

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 27 AUGUST 1957

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Legislative Assembly.

FIRST SESSION OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT.

Appointed to meet

AT BRISBANE ON THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF AUGUST, IN THE SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II., IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1957.

TUESDAY, 27 AUGUST, 1957.

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT.

Pursuant to the proclamation by His Excellency the Administrator, dated 22 August, 1957, appointing Parliament to meet this day for the dispatch of business, the House met at 12 o'clock noon in the Legislative Assembly Chamber.

The Clerk read the proclamation.

COMMISSION TO OPEN PARLIAMENT.

The Clerk acquainted the House that His Excellency the Administrator, not being able conveniently to be present in person this day, had been pleased to cause a commission to be issued under the public seal of the State, appointing the Hon. George Francis Reuben Nicklin, the Hon. Kenneth James Morris, and the Hon. Jack Charles Allan Pizzey, Commissioners in order to the opening and holding of the present session of Parliament.

The Commissioners so appointed being seated on the dais, and the Clerk having read the commission—

The SENIOR COMMISSIONER (Hon. G. F. R. Nicklin—Landsborough) said: Hon. members, we have it in command from His Excellency the Administrator of the Government to let you know that as soon as the Members of the Legislative Assembly have been sworn, the causes of this Parliament being called together will be declared to you: And it being necessary that a Speaker be first chosen, it is His Excellency's pleasure that you proceed to the election of one of your number to be your Speaker, and that you present such person so chosen to His Excellency the Administrator of the Government, at such time and place as His Excellency shall appoint.

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The Premier thereupon produced a commission under the public seal of the State empowering him, the Hon. George Francis Reuben Nicklin, the Hon. Kenneth James Morris, and the Hon. Jack Charles Allan Pizzey, or any of them, to administer to all or any members or member of the House the oath or affirmation of allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen, which commission was then read to the House by the Clerk.

RETURN OF WRITS.

The Clerk informed the House that the writs for the various electoral districts had been returned to him severally endorsed as follows:—

Aubigny—Walter Beresford James Gordon Sparkes.
Balonne—Edwin James Beardmore.
Barambah—Johannes Bjelke-Petersen.
Barcoo—Edward William Davis.
Baroona—William Power.
Belyando—Thomas Andrew Foley.
Bremer—James Donald.
Brisbane—John Henry Mann.
Bulimba—John William Houston.
Bundaberg—Edward Joseph Walsh.
Buranda—Keith William Hooper.
Burdekin—Arthur Coburn.
Cairns—George Walter Gordon Wallace.
Callide—Vincent Edward Jones.
Carnarvon—Paul Jerome Remigius Hilton.
Carpentaria—Alfred James Smith.
Charters Towers—Arthur Jones.
Chernside—Alexander Tattenhall Dewar.
Clayfield—Harold Bourne Taylor.
Condamine—Leslie Frank Diplock.
Cook—Herbert Arthur Adair.
Cooroora—David Alan Low.
Coorparoo—Thomas Alfred Hiley.
Cunningham—Alan Roy Fletcher.

Darlington—Robert Leslie Harrison.
 Fassifern—Adolf Gustave Müller.
 Fitzroy—James Clark.
 Fortitude Valley—Robert Levi Windsor.
 Haughton—Colin George McCathie.
 Hinchinbrook—Cecil George Jesson.
 Ipswich—Ivor Marsden.
 Isis—Jack Charles Allan Pizzey.
 Ithaca—Patrick Joseph Hanlon.
 Kedron—Eric Gayford Lloyd.
 Kelvin Grove—Seymour Douglas Tooth.
 Keppel—Mervyn Herbert Thackeray.
 Kurilpa—Peter David Connolly.
 Landsborough—George Francis Reuben Nicklin.
 Lockyer—Gordon William Wesley Chalk.
 Mackay—Frederick Dickson Graham.
 Mackenzie—Neville Thomas Eric Hewitt.
 Marodian—James Alfred Heading.
 Maryborough—Horace Jason Davies.
 Merthyr—Samuel Raymond Ramsden.
 Mirani—Ernest Evans.
 Mount Coot-tha—Kenneth James Morris.
 Mount Gravatt—Graham Lloyd Hart.
 Mourilyan—Peter Byrne.
 Mulgrave—Robert Hodgson Watson.
 Mundingburra—Thomas Aikens.
 Murrumba—David Eric Nicholson.
 Nash—Allen Maxwell Hodges.
 Norman—William Edward Baxter.
 North Toowoomba—Leslie Arnold Wood.
 Nundah—William Edward Knox.
 Port Curtis—James Burrows.
 Rockhampton—Harold Raymond Gardner.
 Roma—William Manson Ewan.
 Sandgate—Thomas Gipps Ahearn.
 Sherwood—John Desmond Herbert.
 Somerset—Harold Richter.
 South Brisbane—Vincent Clair Gair.
 Southport—Eric John Gaven.
 Tablelands—Thomas Vernon Gilmore.
 Toowong—Alan Whiteside Munro.
 Toowoomba—Mervyn John Reginald Anderson.
 Townsville—George Keyatta.
 Warrego—John Joseph Duffley.
 Warwick—Otto Ottosen Madsen.
 Whitsunday—Lloyd Henry Scurfield Roberts.
 Windsor—Percy Raymund Smith.
 Wynnum—William Morrison Gunn.
 Yeronga—Henry Winston Noble.

FLINDERS ELECTORAL DISTRICT.

RETURN OF WRIT.

The Clerk informed the House that His Excellency the Administrator of the Government, acting by and with the advice of the Executive Council, and in pursuance of Section 87 of the Elections Acts, 1915 to 1952, had been pleased to extend to Saturday, 7 September, 1957, the time for the return of the writ for the electoral district of Flinders in connection with the general election held on 3 August, 1957.

MEMBERS SWORN.

The Commissioners, who, with other members of the Ministry, had been sworn in before His Excellency the Administrator on 22 and 26 August, 1957, and subscribed the roll, then administered the oath or affirmation of allegiance to the following other members, who thereupon also subscribed the roll:—

Adair, Herbert Arthur, Esquire.
 Ahearn, Thomas Gipps, Esquire.
 Aikens, Thomas, Esquire.
 Anderson, Mervyn John Reginald, Esquire.
 Baxter, William Edward, Esquire.
 Beardmore, Edwin James, Esquire.
 Burrows, James, Esquire.
 Clark, James, Esquire.
 Coburn, Arthur, Esquire.
 Connolly, Peter David, Esquire.
 Davies, Horace Jason, Esquire.
 Davis, Edward William, Esquire.
 Dewar, Alexander Tattenhall, Esquire.
 Diplock, Leslie Frank, Esquire.
 Donald, James, Esquire.
 Duffley, John Joseph, Esquire.
 Ewan, William Manson, Esquire.
 Fletcher, Alan Roy, Esquire.
 Foley, Thomas Andrew, Esquire.
 Gair, Vincent Clair, Esquire.
 Gardner, Harold Raymond, Esquire.
 Gaven, Eric John, Esquire.
 Gilmore, Thomas Vernon, Esquire.
 Graham, Frederick Dickson, Esquire.
 Gunn, William Morrison, Esquire.
 Hanlon, Patrick Joseph, Esquire.
 Harrison, Robert Leslie, Esquire.
 Hart, Graham Lloyd, Esquire.
 Herbert, John Desmond, Esquire.
 Hewitt, Neville Thomas Eric, Esquire.
 Hilton, Paul Jerome Remigius, Esquire.
 Hodges, Allen Maxwell, Esquire.
 Hooper, Keith William, Esquire.
 Houston, John William, Esquire.
 Jesson, Cecil George, Esquire.
 Jones, Vincent Edward, Esquire.
 Keyatta, George, Esquire.
 Knox, William Edward, Esquire.
 Lloyd, Eric Gayford, Esquire.
 Low, David Alan, Esquire.
 Mann, John Henry, Esquire.
 Marsden, Ivor, Esquire.
 McCathie, Colin George, Esquire.
 Nicholson, David Eric, Esquire.
 Power, William, Esquire.
 Ramsden, Samuel Raymond, Esquire.
 Richter, Harold, Esquire.
 Roberts, Lloyd Henry Scurfield, Esquire.
 Smith, Alfred James, Esquire.
 Smith, Percy Raymund, Esquire.
 Taylor, Harold Bourne, Esquire.
 Thackeray, Mervyn Herbert, Esquire.
 Tooth, Seymour Douglas, Esquire.
 Wallace, George Walter Gordon, Esquire.
 Walsh, Edward Joseph, Esquire.
 Watson, Robert Hodgson, Esquire.
 Windsor, Robert Levi, Esquire.
 Wood, Leslie Arnold, Esquire.

ELECTION OF SPEAKER.

Hon. J. C. A. PIZZEY (Isis—Minister for Education) (12.25 p.m.): Our first duty after hon. members have signed the roll is to select one of our number to take the chair to preside over our deliberations. I rise for the purpose of nominating Mr. Alan Fletcher, hon. member for Cunningham. I move—

“That Mr. Alan Fletcher do take the Chair of the House as Speaker.”

Of course, Mr. Fletcher has as yet never occupied the chair. To that extent he may be said to be an untried man. However, ever since he has been an hon. member of this House he has shown himself to be a man of sound judgment, ready wit, impeccable character, and a man held in high esteem by both sides of the House—perhaps I should say by the three sides of the House as it is now constituted.

I am perfectly satisfied that he will bring, not only impartiality, but also great dignity and decorum to the high and honourable office of Speaker. He is by nature endowed with all the necessary qualifications for Speakership. He is a man of very even temper, not likely to be rattled in a crisis, a man of sound judgment, keen intellect, firm yet courteous. He is a man possessing great tact, infinite patience, and a deep understanding of human nature. Not only will he ensure that justice will appear to be done to all parties, but he will carry out his duties in such a way that justice will be done.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. PIZZEY: Tradition and custom confer upon the person who occupies the office of Speaker a dignity and authority which could hardly be surpassed. He is historically the protector and guardian of the rights and privileges of Parliament against undue interference by the Crown or by the Executive. Happily the days when he had to protect Parliament from interference by the Crown have long since passed. No such need arises today.

Mr. Speaker's main function is to preside over meetings of the House in full session. Soon I trust we shall be dragging him “unwillingly” to the Chair. Thus is history expressed symbolically. It explains why the title “Mr. Speaker” is given to the one hon. member of the House who is not free to speak.

In the long struggle between the Crown and Parliament feeling often ran high and Parliament did not dare conduct its debates in the full light of day, for Kings had long memories and some of them could be very vindictive. On one occasion a King sent a posse of soldiers to arrest a number of members whose speeches had displeased him. In those days the House met in secret and no reports of the proceedings were allowed to be published. Members did not refer to each other by name when speaking, a custom which

is still followed. They communicated with the Crown through their Chairman. Their Chairman was the Speaker for the House of Parliament to the Crown. The Crown could be vindictive to Speakers just as it could be to ordinary members. Thus the Speaker was in a particularly vulnerable position and in those days the office was not keenly sought after. On the contrary, so much did members dislike being nominated as Speaker that they had to be dragged unwillingly to the Chair.

It is well to remember the famous words of that brave and courageous man, Speaker Lenthall who, when the King demanded certain things of him, said—

“May it please Your Majesty, I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak in this place, but as the House is pleased to direct me, whose servant I am here.”

It is a position calling for a high degree of understanding, infinite tact and patience and a profound understanding of human nature. What are some of his responsibilities—

1. Keeping order—merely by standing up.
2. Keeping members in order in another sense—that is in regard to relevancy of subject matter.
3. Selecting the speakers in debate.
4. Protecting the House against the encroachment of the Government. It is Mr. Speaker to whom members appeal to safeguard and enforce the rights of members against the Executive. Of these rights dimly won in past battle, Mr. Speaker is the custodian.
5. The protection of minorities in the House. In respect to Parliamentary rights, the humblest back-bencher is no less than a member and the most senior Minister is no more than a member. In respect of their rights as a member, all are absolutely equal.
6. Being responsible for the control of the affairs of Parliament.

I feel sure all members of this House will share my views that Mr. Fletcher is eminently fitted for the position of Speaker.

I hope that my nomination will receive the support of all members of this House.

Hon T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (12.33 p.m.): It is with very great pleasure that I rise to support the nomination of Mr. Alan Roy Fletcher to occupy a position rightly described by the mover of the motion as one of the foundations of our Parliamentary system and practice. In the years that I have known Mr. Fletcher he has earned my respect and admiration, and from those things has grown a deep personal regard which adds to my pleasure in seconding this motion this morning. It would be wrong of me or anybody else to submit such a resolution simply because a man happened to be my

friend. The reasons why I support this resolution are that in the years Mr. Fletcher has served in this House he has impressed me with the clarity of his thought and his capacity to express his arguments without any shameful personalities or anything that remotely savoured of disorder. His gift of clothing his thoughts in temperate language and his habit of fair comment all commend him to me for the office for which he is now proposed. It is not to be understood that Mr. Fletcher failed to have strong views politically. To hold such views is a great tribute to a member of Parliament, but to hold strong views and express them impersonally, decently and temperately is the hallmark of any Parliamentarian. It is as such that I support the nomination of Mr. Fletcher for the office of Speaker. I might say that his great gift of spicing his contributions with that dry wit with which we associate Alan Fletcher also indicate his fitness for such an office.

Mr. Fletcher has tremendous respect for the institution of Parliament, an essential characteristic in anyone who graces the office to which I hope this Parliament will elect him.

It is true, as we have been reminded by the mover of the motion, that Mr. Fletcher comes to this office without previous experience, but those who have known him through the years have come to recognise his devotion to duty in many spheres, and that devotion to duty will cause him to devote himself so assiduously to a study of the Standing Orders and rules of precedent that he will rapidly acquire familiarity with parliamentary practice and the functioning of Parliaments in British communities, and so fit himself ideally for the position of Speaker.

During the period I have been associated with him in Parliament it has been my privilege on occasions to accompany him to his area. After we had gone through some of the paddocks of the Darling Downs, hunting the elusive quail and hares, we would have a picnic lunch on a mountain in his property called Mount Russell. Sitting there surrounded by the things of nature, with birds flitting around our feet, and looking over that great landscape of rich countryside, we would discuss issue after issue of mutual interest. In dismissing the little, petty things that surround us in our everyday life, he displayed the great breadth of vision and broad perspective symbolised by that lofty eminence.

I hope in due course he is installed in what metaphorically is the Mount Russell of this Parliament, and that he will demonstrate his great breadth of vision and capacity to overlook the small and petty things.

His qualities will enable him to develop fully the judicial outlook that I think is an essential qualification of the office.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (12.38 p.m.): When I came to this Parliament and in fact before I got here a number of people

said to me, "Where are you going to sit in the new Parliament now that the Liberal-Country Party has been elected as the Government?" I told them, and I carried out my resolution this morning, that I proposed to sit where I have always sat since I was first elected to Parliament in 1944. I see no reason, because the previous Government failed and the former Opposition now occupy the Treasury benches, why I should change my place in this Chamber. My attitude is simply this: Governments may go and governments may come and empires may crumble into dust, but Tom Aikens goes on forever.

My parents did not give me a second Christian name, but if they had chosen to give me a second name and knew the man I was going to become, my second name would have been Constant or Consistent—Thomas Constant Aikens or Thomas Consistent Aikens. It does not matter where I sit in the House. It is what I say, what I do and how I vote that matters, and I am bound to be coming here for many more years for as long as I live. I will always do what I have done in previous Parliaments. I will cast my vote and raise my voice as I think the people of Mundingburra desire.

Mr. Dewar: Wait till the redistribution.

Mr. AIKENS: With the redistribution of seats, I may come down here and take on the hon. member. That will be his political swan song.

I have a few remarks to make regarding the Speaker-elect, and I hope my words do not fall on deaf ears as far as Mr. Fletcher is concerned. It is quite true, as the mover and seconder of the motion have said, Mr. Fletcher has demonstrated to members of the House that he possesses some very fine personal qualities. He also possesses some very fine characteristics, and he has displayed those personal qualities and fine characteristics in the capacity of a man and a private member of this Assembly. But, he is to be elevated to the Speaker's chair, and the real test of the man will come when we see whether or no he carries those fine qualities and characteristics into his office because far too often have we seen men carried away on elevation to office. As Shakespeare said—

"But man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high
heaven,
As make the angels weep."

I have a great liking for the hon. member and I sincerely hope and trust that he carries into the Speaker's chair the fine qualities that he possesses. If he does he will have very little trouble with me. I am only concerned with myself, I am not a bit concerned with any other member of this Assembly.

Mr. Hiley: You will find that he has a better gift of repartee than you—it is more effective.

Mr. AIKENS: I am happy to hear that. The hon. member for Coorparoo was not behind the door when the gift of repartee was handed out. Whilst on the question of repartee I noticed in yesterday's "Telegraph" where the Speaker-elect said that he was going to introduce decency, dignity and decorum into the Chamber. During the period in office of the former Speaker there were many occasions when we had decency, dignity, and decorum in the Chamber, but times when we did not. And that is the testing point. It is easy to be dignified and decorous when everyone else is dignified, just as it is easy to be a philosopher on a full stomach. I hope in my reading of the "Telegraph" of yesterday I have not misinterpreted what the Speaker-elect intends to do. I trust that he will not transform the Chamber into a glorified Sunday school but I hope he jumps with a heavy foot on any interruption. I am loth to think that he is going to stifle interjection or, as the hon. member for Coorparoo said, repartee, because I have always believed that repartee is the icing on the cake and without the icing the cake would be insipid and tasteless. I remember the hon. member for Hinchinbrook who is often etymologically right off the beam, but on this occasion right on the beam so far as common sense was concerned, saying, "If we are not allowed to 'repart' we might as well all depart." I agree with him.

If the Speaker-elect goes into the chair with the determination to see that every hon. member gets a fair go and that the proceedings of the House are conducted along the lines of ordinary decency and common sense he will have no trouble from me but if he is going to pursue a line, far too often pursued in the past, of deliberately picking on me and allowing other hon. members to get away with murder, I assure him that there will be times when he could be pardoned for thinking that a bag of wheat from the top of one of the stacks on his farm had unexpectedly fallen on the back of his neck. As Christ said, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap," and I commend it to the consideration of the Speaker-elect.

We heard a good deal from the Minister for Education about the theoretical part of a Speaker's job. I agree with what he said. Theoretically it was excellent, but the job is to put those things into practice. Far too often have we seen Mr. Speaker adopt the role of a one-eyed Boko. During periods of unruly conduct in the Chamber hon. members of the Opposition and I have been named and suspended, but never has that happened to an hon. member of the Government Party. It cannot be said that during those unruly scenes hon. members of the Government Party have been any less culpable than hon. members of the Opposition or I.

I suggest to the Speaker-elect that when there are unruly scenes in the Chamber and tempers are frayed and short, he not only sees to it that hon. members of the Opposition and I obey the customs and practices of Parliament, but that he applies the same rule to hon. members of the Government Party. I remind him, also, that far too often in the past have we seen hon. members of the Chamber deliberately goaded and provoked into saying something and, after they have said it, being named and suspended, whilst the hon. member who did the goading and provoking escaped scot-free. That is one way in which the Speaker-elect can protect new hon. members of the Chamber. I remember that when I was speaking on one occasion during my first or second year in the Chamber, a rank-and-file hon. member of the Government Party who later became a Minister—he has now reverted to the role of a rank-and-file hon. member—deliberately goaded and provoked me to such an extent that I was forced to reply. The then Chairman of Committees, who later became the Speaker, named me and I was suspended. It is in the records of Parliament and in the Press, that I said to the Chairman of Committees, "Never mind about naming me, why don't you name that dill?" As I say, I was named and suspended, but the hon. member who deliberately provoked and goaded me escaped scot-free. In fact, for some time afterwards he went round the House boasting that he had deliberately provoked me into replying to his interjections so that I would be suspended. I shall not mention his name; he is sitting over there now, grinning like a Cheshire cat. I have forgotten the incident, but I remember the lesson.

As I say, the main job of a Speaker is, firstly, to be honestly and sincerely impartial and, secondly, to protect new hon. members of the Chamber from the provocation and goading of other hon. members. I do not care how the House is conducted. It can be conducted in the atmosphere of a sanctified Sunday school, and I shall bring in my little prayer book and be just as sanctified as anybody else. Or it can be conducted in the atmosphere of a Bordello or a dive at Petrie Terrace or Spring Hill and I shall be right there acting in accordance with the rules as set down. Any rules will suit me. However, I hope we shall have sensible rules. We had them in patches under the previous Speaker, but there were times when we did not.

My attitude towards the present Government is exactly the same as it was towards the previous Government. I shall continue to sit in my eminent position with my converted 4.7 naval gun fully loaded and trained straight at the ministerial bench. And I will use my gun as often as I think the people of Mundingburra would want me to pull the trigger. I know that the hon. member for Clayfield, the Chairman of Committees-elect, smiled very broadly when I used the metaphor of a converted 4.7 naval

gun because I understand that he commanded a battery of such artillery with considerable gallantry at Rorke's Drift or perhaps Omdurman.

I will give Mr. Speaker what he gives to me. If he wants fairness and decency, I will give him fairness and decency. I have demonstrated in the years that I have been in this Chamber and in my own electorate that if a man gives me a fair go I can be as gentle as the handclasp of a little child, but if he wants it rough he can have it rough. I repeat that I have a very high regard for the Speaker-elect as a man and as a private member. I hope he takes his admirable characteristics into the Speaker's chair with him. If he does not, if he becomes a tyrant or a pompous ass, then he can count me in the list against him.

Mr. Dewar: It is nearly lunch time.

Mr. AIKENS: I am just as hungry as the hon. member. I am speaking now because no-one can stop me and I will be guided only by my own conscience as to when I should stop. I can see the hon. member's lips drooling with hunger. I assure him I will stop in plenty of time for him and the rest of the members to go out for lunch. We know that all they are concerned about is their stomach and their pocket, or their bank book. However, let us get away from those frivolities and all that nonsense.

Let me say in all sincerity that I hope the House will be conducted almost on the same lines as those on which the previous Parliament was conducted. The exception is that when we have that unruly conduct that seems to be associated with Parliament at certain times, let us not have any more of that one-eyed attitude from the Chair. I will vote against every suspension of a member of Parliament, as I have always done, until a member of the Government is named and suspended. After that, I will use my discretion and judge the proposed suspension on the facts of the case. I will always vote against the gag because I think it is undemocratic. I will do with the Government what I did with the previous Government and my representations on behalf of Mundingburra and North Queensland will be the same as before. So now the Speaker-elect knows where I stand. The Government only partly know. I will tell them the rest on the Supply debate on Thursday, if I can get the call or, failing that, on the debate on the Address in Reply.

Mr. FLETCHER: Hon. members, I am deeply conscious of the honour proposed to be conferred on me and I submit myself to the pleasure of the House.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

There being no other nomination, Mr. Fletcher, on being called, was conducted by the mover and seconder to the chair. Speaking from the dais, he said: I formally acknowledge the honour you have done me.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier) (12.54 p.m.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government and myself I congratulate you on your election to the high office of Speaker. As you fully realise, your task will not be easy but we all know that you will discharge it with your customary sincerity, honesty and ability.

The office of Speaker is the most ancient and honourable in the long history of Parliament. In the British House of Commons it has been continuous since 1377. As we have inherited and adopted the procedures and the traditions of the Mother Parliament we attach very high importance to the office of Speaker. As pointed out by the Minister for Education the Speaker is traditionally the spokesman of Parliament in its relations not only with the Crown but also with other persons and bodies outside the Chamber. That is a point not always fully recognised by hon. members. He is also the principal presiding officer of Parliament and the guardian and custodian of its privileges. In that respect he has indeed many responsibilities. Often I fear the privileges and responsibilities of private members of Parliament are in jeopardy. I trust that during the time you, Mr. Speaker, hold this high office you will maintain and uphold the rights of individual members at all times, even against the Executive as mentioned by the Minister for Education when he nominated you.

As you are no doubt aware from your study of Standing Orders, you possess considerable powers. They include the power to issue warrants by order of the House for the commitment of offenders against its privileges. You can issue writs to fill vacancies in the House, for the attendance of witnesses and the bringing of offenders to the Bar for rebuke or sentence. I trust that you will exercise these powers with considerable discretion, particularly the issuing of warrants which may result in the commitment of offenders. I know the Attorney-General is worried about the present over-crowding in the gaols.

By virtue of your office you exercise very wide authority in Parliament itself. You are the arbiter of our debates. You control the conduct of hon. members and you have a general supervision over the officers and staff of Parliament House and its surroundings. Each and every hon. member has the responsibility to assist you to uphold the dignity of Parliament and maintain decorum within these four walls. I trust that the hon. member for Mundingburra who recently gave gratuitous advice as to how the House should be conducted, will also play his part in trying to assist you in your duties in upholding dignity in the House.

Mr. Aikens: You can bet your life I will do what the mob does.

Mr. NICKLIN: I trust that the hon. member will also realise some of the responsibilities that are involved in being an hon. member of the House.

I feel sure, Mr. Speaker, that you will consider returning to Parliament its full powers over its own affairs. I can assure you that you will have the assistance of the Government to that end. Unfortunately, over the years I believe that we have allowed quite a number of our responsibilities as hon. members to be taken away from us. We should retain all the powers that traditionally belong to Parliament. Within the confines of Parliament House and its surroundings Parliament should be supreme. You, Sir, are the Speaker in charge of its affairs, responsible to see that the privileges of Parliament that have come down over the years are fully maintained. As the Chairman of the House you are responsible for maintaining order during debates. It is your responsibility to decide all points of order that may arise from time to time.

It is an interesting fact that the Speaker never presides over the House when it is in Committee where most legislation is initiated.

Like my hon. friend the Minister for Education, I have looked into the reasons for this, and they are purely historic and traditional ones. In the early days of the British Parliament the Speaker was more an officer of the King than he was of the House of Commons. He acted as the link between the Monarch and the representatives of the people. He was in fact virtually selected by the King. The House of Commons desired the absence of the Speaker when it was in Committee, so that members could speak freely and without embarrassment and avoid the risk of the Speaker informing the King of members' views on the King's affairs, especially when Crown finances were under discussion. Further, if the Speaker were presiding he would be in a position to exert influence in favour of the King, contrary to a course the Commons wished to pursue. Today, the Speaker, although nominated by the party in the majority, stands above party politics in Parliament. As Speaker he represents no party; he is there to give justice to all and protect the rights of individual members. I feel sure that you will maintain those very high traditions attached to your office in that respect, that you will impartially control the debates, and in your judicial role use your discretion in enforcing and interpreting the Standing Orders.

I feel that our Speaker has the respect and confidence of every member of this House, irrespective of his political beliefs. I am confident that his term as Speaker will be one which all members, regardless of party, will acknowledge as one of the finest in the history of Queensland's Parliament.

Mr. Fletcher brings to his very high office a wealth of experience gained in local authority affairs, experience gained in representing a very important electorate in this State, and experience gained in association with primary industries and the organisation of them in Queensland. As a result I feel that he is a very fitting choice for the high office

to which we have called him. I wish him well and a long and successful term as Speaker of this House.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. WOOD (North Toowoomba) (1.3 p.m.): On behalf of the Australian Labour Party I join with the hon. the Premier in extending my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, on your elevation to the high office you now hold. You now occupy a position that has been held with varying degrees of distinction by Speakers who preceded you, and not the least distinguished was your predecessor the hon. member for Brisbane. I can say without any degree of flattery that I endorse the sentiments of the hon. the Premier and state that you have all the qualifications and personal character necessary for the discharge of your high office combined with more than your share of mental capacity. You go to your high office fully qualified to discharge it with satisfaction to yourself and credit to the institution of Parliament. Not only will you discharge your responsibilities to your own satisfaction but you will also have in mind the authority and prestige of the institution of Parliament itself. This authority which means so much to us in our democracy is assailed in many quarters today. It is in the interests of hon. members and the people that we maintain the authority and prestige of Parliament. Of course, the obligation is upon us all to support you in maintaining the high standards of this Parliament. The members of the Australian Labour Party, will support you in all your actions however firm, while they are combined with justice.

I do not believe for a minute that you would display firmness without justice or allow firmness to develop into arrogance. It is foreign to your nature. In your firmness to uphold the prestige of Parliament, my Party gives you full support.

It is your duty to give equal justice to all hon. members, regardless of their position in this House and the Party to which they belong, whether they are senior Ministers or humble occupants of the back benches. I believe you will set out to do this. Members of the Australian Labour Party wish you well. We feel that the authority of the Chair and the prestige of Parliament will not in any way be dimmed by your occupancy of the high office of Speaker.

Mr. GAIR (South Brisbane) (1.6 p.m.): On behalf of the members of the Party I am privileged to lead and on my own behalf, I extend our congratulations on your selection and election by this Parliament to the high and exalted position of Speaker.

The duties of the office are onerous. It carries grave responsibilities. It is a position that calls for the highest measure of tact, common sense and justice. Because of the limited time we have been acquainted,

I do not know whether you possess the necessary qualifications, but I am prepared to accept the statements made by the mover and seconder of the motion, and I look forward confidently to the discharge with distinction of the duties attached to your high office.

As other speakers have said, all hon. members of Parliament are equally responsible for the preservation of the dignity and decorum of Parliament. I have said that repeatedly, from another place in this Chamber. On the other hand, in a Parliament of 75 hon. members, no-one could expect it to be conducted in the atmosphere of a Sunday school. I am sure none of us condones conduct which would have the effect of destroying the dignity of Parliament. From my experience of many years in this Chamber and as Chairman of Committees for a period, I think the cause of a great deal of trouble in debate arises from the failure of the presiding officer—the Speaker or the Chairman of Committees—to prevent the introduction of irrelevancies. With all humility I suggest that the Standing Order dealing with relevancy might be applied more frequently than it has been in the past. I have often witnessed scenes that have emanated from irrelevancies in debate, permitted by the Speaker or the Chairman of Committees.

Your task is an onerous one. I am sure all hon. members wish you well and in the interests of Parliament and those who elected us we trust that you will discharge your duties successfully.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am a little overwhelmed by the occasion. Although there is no need to say it, I appreciate the great compliment and honour bestowed on me both by the fact that this House has elected me to the office of Speaker and by the expressions of those hon. members who proposed my nomination, seconded it, congratulated me and offered their collaboration and best wishes. To those gentlemen I say, "Thank you most sincerely." I thank my friend the hon. member for Mundingburra who managed to attain his usual standard of impartial and impersonal approach to a problem like this, but I should say to him that although I think repartee is the icing on the cake there may be occasions, if I am guided by experience, when I might not like the icing on his cake and I might not even like his cake at all. I reciprocate his expression, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap."

I approach the task with some trepidation, of course, a very full sense of my responsibilities and with a real sense of my own shortcomings. The words spoken by previous speakers on my nomination as Speaker have given me great confidence. I think the task of a Speaker is a difficult one if he is to do his job well. It requires certain attributes of character which, to use the words of an eminent British jurist when speaking of what is required of a Speaker, "are not common

in their single excellence and are most rare in their happy combination." If I fail it will not be because I have not honestly tried, but probably because I lack some of those characteristics in their happy combination. Might I remind hon. members—and they do not need reminding because they have professed themselves in their speeches—that they too have a responsibility so far as good order and conduct of this House is concerned, a responsibility only different in character and degree from my own. Each of us represents many thousands of men and women and that is a responsibility in itself. We all recently took an oath the essence of which was that we pledged ourselves to carry out our responsibilities honestly, decently and to the best of our ability. In speaking of each other we should use the term, "honourable member." It is our responsibility to see that by our conduct in this House the term is not something in the nature of a mockery. I have always felt that the effective functioning of Parliament is almost in proportion to the respect accorded it by the men and women outside and upon our conduct depends their respect for us.

I refer to the remark of the Minister for Education on the need, and it is a need, and there is much wisdom in it, of keeping in mind the value of the old maxim of British justice, that it is not only necessary that justice be done but that it should appear to be done. In a debate clouded with prejudice and bitterness there is always likely to arise in the minds of onlookers the idea that perhaps we serve prejudice rather than justice. I trust that in the forthcoming series of debates we remember the charge that is upon us all in this regard. Possibly the occasion will arise—I have no doubt it will—when my rulings may seem unreasonable or oppressive. I ask you to remember on such an occasion that the Chair is not exercising a personal authority but is giving expression to self-imposed rules that the practice and experience of years have shown to be desirable.

I thank you again for the honour you have conferred upon me. Under God, I pledge myself to do the best I can. My attitude, even when I am exercising my small, temporary authority over you, will always be tempered by the knowledge that I derive that authority from you. We are all working together towards the same end, that is, the benefit and good of the State.

PRESENTATION OF Mr. SPEAKER.

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier): I desire to inform hon. members that His Excellency the Administrator will receive the House for the purpose of presenting Mr. Speaker to His Excellency at Government House this afternoon at 2.30 o'clock.

Mr. SPEAKER: I wish to inform the House that at 2.15 p.m. today I shall leave for Government House, there to present myself to His Excellency the Administrator as the member chosen to fill the high and honourable office of Speaker, and I invite such hon. members as care to do so to accompany me.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT.

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Premier): I move—

“That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 11.57 a.m. tomorrow.”

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 1.18 p.m.
