs, John Douglas, with SW Gray, the new member for Kiama, being recorded simply as having 'seconded the motion'.[10] At the opening of the Fifth Parliament in January 1865 neither the mover nor seconder of the motion was a new member, which is suggestive of evolving and intermittent practices.[11]

First elected in December 1874 were two later Premiers, Alexander Stuart (East Sydney) and George Dibbs (West Sydney). Stuart spoke first in January 1875 in the politically charged address-in-reply debate, which concerned the conditional pardon granted by Governor Robinson to the bushranger Frank Gardiner who was released into exile in Hong Kong.[12] Stuart started by saying that he felt 'some diffidence' in speaking and only did so to voice the opinion of his 'large and influential constituency'. The tenor of his speech, which was punctuated by several 'Cheers' and calls of 'Hear, Hear', was in defence of the petition signed against Gardiner's release, whose 'reign of terror' was said to have turned the country 'upside down'. Stuart also defended the rights of the House to debate the question, even if the result was a change of government.[13] It was a confident and powerful contribution and certainly not an example of a a modest inaugural speech. The adoption of the address-in-reply was moved by new members Patrick Shepherd, The Nepean and seconded by JJ Wright, Queenbeyan, the first speaking at some length without interruption, the second only perfunctorily, which was the pattern in the early years of the parliament. Speaking first in March 1875 in the budget debate, Dibbs was assertive in his brief defence

of public money to boost population and production. Seemingly uninterrupted, the record makes no further suggestion that this was an inaugural speech.[14]

In the 10th Parliament, which started in December 1880 when Henry Parkes was Premier for the third time, the address-in-reply was moved and seconded by new members,[15] and at least one other new member participated in the debate, albeit briefly, with only one interjection in total.[16] Making their parliamentary debuts outside that debate were three future Premiers, all of them elected in November 1880 – George Reid (East Sydney), William Lyne (The Hume) and John See (Grafton). None of these made recognisably inaugural speeches. Quick off the mark, Reid asked his first question on 17 December 1880[17] and made his first substantive speech on 8 February 1881 on a motion for the eight hour working day, which he supported in most part.[18] Lyne entered the debating lists on 17 February 1881 in the budget debate, launching straight into an argument against raising taxes and in favour of a new policy on the sale of land.[19] On 16 March 1881 See made a brief foray into the parliamentary debate in the budget debate on loan estimates for railways,[20] going on to speak at greater length in the committee stage of the debate on loan estimates for the Northern Junction Railway, from Homebush to Waratah in the Hunter region, a project he considered premature and unlikely to 'pay for many years to come'.[21]

A notable example from the 1890s, during the debate on federation, was the inaugural speech by the new member for Grenfell, WA Holman, first Labor then Nationalist Premier. He spoke in the committee stage of the debate on the Australasian Federation Resolutions, specifically on an amendment moved by his party leader, McGowen, concerning the method of altering the proposed federal constitution. Referring at first to 'my immature views',[22] he delivered a closely reasoned speech, nearly an hour long, with a number of interjections from leading players, Reid and See among others. Fine as it is, a harbinger of great things to come, its relationship to what we now call an inaugural speech is tenuous at best. At the very least, as a model of its kind, in form and substance, it indicates the journey such speeches have taken in the Assembly.

From federation to McKell: After the conflict over federation had been settled, testing the limits of procedural niceties were class-based issues associated with the growing influence of the Labour Party. When the new member for Hartley, James Dooley, Labor Premier in 1921–22 and Speaker in 1925–27,[23] first spoke in October 1907 he stressed his inexperience and to craved the House's indulgence over his unfamiliarity with the 'routine of debate in this Chamber'.[24] The formalities over, Dooley went on to claim that 'no man in this State earns a thousand a year by his own personal exertion'. 'What about a doctor?' a member asked. Dooley responded, 'A doctor does not earn his income by his own personal exertion. He has four or five servants, he has a groom…', at which point he was interrupted by 'loud laughter'.[25]

Ironically, despite his reputation for domineering bluster, in 1914 Jack Lang delivered what by the standards of the day was a rather tame inaugural speech, more local than many in its focus, grouped around what he termed an opportunity to air his 'grievances'.[26]

Thomas Bavin and William McKell were both elected to the Assembly in 1917, at the time of Holman's Nationalist Ministry, Bavin on the Government's side, McKell in Opposition. Bavin

(Gordon) seconded the address-in-reply motion and chose for his theme the war and 'the obligation of doing the best we can to help the Empire in the war'. After two interruptions, the Speaker (JJ Cohen) sought to bring proceedings to order, saying:

> Interjections are at all times disorderly. It has been a tradition of this House, and of every House which has responsible government, that new members shall be heard in silence…I ask that the honourable member be allowed to proceed without interruption.[27]

Bavin was only interrupted on three further occasions. The interjections during McKell's inaugural speech, delivered during the same address-in-reply debate, ran into double figures. Little wonder perhaps when, in seeking to defend Labor against claims of association with the militant unionist movement the IWW (International Workers of the World), he raised the raw question of Holman's disloyalty to the Empire during the Boer War. This caused the Speaker to call him to order, saying 'It is unparliamentary to accuse any honourable member of being disloyal'.[28] When McKell moved on to the recent snap election, calling it a 'trick' played by Holman to disenfranchise many working people, the Speaker again pulled him up, saying:

> The honourable member is exceeding the bounds of parliamentary license in accusing the leader of the National Party, or any other member of this House, of having been guilty of a deliberate trick.[29]

His point well and truly made, twice over, like a practised barrister working on the minds of a jury, McKell apologised if he had 'transgressed the rules of debate'. In some ways the speech is a good companion to Preston Stanley's, pugnacious, wide ranging address , dealing with issues as diverse as sectarianism in politics, revived at the recent election, along with industrial law and policy, never hesitating to take up the most intense party political quarrels, and managing to insert a reference to Liberal Party members as 'oppressors of the class to which I belong'.[30] Pulling no punches of his own, McKell seemed happy enough to parry the interjections that came his way.

The roaring Twenties: Joe Cahill (St George) was elected to the Assembly in 1925, the same year as the redoubtable Millicent Preston Stanley. On different sides of the political divide, they belonged to a combative cohort of new members, appropriate perhaps for an election that brought Jack Lang to government for the first time. Far from avoiding controversy and littered with interjections, Cahill's own inaugural speech, made during the address-in-reply debate, was deliverered in fighting terms. It was long and hard hitting, taking on the big class issues of the day, including working hours, unemployment, and the continuing fallout from the railway strikes of 1917. When Cahill rounded on the National Party member for the North Shore, Scott Fell, telling him that he regarded 'those whom you employ in your workshops as mere pieces of machinery', there followed this angry exchange:

> Mr Scott Fell: That is not true!
>
> Mr Cahill: It is true. Your experience only reaches as far as your office, where you sit in the midst of luxury.
>
> Mr Scott Fell: That is not true either. I started from scratch![31]

It was no time for faint hearts. The address-in-reply was moved by Dr Evatt (Balmain) who started by acknowledging that the 27th Parliament would be memorable 'because this is the first occasion on which a woman has been elected to this Assembly', a comment that provoked an unidentified Opposition member to interject, 'She is not on your side though!'[32]

So it went on, until Miss Preston-Stanley (Eastern Suburbs) got to her feet some days later, again during the address-in-reply debate, to make what has become perhaps the most remarked upon inaugural speech in NSW political history. Rejecting the view that women should be protected from the 'hurly-burly' of politics, in her feminist guise she argued that as tax-payers and workers women were touched by every 'turn of the political wheel'. Never one to mince words, she said that women 'are subject to the laws you make, the inadequate wages you impose, the taxes you collect, the injustices you perpetuate, the anomalies you tolerate, and they suffer under the vital and important matters you forget to handle'.[33] That part of her speech ended with a strong statement of the contribution that only women can make to 'the life of the nation' and by emphasising that 'women's questions are national questions, and that national questions are women's questions', all of which was heard without interruption, as was her acknowledgement of the assistance provided to her by the Speaker and the officers of the House. From there the speech focused on the pressing health issues facing women and children, including the preventable deaths of 300 women a year in childbirth. The first interjection came from Nationalist's James Arkins (St George) who asked 'Are not many of the causes parental?'

From this feminist platform Preston-Stanley diverged to argue at length for the reform of the criminal justice system and the state control of breeding founded on the science of eugenics, an issue which she referred to as 'the question of the feeble-minded' or the 'pests which are undermining the tree of life'.[34] Obviously ever since the Second World War such views have become highly controversial but, dubious as they may be at any time, they were less shocking and extreme in the 1920s and were heard in silence.

Only after she had commented on the 'trifling and contemptible issues' which split her own side of politics, the National and Country parties, did she seek to directly address the content of the Governor's speech, taking up the cudgels in particular against the proposed 44 hours week. It was then the interruptions started in earnest, with Labor members disputing her claims about 'ca'canny' and 'go slow' industrial practices. Returning to her feminist theme, she said:

> Furthermore, from the woman's point of view, has the Labor Party ever thought of even an eighty-eight hours week for women? Goodness me! the average woman works 112 hours per week, and she is lucky if she gets through in her work in that time.[35]

From there the speech lost some direction and momentum, engaging in contemporary controversies, among them Lang's treatment of public servant Bertram Stevens, who had been driven out of Treasury. Nonetheless, in all it was a brave and politically charged speech, as radical as it was conservative, fiercely impersonal, barely mentioning her electorate let alone her personal history, a speech that certainly stretched the usual boundaries without breaking apart the rather loose fitting conventions in place in the Assembly. With interjections more the norm than the exception in the Assembly in this

period, it is not quite accurate to suggest, as Brennandoes, that those interjections were prompted solely by gender.[36]

The political and the personal: Compared to the boisterous Lang years, after 1945 some of the heat had gone out of the political debate in NSW. Robert Askin became a member in 1950 and made his inaugural speech during the address-in-reply debate. Askin referred extensively to matters affecting his constituency (Collaroy), including the Surf Life Saving Association, and to the politics of the day, but was silent on personal issues, giving no acknowledgement to his political supporters, mentors or family.[37] This seemed to be the practice at the time, where thanks were restricted to the electors of the relevant constituency and sometimes to parliamentary staff.

The distinction that was maintained, up until the 1980s at least, between the public and private spheres is evident in the restraint shown in the inaugural speech made on 7 August 1974 by Mary Meillion, the first female Liberal Party member elected to the Assembly for the seat of Murray, previously held by her father JA Lawson since 1932.[38] Her father is mentioned as is her mother but only briefly and unsentimentally. The speech, which proceeded without interjection, concentrating almost entirely on the issues facing the Murray region.

Some inaugural speeches continued to provoke. Elected to the Assembly at a by election, Bob Carr's inaugural speech was made on 23 November 1983 as part of the second reading debate on the three cognate police regulation Bills.[39] He spoke on the history of the Maroubra electorate and its representation, in praise of Sir William McKell and in support of the Bills, arguing in strong terms in favour of the Wran Government's attempts to 'purify New South Wales civic life after the debauchery of the Askin years'. The more tendentious remarks prompted the interjection 'Return to the good years' by the member for Eastwood, JA Clough. Cognisant of the conventions at issue, self-consciously echoing D'Israeli and Whitlam, Carr retorted 'The time will come when you may interrupt'.[40]

Still true to the political model, by the 1990s first speeches tended to make some acknowledgement of family ties. Barry O'Farrell's first speech was delivered on 19 September 1995[41] during the second reading debate on the Endangered Fauna (Interim Protection) Bill. In the speech Mr O'Farrell veered away from commenting on the Bill to reflect on his constituency of Northcott and its former member, Bruce Baird, as well as at the close to thank his family. The speech also articulated his views on the democratic system of politics and on his own Liberal political philosophy, stating (in part):

> All of us enter this place with a set of beliefs, values and experiences that we hope will add to party-room and parliamentary debate. Obviously, my political philosophy is Liberal. It is liberal in its concern for the rights of the individual and it is conservative in its respect for the values of the past, and recognises the limitations of both individuals and government. Many find it difficult to come to terms with the existence of both liberal and conservative strands in Liberal Party philosophy. Countless pointless debates occur on the issue and I appreciate that nothing I say will end them. However, for me there is no difficulty; instead of a problem, I see a strength.[42]

Into the 21st century, while inaugural speeches can still carry weighty political messages, many of them also contain 'softer' elements. Migrant histories are celebrated, as are family relationships generally. Making her inaugural speech on 20 May 2003 Kristina Keneally (Heffron) said: 'My children remind me that small things matter; that learning to do up buttons on your pyjamas or pouring your own cereal is important'.[43] Imagine Joe Cahill or Robert Askin getting to their feet to say such a thing on the floor of the Assembly, traditionally a bastion of 'blokeyness'.

NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

The nominated and indirectly elected Council: The position in the Council is made more complicated by the changing methods of appointment or election to the Upper House, which was a nominated Chamber from 1856 to 1934, then indirectly elected by an electoral college of members of both Houses up until 1978, and only fully directly elected since 1984. From 1856 to its reconstitution in 1861 appointments to the Council were for five years only; it is doubtful that the conventions of first speeches operated in this 'quinquennial' Council, if only because it comprised very experienced men, many of whom had served in the Legislative Council in the pre-responsible government era.

Later Premier, Patrick Jennings, started his parliamentary career in the Upper House, where he made his first contribution to debate in December 1867, a brief and straightforward comment on the terms of the Municipalities Bill.[44] It seems that inaugural speeches were not made outside the address-in-reply in this early period. Nor was there much, if any scope, for such speeches to be made even in that context, which up until 1875 was referred to a select committee, followed usually by only a brief debate.

The first volume of Hansard opens on 28 October 1879, the third session of the 9th Parliament, at which time seven new Council ??members took the oath, one a former Council President (Sir Alfred Stephen), five former Assembly members and one man, James Norton, who was new to Parliament. By this time, the practice of new members moving and seconding the address-in-reply was followed , with the courtesies only being departed from reluctantly. However, that appears to have been the full extent of the observance of inaugural speeches. As in the Assembly, at least up until the 1940s when new members spoke first in the course of other business, including in the second reading debates on Bills, no consideration seems to have been given to the conventions of inaugural speeches.[45]

The changing practices can be traced through the female members of the Upper House, from the first appointments in the pre–1934 Council up to the early 1960s. The first appointments, on 23 November 1931 in the Lang years, were Ellen Webster and Catherine Green. It was Green who uttered the first words spoken by a woman on the floor of the Chamber, in an adjournment debate on 23 December 1931, when she tangled with FS Boyce, formerly Attorney General in the Bavin Ministry and later a Supreme Court judge, over disparaging remarks he had made about Lang's latest appointees. Neither on this occasion, nor in her other early forays, was there any suggestion that Green was making a

formal first speech. Boyce was reported to have said that, since joining the Council, Green and Webster had swapped political sides, which resulted in this steely exchange:

> The Hon Mrs CE Green: I desire to state that I will never vote with the Opposition, nor betray the confidence of a body of women who place their trust in me.
>
> The Hon FS Boyce: I think it is only fair to say that I have never had any encouragement from the ladies![46]

Ellen Webster first spoke on 18 October 1932, after Lang's demise, to oppose the Farmers' Relief Bill. Sticking entirely to the terms of the proposed legislation, she described it as 'The Farmers' Enslavement Act'.[47]

In the more decorous 1950s, the first woman to speak in the indirectly elected Council was ALP member Gertrude MelvilleIn August 1953, in what was clearly her inaugural speech, she seconded the adoption of the address-in-reply, raising equal pay for women and the high cost of maternity among other issues.[48] Melville was followed into the Council by the redoubtable Edna Roper who, on 20 August 1958, was granted the honour of moving the adoption of the address-in-reply, taking that opportunity to acknowledge Melville's ground breaking contribution in the fight for economic equality for women.[49] More telling still than these more formal occasions was the short speech of Labor's Anne Press in December 1959 on the Gaming and Betting (Poker Machines) Bill, in which she looked forward to a time when 'these iniquitous monsters are banned'.[50] Press's contribution was recognised by the next speaker, Hector Clayton, as 'her maiden speech',[51] something which would not have occurred in the nominated Council or, it would seem, in the early years of its indirectly elected successor. Speaking in the debate on the budget on 20 October 1963, the first Liberal member of the Council, Eileen Furley delivered a copybook inaugural speech, which started 'To make my first speech as a member of this Parliament is, to me, a rather emotional experience', sentiments that would not have been echoed in the all-male Assembly in this period. Furley went on to make reference to her nominal predecessor, to thank members and staff and to speak widely on housing, education and youth related issues, all without interjection.[52] Clearly the equivalent of the modern inaugural speech had arrived in the Upper House.

The contemporary period: The practice and conventions that apply to the Council in the modern period are set out in detail in *NSW Legislative Council Practice* by Lynn Lovelock and John Evans.[53] Unlike the Assembly, first speeches continue to be made mainly during debate on the address-in-reply or the budget debate 'as these debates are typically wide-ranging and the issue of relevancy does not arise'. It is the case, however, that these days inaugural speeches are acknowledged as such in Hansard. Where these speeches are made in second reading debates on government Bills, the same conventions apply and 'the Chair has allowed wide latitude of debate'.[54] Rulings of the Council President, dating from 1982 onwards, are cited requiring first speeches to be heard in silence 'without interjection or interruption'.[55]

A window into the style and content of more recent inaugural speeches is found in three addresses from 1981, from Liz Kirkby, the first Australian Democrat, the Reverend Fred

Nile, the first Call to Australia member and Franca Arena, originally a Labor Party member and later an independent. As well as briefly thanking supporters and the like, Kirkby traversed benefits of proportional representation and such social issues as housing costs, airing concerns she said that were shared by all members, across all allegiances. Keeping to script Kirkby said: 'I shall not abuse the privilege granted me for this my maiden speech by discussing the highly controversial matters that are implicit in this large-scale programme of infrastructure borrowing'.[56] More autobiographical in approach was the Reverend Fred Nile, who spoke about his father and also canvassed the basis of his religious and philosophical beliefs, along with several issues of moral and social concern, touching on censorship, law and order and the 'gambling explosion in New South Wales'.[57] He was followed by Franca Arena who gave an account of her migrant background, spoke of her commitment to Labor values and, going into more controversial territory, set out her republican views.[58]

Part of the same cohort was George Brenner, another Labor member with an autobiographical tale to tell of his early life in wartime Hungary.[59] The content depended very much on personality, background and the like. The variation in approach, with the shifting balance between the more personal and purely political, is on display in John Hannaford's speech from August 1984, very much a political creation and particularly noteworthy for its advocacy of a stronger committee system in the Upper House.[60]

Taken together these speeches are a reasonable reflection of the kinds of first speeches in the contemporary Council, in which more personal elements feature before they do as a regular part of speeches in the Assembly. This may have something to do with the greater number of women in the Council Chamber and to its more fluid party mix in the directly elected era. When David Oldfield, the first and (to date) only representative of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party, elected in 1999, made his first speech, he raised the controversial issues of race and multiculturalism, at the same time speaking at some length about his family's history, military and otherwise. Speaking of his parents and siblings, he said 'I only pray I will one day be as good as them and my brother and sisters'.[61]

CONCLUSION

Since the 1980s and certainly into the 1990s in both Houses, but particularly in the Legislative Assembly, there has been a noticeable shift in the content of inaugural speeches, towards a more public sharing of personal background and experience. Increasingly, family life and history is discussed, as are autobiographical reflections, matters which to some extent at least would have been considered private and ill-suited to public airing not that many decades ago. This applies with particular force to the Assembly, built on and dominated for long years by unreconstructed male attitudes and standards of conduct. Public life in general has shifted, taking the culture of the Assembly along with it. The influx of women into the House, albeit modest by some international standards, has had some direct influence on this process; and in the wider world the barriers between the public and private spheres appear to be weakening, if not actually dissolving. The changing

content of inaugural speeches in the NSW Legislative Assembly is one small window into this new landscape.

The same might be said of the Legislative Council, except that the changing culture seems to have emerged there earlier, for it is a House where a different atmosphere has prevailed. The Council is less intense in its relationship with power politics. It also has more women members historically and from the early 1980s on has experienced the impact of minor parties. . The precise reasons are hard to identify, but they would seem to lie somewhere within that causal constellation. Now the Assembly's inaugural speeches are similar to the Council's, the one distinguishing feature being the Assembly's references to distinct geographical constituencies, whereas in the Council that reference remains the State as a whole, along with any constituencies of interests or ideas that might apply.

Inaugural speeches in both Houses remain essentially political in nature, based on issues, values and concerns. Admittedly, there is nothing to compare to Millicent Preston-Stanley in the contemporary period, but that is not to say that first speeches cannot be politically tough, perhaps even controversial on occasions. Historically, at least, the NSW Parliament and the Assembly in particular, was known for its aggressive political style, its no-holds-barred debates which were not for the faint-hearted. This paper show that the history of inaugural speeches point to an era when the rule against interruption or interjection was only intermittently applied. This was certainly the situation before the Second World War, even in the address-in-reply debate where some regard was paid to the relevant conventions. On the other hand, over the past 40 years or so the conventions that apply in other Westminster Parliaments have generally been adhered to in the New South Wales, where Members making their inaugural speeches have been heard in respectful silence.

REFERENCES

1 This paper is a revised version of Briefing Paper 4/2013 – *Inaugural Speeches in the NSW Parliament*.

2 http://www.womenshistory.com.au/image.asp?iID=313

3 For more detailed commentary see – G Griffith, – *Inaugural Speeches in the NSW Parliament*, Briefing Paper 4/2013. Note that, of the ten Premiers prior to Reid (in 1894), six were Assembly members from the start of responsible government and could not have made 'maiden' speeches in any meaningful sense at a time when all members were new.

4 The term 'maiden speech' seems to have been replaced during the 1990s, more as a consequence of practice than pronouncement.

5 For a commentary on the practices in other Parliaments see G Griffith, n 3.

6 Jack Lang was Premier of New South Wales from 1925 to 1927 and from November 1930 until his dismissal in May 1932. He was a State Member until 1946 and remained a divisive, if waning, influence, throughout the period.

7 For more detailed commentary on the contemporary period see G Griffith, n 3.

8 D Brennan and L Chappell eds, *'No fit place for women'? Women in New South Wales politics, 1856–2006*, UNSWPress 2006, p 23.

9 *SMH* 13 June 1860 and 25 October 1860; *NSW Index to Parliamentary Debates, First to Fifth Parliaments, Volume 1 – 22 May 1856 to 15 November 1869*, p 521. Identifying a Member's inaugural speech can be difficult prior to 1879 when Hansard reports of the NSW parliamentary debates started, especially when a Member's initial contribution was in the form of questions or comments from the floor of the House.

10 *SMH*, 1 September 1859. Up until 1922 it was practice in the Assembly for the address-in-reply to be referred to a pro forma select committee, a practice abandoned in the Council in 1875.

11 William Walker (Windsor) has been a member since 1860; Hugh Gordon (Tenterfield) since 1861: *SMH*, 28 January 1865.

12 D Clune and K Turner eds, *The Governors of New South Wales*, The Federation Press 2009, pp 298–301.

13 SMH, 29 January 1875; *NSW Index to Parliamentary Debates, First to Fifth Parliaments, Volume* 2 – 27 January 1870 to 9 November 1880, p 2905.

14 *SMH*, 26 March 1875; *NSW Index to Parliamentary Debates, First to Fifth Parliaments, Volume* 2 – 27 January 1870 to 9 November 1880, p 2684.

15 *NSWPD*, 16 December 1880, p 28 (WH Pigott – Canterbury) and p 29 (JH Douglas – The Murrumbidgee).

16 *NSWPD*, 16 December 1880, p 46 (WA Brodribb – Wentworth).

17 *NSWPD*, 17 December 1880, p 58.

18 *NSWPD*, 8 February 1881, p 280.

19 *NSWPD*, 17 February 1881, p 473.

20 *NSWPD*, 16 March 1881, p 962.

21 *NSWPD*, 22 March 1881, p 1082.

22 *NSWPD*, 27 October 1898, p 1936. For comment on the speech see – D Clune and K Turner eds, *The Premiers of New South Wales, Volume 2, 1901–2005*, The Federation Press 2006, p 122.

23 Dooley's premiership was interrupted by Fuller's seven hour premiership on 20 December 1921.

24 *NSWPD*, 15 October 1907, p 129.

25 *NSWPD*, 15 October 1907, p 134.

26 *NSWPD*, 29 July 1914, p 498.

27 *NSWPD*, 17 July 1917, p 51.

28 *NSWPD*, 31 July 1917, p 316.

29 *NSWPD*, 31 July 1917, p 319.

30 *NSWPD*, 31 July 1917, p 324. For comment on the speech see – C Cunneen, *William John McKell: Boilermaker, Premier, Governor-General*, UNSW Press 2000, p 58.

31 *NSWPD*, 19 August 1925, p 245.

32 *NSWPD*, 12 August 1925, p 66.

33 *NSWPD*, 26 August 1925, p 369.

34 *NSWPD*, 26 August 1925, pp 374–375.

35 *NSWPD*, 26 August 1925, p 377.

36 *'No fit place for women'? Women in New South Wales politics, 1856–2006*, p 24.

37 *NSWPD*, 26 September 1950, p 358.

38 *NSWPD*, 7 August 1974, p 76. Meillon was elected at a by-election held on 6 October 1973.

39 Carr was elected at the by-election held on 22 October 1983.

40 *NSWPD*, 23 November 1983, pp 3327–3331. In 1953, Gough Whitlam's first speech had been interrupted by John McEwen, to which Whitlam replied: 'I thought that the Minister for Commerce and Agriculture (Mr. McEwen) had returned to the more congenial climate of Disraeli's day. I recollect that Disraeli said, on the occasion of his maiden speech, 'The time will come when you shall hear me'. Perhaps I should say, 'The time will come when you may interrupt me''. *Commonwealth Hansard (HR)*, 19 March 1953, p 1423 (a second member, RG Pollard, also interjected and the Speaker called for 'complete silence').

41 O'Farrell was elected at the general election of March 1995.

42 *NSWPD*, 19 September 1995, p 1094.

43 *NSWPD*, 20 May 2003, p 734.

44 *SMH*, 13 December 1867; *NSW Index to Parliamentary Debates, First to Fifth Parliaments, Volume 1 – 22 May 1856 to 15 November 1869*, p 1296.

45 See for example *NSWPD*, 4 December 1879, p 478 (J Stewart); 10 December 1879, p 534 (E Flood); 17 December 1879, p 629 (G Oakes).

46 *NSWPD*, 23 December 1931, p 7651.

47 *NSWPD*, 18 October 1932, p 1151.

48 *NSWPD*, 12 August 1953, p 9.

49 *NSWPD*, 20 August 1958, p 10.

50 *NSWPD*, 2 December 1959, p 2529.

51 *NSWPD*, 2 December 1959, p 2530.

52 *NSWPD*, 30 October 1963, p 6014. Furley filled a vacancy produced by the death of Leicester Saddington.

53 *NSW Legislative Council Practice*, Federation Press 2008, pp 334 –336.

54 *NSW Legislative Council Practice*, Federation Press 2008, p 335.

55 *NSW Legislative Council Practice*, Federation Press 2008, p 334.

56 *NSWPD*, 24 November 1981, p 622.

57 *NSWPD*, 25 November 1981, p 741. The Reverend Nile does not appear to have made a second first speech after his re-election to the Council in October 2004, following his resignation in August 2004 to run for the Senate.

58 *NSWPD*, 25 November 1981, p 744.

59 *NSWPD*, 24 November 1981, p 616.

60 *NSWPD*, 15 August 1984, p 89.

61 *NSWPD*, 26 October 1999, p 1909.