

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 1975

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Legislative Assembly

FIRST SESSION OF THE FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT

Appointed to meet

AT BRISBANE ON THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF FEBRUARY, IN THE TWENTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1975

TUESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 1975

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

Pursuant to the proclamation by His Excellency the Governor, dated 23 January 1975, appointing Parliament to meet this day for the dispatch of business, the House met at 12 noon in the Legislative Assembly Chamber.

The Clerk read the proclamation.

COMMISSION TO OPEN PARLIAMENT

The Clerk acquainted the House that His Excellency the Governor, 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 Honourable Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, the Honourable Sir Gordon William Wesley Chalk, and the Honourable Ronald Ernest Camm, Commissioners in order to the opening and holding of this session of Parliament.

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

THE SENIOR COMMISSIONER (Honourable J. Bjelke-Petersen—Barambah) said: Honourable members, we have it in command from His Excellency the Governor 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 Governor at such time and place as His Excellency shall appoint.

The Premier thereupon produced a Commission under the public seal of the State empowering him, the Honourable Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, the Honourable Sir Gordon William Wesley Chalk, and the Honourable Ronald Ernest Camm, or any one or more 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—

Albert—Ivan James Gibbs.
Archerfield—Kevin Joseph Hooper.
Ashgrove—John Ward Greenwood.
Aspley—Frederick Alexander Campbell.
Auburn—Neville Thomas Eric Hewitt.
Balonne—Donald McConnell Neal.
Barambah—Johannes Bjelke-Petersen.
Baroona—Dennis Charles Young.
Barron River—Martin James Tenni.
Belmont—David Edward Byrne.
Belyando—Vincent Patrick Lester.
Brisbane—Harold Bertram Lowes.
Bulimba—John William Houston.
Bundaberg—Eugene Dubois Jensen.
Burdekin—Valmond James Bird.
Burnett—Claude Alfred Wharton.
Cairns—Raymond Jones.
Callide—Lindsay Earle Hartwig.

Carnarvon—Peter Richard McKechnie.
 Chatsworth—William Douglas Hewitt.
 Clayfield—John Murray.
 Condamine—Victor Bruce Sullivan.
 Cook—Eric Deeral.
 Cooroora—Gordon Leslie Simpson.
 Cunningham—Jannion Anthony Elliott.
 Everton—Brian David Valentine Lindsay.
 Fassifern—Selwyn John Müller.
 Flinders—Robert Carl Katter.
 Greenslopes—Keith William Hooper.
 Gregory—William Hamline Glasson.
 Gypie—Allen Maxwell Hodges.
 Hinchinbrook—Edward Charles Row.
 Ipswich—Llewellyn Roy Edwards.
 Ipswich West—Albert Hales.
 Isis—Lionel William Powell.
 Ithaca—Colin John Miller.
 Kurilpa—Samuel Sydney Doumany.
 Landsborough—Michael John Ahern.
 Lockyer—Gordon William Wesley Chalk.
 Lytton—Thomas James Burns.
 Mackay—Edmund Denis Casey.
 Mansfield—William Bernard Kaus.
 Maryborough—Gilbert Alison.
 Merthyr—Donald Frederick Lane.
 Mirani—Thomas Guy Newbery.
 Mount Coot-tha—William Daniel Lickiss.
 Mount Gravatt—Geoffrey Talbot
 Chinchen.
 Mount Isa—Angelo Pietro Dante Bertoni.
 Mourilyan—Victoria Ann Kippin.
 Mulgrave—Roy Alexander Armstrong.
 Murrumba—Desmond John Frawley.
 Nudgee—John Melloy.
 Nundah—William Edward Knox.
 Pine Rivers—Robert George Akers.
 Port Curtis—Martin Hanson.
 Redcliffe—James Edward Hiram
 Houghton.
 Redlands—John Philip Goleby.
 Rockhampton—Keith Webb Wright.
 Rockhampton North—Leslie John
 Yewdale.
 Roma—Kenneth Burgoyne Tomkins.
 Salisbury—Rosemary Annette Kyburz.
 Sandgate—Harold Dean.
 Sherwood—John Desmond Herbert.
 Somerset—William Angus Manson Gunn.
 South Brisbane—Colin Charles Lamont.
 South Coast—Russell James Hinze.
 Stafford—Terence Joseph Gygar.
 Surfers Paradise—Andrew Bruce Small.
 Toowong—Charles Robert Porter.
 Toowoomba North—John Aubrey Ross
 Lockwood.
 Toowoomba South—John Herbert
 Warner.
 Townsville—Norman Reginald
 Scott-Young.
 Townsville South—Thomas Aikens.
 Townsville West—Maxwell David
 Hooper.
 Warrego—Neil John Turner.
 Warwick—David Wheatcroft Cory.
 Wavell—Arthur Pinkerton Crawford.
 Whitsunday—Ronald Ernest Camm.
 Windsor—Robert Edgar Moore.
 Wolston—Evan Marginson.
 Wynnum—William McMillan Lamond.
 Yeronga—Norman Edward Lee.

MEMBERS SWORN

The Commissioners, who with other members of the Ministry had been sworn in before His Excellency the Governor on 6 and 13 February 1975 and subscribed the roll (Honourable Russell James Hinze having been sworn in before His Excellency on 18 February 1975 and subscribed the roll), then administered the oath or affirmation of allegiance to the following other members, who thereupon also subscribed the roll—

Ahern, Michael John, Esquire.
 Aikens, Thomas, Esquire.
 Akers, Robert George, Esquire.
 Armstrong, Roy Alexander, Esquire.
 Bertoni, Angelo Pietro Dante, Esquire.
 Bird, Valmond James, Esquire.
 Burns, Thomas James, Esquire.
 Byrne, David Edward, Esquire.
 Casey, Edmund Denis, Esquire.
 Chinchen, Geoffrey Talbot, Esquire.
 Crawford, Arthur Pinkerton, Esquire.
 Dean, Harold, Esquire.
 Deeral, Eric, Esquire.
 Doumany, Samuel Sydney, Esquire.
 Elliott, Jannion Anthony, Esquire.
 Frawley, Desmond John, Esquire.
 Gibbs, Ivan James, Esquire.
 Glasson, William Hamline, Esquire.
 Goleby, John Philip, Esquire.
 Greenwood, John Ward, Esquire.
 Gunn, William Angus Manson, Esquire.
 Gygar, Terence Joseph, Esquire.
 Hales, Albert, Esquire.
 Hanson, Martin, Esquire.
 Hartwig, Lindsay Earle, Esquire.
 Hewitt, William Douglas, Esquire.
 Hooper, Kevin Joseph, Esquire.
 Hooper, Maxwell David, Esquire.
 Houghton, James Edward Hiram,
 Esquire.
 Houston, John William, Esquire.
 Jensen, Eugene Dubois, Esquire.
 Jones, Raymond, Esquire.
 Katter, Robert Carl, Esquire.
 Kaus, William Bernard, Esquire.
 Kippin, Mrs. Victoria Ann.
 Kyburz, Mrs. Rosemary Annette.
 Lamond, William McMillan, Esquire.
 Lamont, Colin Charles, Esquire.
 Lane, Donald Frederick, Esquire.
 Lee, Norman Edward, Esquire.
 Lester, Vincent Patrick, Esquire.
 Lickiss, William Daniel, Esquire.
 Lindsay, Brian David Valentine, Esquire.
 Lockwood, John Aubrey Ross, Esquire.
 Lowes, Harold Bertram, Esquire.
 McKechnie, Peter Richard, Esquire.
 Melloy, John, Esquire.
 Miller, Colin John, Esquire.
 Moore, Robert Edgar, Esquire.
 Müller, Selwyn John, Esquire.
 Murray, John, Esquire.
 Neal, Donald McConnell, Esquire.
 Porter, Charles Robert, Esquire.
 Powell, Lionel William, Esquire.
 Row, Edward Charles, Esquire.
 Scott-Young, Norman Reginald, Esquire.
 Simpson, Gordon Leslie, Esquire.
 Small, Sir Bruce.

Tenni, Martin James, Esquire.
 Turner, Neil John, Esquire.
 Warner, John Herbert, Esquire.
 Wharton, Claude Alfred, Esquire.
 Wright, Keith Webb, Esquire.
 Yewdale, Leslie John, Esquire.
 Young, Dennis Charles, Esquire.

[*Note:* Mr. Alison and Mr. Cory on 13 February 1975, and Mr. Marginson on 20 February 1975, were sworn in before a Commissioner, and they thereupon also subscribed the roll.]

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier): I move—

“That Mr. James Edward Hiram Houghton do take the chair of the House as Speaker.”

Hon. Sir GORDON CHALK (Lockyer—Deputy Premier and Treasurer): I second the motion.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (12.29 p.m.): On this occasion, the Opposition will not submit a nomination for the position of Speaker. Clearly, with its present reduced numerical strength, that would be an exercise in futility. But let me make it clear, very very clear at the outset of this Parliament, we are still the Opposition—the only legitimate Opposition in the State of Queensland—we will not, because of temporary numerical deficiencies, be a rubber stamp for the political extremes of the Premier and his ruling National Party. I do not care if we are outvoted 71 to 11 time and time again. We will continue to fight against policies, philosophies and, in some cases, fantasies which we believe are contrary to the best long-term interests of our State and our nation.

As I said, we will not be nominating for the Speakership. But this debate provides the opportunity to test the political sincerity of the Liberal Party; to test the sincerity of a Liberal Party which says every three years that it can, and should, govern but then settles for a role of political inferiority beneath the minority National Party.

I say to members of the Liberal Party in this Chamber: we are prepared, in the peculiar, almost unique, circumstances of this Parliament, to give you your long-desired chance to govern. We will, if you have the courage to co-operate, make Sir Gordon Chalk the Premier of this State. We seek no coalition, no guarantees and no ministerial representations. However, we are prepared to vote solidly in this Parliament to endorse the policies which the Treasurer, on behalf of the Liberal Party, has expounded for improved Commonwealth-State co-operation. We will support your legislation where it does not infringe humanitarian policies or principles.

We have no affinity with the Liberal Party. Its objectives are, in most instances, foreign to those of myself and my party. But we do believe, at a time when Australians are looking for a co-operative approach to very serious domestic problems, that the attitudes expressed by the Treasurer are far more rational than the fanatical desire for national disruption pursued by the Premier.

I believe that there are grave dangers for Queensland in the present situation, where exaggerated power rests in the lap of a Premier who has shown a frightening adherence to political obsession. The 7 December elections did not give the Premier a mandate to follow a suicidal course in national obstruction. In that election the A.L.P. won 36 per cent of the votes for just over 12 per cent of the seats. The Liberal Party gained 31 per cent of the votes for 30 of the 82 seats; while the National Party—the so-called apostles of democracy—needed only 27.8 per cent for almost 50 per cent of the electorates.

It is incredible that the political party with the least public support emerges from an election with the greatest political power. This is the warped, gerrymandered electoral mathematics that allows Mr. Bjelke-Petersen to govern our State of Queensland. The Liberal Party suffers as much as the Labor Party from it.

In the campaign late last year, both the A.L.P. and the Liberal Party proposed improved Commonwealth-State co-operation. The Treasurer, as Liberal Leader, publicly dissociated himself from the blind uncompromising attitudes of the Premier. In his recent talks with the Federal Treasurer, Dr. Cairns, Sir Gordon Chalk has demonstrated—fortunately for Queensland—the ability to put into practice the attitude of co-operation that he advocated and campaigned for.

In simple terms, on 7 December the 36 per cent of Queenslanders who voted Labor and the 31 per cent who voted Liberal—a combined 67 per cent of the people of this State—expressed their desire for better national co-operation and participation. Less than 28 per cent endorsed the obstructionist policies which the Premier now claims that poll gave him a mandate to pursue.

Already since 7 December the Premier has embarked on a ruthless plan to restrain and reduce the traditional—indeed, democratic—rights of Her Majesty's Opposition. Through what is termed Cabinet solidarity, he seeks to smother the identity of the Liberal Party and, on his slender 27.8 per cent of votes, exercise outright National Party control of this Parliament and this State. He will bind the hands and tongues of the eight Liberal Cabinet Ministers to National Party dictates and render their 22 back-bench colleagues, in this Parliament an ineffective, powerless faction of his Government. Through the medium of manipulation, he will achieve the degree of absolute control that only 27.8 per cent of Queenslanders want him to have.

I believe that any Liberal Party worth a grain of salt would rebel against such a tormentor. This is the chance that I give the Liberal Party today on behalf of the Opposition. If Liberal members have the courage to strike back at their oppressor, my cricket team will help them elect a Liberal Premier and help them establish a Liberal Government. There are no strings, no ties, no conditions.

This offer is made because of my deep feeling, my deep conviction, that our entire democratic system is in danger of destruction by one man—a deep feeling, deep conviction, that this Parliament is being manoeuvred into a position where it will be the captive of paranoid obsessions.

During this Parliament there will be a redistribution. Will the Liberal Party sit back and again accept electoral principles that are against Queensland and against the Liberal Party's electoral interests? Will the Liberal Party endorse boundaries that are designed to ensure its continued suppression and the continued suppression of the people's democratic voice? The object of any redistribution should be to restore some semblance of electoral justice to Queensland, but I believe that this will be impossible while a man who rejects normal electoral principles has virtual absolute power to determine the findings.

Queensland's parliamentary system is too important to become the personal property of one man, particularly when that man is one who has expressed time and time again views and attitudes contrary to the thinking of most citizens in this State, or any other.

If this offer is rejected, I believe the Liberal Party will have surrendered the responsibilities it holds to the people who voted for it. On 7 December the Liberals went to the Queensland people offering an alternative administration to that of the National Party—not as the permanent prisoner of a coalition dominated by it.

Sir Gordon Chalk campaigned as a candidate for the Premiership, not as an eternal deputy. In fact, as late as a month ago, the Treasurer still wanted to be Premier, and was bemoaning the fact that only 1,000 votes in five electorates prevented him from realising his ambition. I have here a copy of a letter written by the Treasurer, which was delivered recently to my office by the lady who received it. In it the Treasurer says—

"I'm flattered that you and a lot of your friends wished that I'd be Premier. Quite frankly, so did I but then there is such a thing as a majority of members in the party room."

The Treasurer went on to write—

"I'm leader of a section of the coalition Government but when policy decisions are being made or electoral boundaries are discussed the Liberals are the junior partner—with less members in the joint party room."

In other words he is a leader of surrender—a leader of submission. He is beaten.

In his letter the Treasurer continues—

"I think you will concede that the Liberals won more votes at the recent election than did the National Party, but the latter ended up with 13 new members whilst the Liberals won nine new seats."

Here is an admission by the Treasurer less than a month ago—an admission that, while the Liberals won more votes, they are in an inferior and an ineffective administrative position to the minority National Party. It is an admission—an admission from the Leader of the Liberal Party—that the Liberals are ineffectual in policy and redistribution matters and ineffectual because they sit in suppression under a National Party which receives less electoral support. I am quoting the Treasurer. It was his letter.

We are offering the Treasurer the chance to change this situation—the chance to give the Liberal Party a say and a chance to make his party effective. We are giving him the chance to become Premier, an office which he sought last December and still wanted less than a month ago. If he rejects this offer he can no longer say or write that he wants to be the Premier, and no longer say or write that he wants the Liberal Party to have a real say in the policies and redistribution of Queensland. If this offer is dismissed, Liberal Party members will have declared themselves the captives of a Premier who has already shown an obsessive ambition to erode their support in the cities of Queensland and to destroy their sister Liberal Party in the State of Tasmania.

I am giving the Liberal Party this opportunity to shake itself free of the humiliating restraints placed upon it by a political partner who receives fewer votes and is intent on its suppression. Never again will Liberal Party members be able to say that they did not have the chance to govern and did not have the chance to implement the policies they professed as important. This is their chance to show that they are fair dinkum when they say they want to govern and fair dinkum when they say that they are capable of governing.

When I conclude, I have no doubt that the Treasurer, who is a fairly shrewd old political fox, will rise in attack against me. He will probably accuse me of trying to stir political mischief within the coalition, and level a few other allegations at me. But he cannot get away from the cold fact that only three months ago—in fact, in his personal case, less than one month ago—he wanted to be Premier. Only three months ago the Liberal Party wanted to be the dominant partner in a Government coalition. In other words, only three months ago, neither he nor the Liberal Party was satisfied to endure inferior status within the Government coalition.

If the Liberal members reject this offer and show that they are content to languish in subserviency under the dictates of a man who believes that he deserves greater voting rights than other Queenslanders, I will be interested to see next year how they attempt to convince the Brisbane people that they should control the people's civic affairs.

This is the first day of the new Parliament, and the Opposition is already disturbed at the pattern evolving in the Government. Our representation on parliamentary committees has been reduced; our space has been confined; and Opposition members are forced to seek the privacy of the Botanic Gardens to interview constituents on delicate personal matters. There is a concerted attempt by the Government to impose involuntary parliamentary suppression. This is an assault on democracy as all Queenslanders know it.

The Premier, with his inflated power, has even more than in the past become a law unto himself. He tells Canberra to cut public spending, but has just returned from a wasted junket to London to mesmerise some Whitehall office boy with his fantasies of a Queen of Queensland. This Premier wants to upstage Mr. Snedden as the Federal Opposition Leader, wants to interfere in the sovereign rights of the New South Wales people to elect their own senators, and now obviously embraces plans to become the de facto Premier of Tasmania.

This Premier, who professes to be the champion of State rights, is in practice the greatest invader of State boundaries in the history of the Queensland Parliament. Not content with promoting disruption in Australia, he is now engaged in export confrontation with Japan, a confrontation which could risk long-term trading agreements and which is disowned by his own Deputy and Treasurer. This Premier wants in Canberra an embassy of espionage for the non-Labor States, but has failed over six years to honour his electoral promise to establish a State trade office in Asia. How can any Liberal Party sit in servility behind a Premier who is more interested in national and international conflict than in international trade?

The Labor Party accepts its defeat of 7 December, but I do not accept that the price of that loss must be the creeping destruction of democratic Government. Likewise, I do not accept that the 27.8 per cent of votes that the National Party claims as its mandate gives its leader the green light to do almost as he likes with the affairs and finances of this State.

The Liberal Party has, I believe, a responsibility towards its own supporters to assist the A.L.P. in exercising restraint on the excesses of a Premier who has displayed an almost fanatical flamboyancy for the extreme. Cabinet solidarity is an ingredient of political procedure, but it must not—I repeat; must not—be the medium for the

sectional submission of this Parliament. This Parliament must be made to work and it must be kept working. The A.L.P. acknowledges its responsibilities; I hope that in the numerical circumstances prevailing the Liberal Party will accept its responsibilities.

The Liberal Party has been a bridesmaid in the politics of this State for a long time. It has also been the timid adolescent of a strict parent. I know that there are many Liberal members who, like myself, are worried at the direction this Parliament may take. They are worried—I believe sincerely worried—that this Parliament may degenerate into a forum for propaganda against Canberra rather than remain the Legislative Assembly for Queensland. Let us not delude ourselves that it cannot happen.

Members who served in the last Parliament remember the way in which on a number of occasions and on a number of issues this Chamber was misused for a senseless, continuing confrontation against the Australian Government. The Treasurer has shown that he is prepared to endorse mutual co-operation on a national level. Unfortunately, the Premier, as yet, has not.

This Labor Opposition is temporarily small, but we will be vocal and constructive. The responsibility for ensuring that it remains constructive rests with every member in the House from the Premier downwards.

I conclude by saying that the Opposition will co-operate with whoever is elected Speaker of this Parliament and we will co-operate with whoever becomes the Chairman of Committees. In return we expect a fair go. Ministerial domination in the present situation must not be allowed to downgrade parliamentary participation.

I have made my offer to the Liberal Party, and I have done so in the sincere belief that the political meanderings of the present Premier reflect dangers that are contrary to the democratic principles of both Queensland and Australia.

For too long, fear, bias and bigotry have been forces of false power in the politics of this State. We have been administered by misrepresentation and blatant distortion. This is not good enough for Queensland and not good enough for Australia. I hope that after this speech today some of the Liberals at least will co-operate with the Opposition to ensure that these non-productive political tactics of diversion and division do not mar our deliberations over the three years ahead.

Hon. Sir GORDON CHALK (Lockyer—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (12.45 p.m.): I have listened to a written speech delivered by the Leader of the Opposition which, undoubtedly, was put forward with the intention of trying to create some disunity within the coalition Government of Queensland. I say here and now that I can have no truck—and I do not believe that

any other member of the Liberal Party would have any truck—with any socialistic Government or party that the Leader of the Opposition represents. He purported to make an offer to the Liberal Party. I do not believe he had authority to make such an offer; I do not think it would be endorsed by the Q.C.E.

As I came here without a prepared speech this afternoon, I do not have with me the statistics that the Leader of the Opposition cited. However, while it is true that during an election campaign I, as Leader of the Liberal Party, would be ambitious to become the Premier of this State (and any other Liberal leader would naturally have that ambition), the policy that I and others who followed me advanced in the election campaign was based on free enterprise and coalition with the National Party. It was on those issues that we went to the people. Those people who voted for the Liberal Party or for the National Party were voting for the return of a free-enterprise Government. That is the Government that has been elected in this State.

The proposal put forward by the Leader of the Opposition would not hold water for 24 hours. The offer was that the Labor Party would support a Liberal Government, that it would support a number of members elected from the Liberal Party to be Ministers of the Crown in this State. I ask quite bluntly, "For how long?"

The point of the matter is that if the Labor Party wants to endorse any particular ideas or thoughts that come from this Government, it has the right to do so. As time goes on we will see whether what the Leader of the Opposition said will be followed by other members of the Labor Party.

The approach just made not only came as a surprise to me but also indicates how far the Labor Party is prepared to go to try to cripple the free-enterprise Government that has been elected in this State. I pledge my loyalty and that of my colleagues to the policy enunciated by the Government when it went to the polls on the basis of a joint-party Government. The Premier delivered one section of the policy speech and I delivered my portion of it. I believe that the people of Queensland took advantage of the opportunity they were given to ensure the return of a free-enterprise Government. It is true that in some electorates there were very close battles between the Liberal Party and the National Party; but I accept, as does every other Liberal, the basis on which the democratic vote was carried out.

Consequently, I say to the Leader of the Opposition that I decline his offer and that I join with the Premier in ensuring that a free-enterprise Government will continue in Queensland. We will fight not merely for the interests of this State and its people but also for the development of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Mr. MELLOY (Nudgee) (12.50 p.m.): This morning the government of this State has reached a serious situation.

Mr. Lane: Didn't they give you a script to read like your leader?

Mr. MELLOY: I don't need a script. I can speak honestly without one, as can any other member of the Opposition.

The Opposition's offer to the Treasurer has been made because of his often-expressed desire to be Premier of the State. Time and time again he has been at odds with the Premier. The Treasurer has made statements that he could do a better job as leader of this State than the present Premier. The Treasurer has expressed doubts about the value of the offer by the Leader of the Opposition. What trust can he place in actions of the Premier, in view of the constant friction between the Premier and him, particularly in the last five years?

Sir Gordon has expressed to various individuals in the community his desire to be Premier. Now we are offering him the opportunity. If he accepts our offer, I am quite sure that the members of his party will support him. He cannot have it both ways. He wants to be Premier. He now has the chance. He knows that within the coalition his party has the majority support of the electorate, yet he accepts a subservient role in the Government.

The Opposition attaches no strings to its offer. It is concerned about the situation that currently exists in Queensland. The Parliament has come to the cross-roads in the State's administration. The Liberal Party no longer trusts the National Party. Now it has the opportunity to take the initiative. I repeat my leader's statement that there are no strings attached to this offer. We are prepared to abdicate our position as official Opposition in the Parliament and to take our place on the back-benches to enable the Liberal Party to establish stable Government in Queensland.

The Treasurer accused the Opposition of attempting to foster disunity within the coalition. Over the years disunity within the Government has been evident. On many occasions the Liberal Party has wished to break the coalition. The Treasurer has expressed the desire to do so. He has wanted to lead the Government in his own right. Now he has that opportunity. Will he tell the people in the next election campaign that he does not desire to become Premier of this State? Will he tell them that he is content to be forever the bridesmaid in the coalition? Of course not.

If he is honest with himself he will consider this offer. I am sure he recognises it is as a means to achieve the objective that for so many years he has longed for. There are no strings attached to the offer. We ask for no Government posts. In the interests of this State, we will support Sir Gordon in all measures. This is our offer.

If the Treasurer rejects it, he will be false to his party, to all the people who have supported him over the years as the leader of the Liberal Party and to all the people who wanted to see him as the Premier of this State. It is up to him to make the decision. It can be made without any misfortune befalling him. He has the opportunity to be Premier of Queensland. If he is fair dinkum and really wants to be Premier and does not want to wait another three years to achieve that goal, he should accept our offer. This will be his last chance to be Premier of Queensland. Take it from me that following the intrusion of the Country Party into the metropolitan area he is finished as a possible Premier by election.

I ask him to consider the Australian Labor Party's offer seriously and to accept it. We are sincere in making it. I put it to him bluntly: does he really want to become the Premier of this State? The opportunity is his; we offer it to him. It is up to him.

Mr. Hinze: You haven't got the numbers. You can't count.

Mr. Melloy: It is easy to see that members of the Country Party are extremely worried by this offer. We are not the ones making the noise. They will find that we are able to provide the numbers.

Mr. Aikens: Mr. George—

Dr. Crawford (Wavell) (12.57 p.m.): I received Mr. George's finger a moment ago.

Mr. Aikens: I am going to make my speech, Mr. George. I don't give two hoots for you or anybody else. Who the hell is that bloke over there? Where does he come from? We see him only once a session or at most one sitting day in every 10, yet he comes in on an occasion such as this and gets preference over me. Anyway, I will take pity on him and let him go first.

Dr. Crawford: It is nice to see the old man on the mountain retiring occasionally.

Mr. Aikens: I'm an old man, but I'm a clean one. That's more than I can say about you.

Dr. Crawford: That's only his opinion.

I realise, Mr. George, that you have little control over the debate, but it is important, I think, that some pertinent points be brought out following the new approach that the leader of the Australian Labor Party and his deputy have made to the Liberal Party. As a member of the Liberal Party I feel very strongly about this and it is for that reason that I am on my feet.

The result of the recent election is a damning indictment of the A.L.P. by the electorate in Queensland. Because of this, some tactics no doubt have to be adopted by the A.L.P. to try to recoup its depleted forces. At least the attempt is an innovation.

Historically we have been aware of the implications of Greeks bearing gifts and I should like to say that the voice of the A.L.P. in this Parliament is exactly the same as it was throughout the rest of the nation. Take taxation alone. In 1972, \$10,000 million was accumulated in the Treasury. By a party which had promised that it would not increase taxation that amount has been escalated to \$16,500 million in two years—an increase of 65 per cent. This is the Australian Labor Party.

The present social service attempts to hand out money to the electorate as a bribe, pure and simple, involve various things, including Mr. Hayden's social services Medibank as well as the national super-annuation fund. Medibank alone is to cost \$1,680 million if it is implemented on 1 July.

Mr. Porter: And that's only the first.

Dr. Crawford: That's so. I should like to state from this platform now, and very vehemently, that in no circumstances should Queensland accept Medibank or any of its ramifications, because if that alone is implemented taxation will increase throughout our nation by 7 to 8 per cent. The argument advanced in support of Medibank is that \$30,000,000, \$40,000,000 or \$50,000,000 will be made available to improve the hospital services of this State. That argument is fallacious, because that money can be obtained from Canberra by demanding it for our hospital services. In a television interview last night, Mr. Hayden said that negotiations with the Queensland Government were going along very nicely. From the tree tops I would dissociate myself from such negotiations, and I ask the Premier to note what I am saying. Under no circumstances should the Queensland Government negotiate with the Federal A.L.P. Government on this or any other subject, and under no circumstances should we go into coalition with the A.L.P. on this matter. The Queensland Government can obtain this finance from Canberra by other means, with no strings attached, to supplement and implement hospital services in this State. Under no circumstances should Queensland accept money for this purpose with strings attached.

Mr. Hartwig: It's another con trick.

Dr. Crawford: Medibank is the greatest confidence trick that has ever been foisted on to the population of Australia, and it is only part of the over-all socialist control of this nation. When the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition ask the Liberal Party to join with them in this confidence trick on the electors of Queensland, they indict their own judgment and insult the intelligence of Liberal members in this House and the Liberal Party organisation in this State.

The situation is even worse when one looks at the over-all tax position in Australia in 1974. If the over-all assessment made by

actuaries such as E. S. Knight & Co. is correct (and there is no reason to believe it is incorrect; it has actually been accepted by the Minister for Social Security), during 1974-75 there will be a taxation increase of 25 per cent to cope with the social services extravaganzas already in the pipeline from Canberra. Already there has been an increase of 65 per cent by an A.L.P. Government that "had no intention of increasing taxation". There will be an additional 25 per cent for the grandiose social service schemes of Mr. Hayden, and the con trick of Medibank. There will therefore be, in the tenure of office of the present Federal Government, a taxation increase of 90 per cent. If Queenslanders are, in the language of the A.L.P., prepared to cop that, they are great fools, and I believe that the election on 7 December pointed out, without any equivocation, that Queenslanders do not want to cop that tax burden.

I repeat that under no circumstances should the Queensland Government have any negotiations with the Department of Social Security for any money to which strings are attached, for social services in this State. The Premier has repeatedly stated in the various forums that he has been using lately that he will not negotiate for "strings-attached" loans or anything else. If Mr. Hayden's remark on television last night that negotiations were going along well means that Queensland is negotiating with the Commonwealth Government on this iniquitous burden on the taxpayers of this State, it might well become necessary for the Liberal Party to consider where it stood both individually and electorally in the future.

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) (1.4 p.m.): Strangely enough, I propose to speak to the motion before the House that Mr. James Houghton be elected Speaker of this Assembly. I would have done that about 25 minutes ago, but the honourable member for Wavell ran under my neck. Naturally, he is very eager to try to rehabilitate himself with the Liberal Party and with the leader of the Liberal Party. Had he paid more attention to his duties as a member of Parliament since becoming a member of this Assembly, he may have been in the ministry and Llew Edwards may not have beaten him for the position of Minister for Health. He stood up here today to try to rehabilitate himself and ingratiate himself with the leader of his party. Whether or not he succeeds is, of course, a matter of no concern to me.

I want to say in all seriousness that coming events cast their shadows before, and today we had a frightening preview of what this Parliament is going to be like with Tom Burns as Leader of the Opposition. If Dr. Crawford and the other two members of the medical profession in the Chamber had been doing their duty, they would have come over here while the Leader of the Opposition was vehemently and frenetically reading the speech that had

been written for him by "Barramundi Jack" and administered something to calm him down. He was on the verge of an apoplectic stroke, and I would not like to see anybody go out that way in the Chamber. It was a shocking exhibition by the Leader of the Opposition—and, of course, he is Leader of the Opposition only by a "set of curious chances", if I may borrow from Gilbert and Sullivan.

I think this is the seventh occasion on which I have taken part in the election of a Speaker of this Assembly. All the former Speakers have had their good points; all of them have had their bad points. I think that Jim Houghton will make an excellent Speaker.

I remember when he first came into this Chamber as an Independent. I was then occupying the room that I occupy now with Eddie Casey, but my room mate at that time was the late Arthur Coburn, and Jim Houghton, as we knew him, was put in with us. In those days I was a simple country lad, naive, unsophisticated, a babe in arms as far as worldly knowledge and politics were concerned. The 12 months or so that Jim Houghton spent with us in what was called "Uncle Tom's Cabin" gave me more knowledge of worldly affairs and more knowledge of political affairs than I could have garnered from any other source in 10 or 12 years, and I thank him for that. While he was in that room with us, I realised that Jim Houghton was a man of very fine, upstanding principles and a man of strict honesty and decency. Consequently, I know that he will make a very fine Speaker.

I am not going to deliver a panegyric for the almost total demise of the A.L.P.; I am not going to speak in any spirit of condolence. Look at them—a shattered and moth-eaten rabble of what was once a great and glorious party! But any political prognosticator would have known—from the split in 1956—that this had to come. They stalled it off for a while, but sooner or later it had to come, because after the split of 1956-57 the Labor Party turned out quite a lot of its old dinky-die, decent types of Labor members of Parliament and Labor executive members and gathered to itself all the smart alics and the Johnny-come-latelies, of which the Leader of the Opposition is a fine example.

Before 1956 the Leader of the Opposition knew nothing about the Labor Party. He was not a member; he was not interested in trade unionism. I have in my office a dossier on him—of course, I have in my office a dossier on most fellows—and in it there is a big newspaper article, flamboyantly and boastfully written by the Leader of the Opposition, Tom Burns, in which he says, "I came from the other side of the sticks." Of course he came from the other side of the sticks! He was reared in opulence, almost in luxury, and had no time for the

Labor Party. If a working man had spoken to him, he would have given the working man in charge and had him lumbered for vagrancy. But, like Percy Tucker and a few other men, when the split came he saw in it an opportunity for his own aggrandisement, and he has made a welter of it.

It is going to be a lopsided Parliament numerically, and it is going to be a lopsided Parliament as far as intellectual debate is concerned. Members have seen two exhibitions of that already today. I regret very much indeed that Tom Burns was elected Leader of the Opposition in this House. I am going to tell the whole of that story. The man who should have been Leader of the Opposition, and who was offered that position, was Martin Hanson. He should have accepted the office. But Martin Hanson said, "Now, look, I don't feel inclined to be the Leader of the Opposition, but I don't want Tom Burns to get it on a unanimous vote, so when the vote is taken in caucus, as long as you can get four or five votes for me to make a contest of it, I will be satisfied." The A.L.P. arranged for Martin Hanson to get four votes, and Tom Burns got seven votes.

I say in all sincerity that Martin Hanson owed it to himself, owed it to the A.L.P. and owed it to the people of Queensland to accept the position of Leader of the Opposition in this House. I know that he felt that acceptance of the leadership of the Opposition would have been akin to handcuffing himself to a corpse. But I think he owed that duty. He at least would have had some chance of getting the A.L.P. back on the rails, but for reasons best known to himself he did not take the position.

I will refer now to the very thing that has brought the Labor Party to its knees politically not only in Queensland but also in the Federal sphere, namely, the smart alects, the wisecrackers and the gimmick men. Tom Burns originated this idea. It will be remembered that he used to run over to America and then come back with great big placards and papers to indicate how elections were won in America. He talked poor old Barramundi Jack and all the other fellows at A.L.P. headquarters into conducting the A.L.P. campaign according to the smart-alec, the smart-crack and the gimmick principle.

In the last State election in the Townsville area we had this smart-alec, gimmick stunt in all its putridity. I have been associated with a political movement for 50 years, 15 of them in the A.L.P., so I learned the hard way, believe me! But in all of those 50 years I know of no campaign more filthy than the recent one in the Townsville area conducted by a protege of Tom Burns named John Rockett. Up there he is known quite rightly as "Repulsive Rockett". He is the organiser of the Teachers' Union.

The A.L.P. feared three candidates in that area: Norman Scott-Young, Max Hooper and myself. Honourable members would not have the faintest idea of the tactics that were adopted—the dinky-die Tom Burns tactics of abuse, slander and scurrility. I got off fairly lightly on the public platform, radio and television, and in the Press and the pamphlets and letters that were put into letter-boxes. I was merely described as a poor old doddering shit-stirrer who was tottering on the brink of the grave. I was referred to as a political joke. I did not mind that. But honourable members should have seen the stuff they churned out about Max Hooper and Dr. Scott-Young.

An Honourable Member interjected.

Mr. AIKENS: Any woman who is in this Chamber is here as a member of Parliament; she is not here as a woman. And if she is here as a member of Parliament and she cannot take it, her place is outside. That is my attitude to the women in the Chamber. It was my attitude to Vi Jordan and it is my attitude to any woman in this Parliament.

Max Hooper was upbraided on the public platform, on the radio and television and in the Press as a man who prostituted his position as mayor and alderman in order to line his own pockets. Honourable members should have heard what they unloaded on Norman Scott-Young. He was referred to as a loafer, a sponger, a bludger and a time-server. It was said that nobody could see him and nobody could contact him. It was asked, "Has anyone ever spoken to Dr. Scott-Young?" I do not know any man in Townsville who is more approachable than Dr. Scott-Young. I do not know any man in Townsville who is more personally popular than Dr. Scott-Young—except perhaps myself.

And the A.L.P. campaigners were not content with slandering and defaming him; they took on his family as well. Is it any wonder that the people of Townsville and the Townsville area said, "We'll show the Burns crowd what we think about their style of campaigning!" On Saturday night I was telephoned by the Press and other people and asked, "Have you any comment to make on Mr. Tucker's defeat?" I replied, "I have two words—'Mission accomplished'."

Let us look further at the A.L.P. campaign. Percy Tucker was the Leader of the Opposition. I have nothing to say about him as a man or a citizen; he passed muster in that regard as far as I am concerned. But as an A.L.P. politician he was of the same class as Tom Burns—a Johnny-come-lately smart alec. As Leader of the Opposition, he was a joke, and everybody knew it. We can all remember the drama that he staged—and I can visualise Tom Burns staging similar ones—when he was suspended. He went out of this Chamber screaming like a maniac, "Come out in the open, Joh, and I'll slaughter ya!" Well, Joh went out in the open on 7 December—and history will record who was slaughtered!

I am sure that all of us saw Percy Tucker's policy speech on television. It was, of course, drafted and typed for him by Barramundi Jack and his boys. We all saw Percy Tucker painfully and laboriously reading what Barramundi Jack had typed out, just as Tom Burns today read out everything that Barramundi Jack had typed out for him. Labor members are not able to make speeches with just a few note headings, as I have here; they must read their speeches. However, at the end of Percy Tucker's speech he gave a Fascist salute and, in a strangled voice, said, as I thought, "Get Joh." Later on I was told that it was not "Get Joh" but "Let's go." Well, they have gone!

As one who is always a fair and kindly man, I must say that I regret the passing from this Chamber of some A.L.P. members. A few of them will be missed. But I thought it was a wonderful tribute to democracy that so many of the A.L.P. no-hopers, smart alegs, gimmick men and wisecrack men were swept away on 7 December by the torrent of public opinion. They will not be missed.

As Deputy Leader of the Opposition there is a man who, despite his little bit of fulmination this morning, will bring some dignity and decorum as well as a measure of common sense and responsibility to the A.L.P. leadership. I am speaking of Jack Melloy. I have a lot of time for Jack Melloy. I do not know how he will go, nor do I know what the forces are against him. I do know, however, that if the Labor Party leaves it to Jack Melloy we will not be subjected to some of the disgusting exhibitions of frenetic anger and vituperation such as we witnessed today from the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Burns.

As an example, the other day he rushed to the media claiming that the accommodation provided for rank-and-file members of the A.L.P. in Parliament House is below standard. The accommodation provided for the rank-and-file members of the A.L.P. in this building is just as good as that provided for any other rank-and-file member of this Parliament. That is all the Labor members are bloody-well entitled to, and that is all they should get. But Mr. Burns, apparently, believes the Labor members are a class apart; he would think they are annointed of God and celestially begotten. He thinks they should all have the best accommodation, probably Buckingham Palace-style accommodation. Incidentally, the other day Jack Egerton was at Buckingham Palace, and I shall tell the House about his visit on a later occasion.

Accommodation in Parliament House is at a premium. When I entered Parliament, and there were then only 62 members, there was quite a lot of accommodation and a member could obtain an office for himself. But that cannot be done today. The result is that the successive Speakers of this Parliament have had to try to apportion the accommodation among the members.

Mr. Burns has complained that six of the members of his party are crowded into one room like sardines in a tin. I would point out to him that a few Parliaments ago seven members were crowded into that same room. But we didn't squeal. Nor did we run round like sulky, petulant kids saying, "We want better accommodation than this." We realised that that was the best accommodation the Speaker could provide at that time, and we were satisfied with it.

Let us remember that in 1953, when the Gair Government came back with what was a record majority of 50 seats of the 72 or 75—I forget which—Arthur Coburn and I were put into a room that has since become known as the "broom cupboard". That room still had the old box of sawdust in the corner and on the back of the door a very fine, hand-painted sign reading, "Please adjust dress before leaving." That was the type of accommodation given to us by the A.L.P. We had one table and one telephone. I remember that 14 members of the Country Party were herded into the big room downstairs, and they had only two telephones.

I have dealt with my next point on a former occasion. It is rather hard to get party members to understand it, but it is about time that they did. Parliament is not run in the interests of parties. Parliament is a collection of men who have been elected by the people and each member is equal. Yet the Leader of the Opposition thinks that this Parliament should be conceived and conducted on party lines, and that A.L.P. members should have preference over all others. Every member of this Parliament is equal and each is entitled to the same concessions and privileges.

I feel sure that our present Speaker-elect will not hold any grudge against the A.L.P. over the election of Mr. Speaker in 1972, when the A.L.P. ganged up to defeat him for the speakership. Mr. Burns, the present Leader of the Opposition and I were teed up to put on a debate on Channel 7. When I got there he squibbed the debate. He made his speech and I made mine. We were both asked about the election of the Speaker (Mr. Lonergan), and he said, "We voted for Mr. Lonergan not because we wanted him but because it is the duty of the Opposition to embarrass the Government on every conceivable occasion."

I do not believe that it is the duty of the Opposition to embarrass the Government. I think it is the duty of the Opposition to oppose the Government, to try to amend any legislation and to see that this House is conducted as a dinky-die Parliament. It is not the duty of the Opposition to go out of its way to embarrass the Government.

I say to some of the older members, who probably do not realise what is involved, and to some of the newer members that even in the last Parliament, when the numbers were not as disproportionate as they are now—I think there were 49 on the Government side and 33 on this side—Parliament

was conducted by the Speaker in accordance with tradition and that led to injustice and inequity so far as questions and grievance day and, I suppose, other matters were concerned.

I have been told that Standing Committees have been altered. Members of the Labor Party claim that no matter how many members they had then—and they now have only one-eighth of the members of this Parliament—they are entitled to one-half of all privileges and concessions. That is quite wrong on a democratic basis. Even in the last Parliament, when there were 49 members in Government and 33 in Opposition, the Labor party got half of all concessions and privileges. That was wrong. One day there was nearly a brawl during question time. On that occasion, a member, who is now a very dignified Minister of the Crown, conducted himself much like I did in my wild days out in Cloncurry when I was regarded as the No. 1 scallywag.

Mr. Wright interjected.

Mr. AIKENS: He was physically a large and a rather good-looking fellow. He put on an awful turn because he could not get an opportunity to ask a question. Another rough and rugged man from the country did likewise. There was some merit in the drama that they staged only because the Speaker, by custom and tradition, had selected the Leader of the Opposition to ask the first questions. I do not know why this custom is allowed to continue, but the Leader of the Opposition gets the first opportunity to ask three questions every morning. If only three questions are asked, they are asked by the Leader of the Opposition. Why should the Leader of the Opposition have precedence over anybody else to ask questions? After the Leader of the Opposition has asked his three questions, the Speaker then calls a member from the Government side of the House and then a member of the Opposition. He alternates his selections until the time for asking questions has expired.

Members of the A.L.P. always ask more questions than non-A.L.P. members. Quite a lot of time is wasted. I hope Mr. Speaker will do something about this practice. The worse offender of the lot, Bromley, has gone and I think whatever gods there be that he has gone, but there is another one sitting in front of me who is nearly as bad. He holds up question time by flippancies and facetiousness, trying to stage a little drama. I hope that that will end.

If the practice of alternate calls continues, the position will be worse than in the last Parliament. As the Speaker and Ministers do not ask questions, in the new Parliament that commences on Thursday 52 non-A.L.P. members will have the right to ask questions compared to 11 A.L.P. members. That is nearly five to one. I suggest to the incoming Speaking that the asking of questions be allotted on the ratio of five to one. Surely that is fair enough. He

should call one A.L.P. man and then five non-Labor members. That is only fair, democratic and just.

Turning to the day allotted to debate on matters of public interest, formerly known as grievance day, the situation is even worse, because Ministers are permitted to speak in that debate. Some 70 non-A.L.P. members and all 11 A.L.P. members will have the right to speak on grievance day. During that debate, which lasts for an hour—six members having 10 minutes each—it has been the custom to allot time to three members on each side of the House. Of course, that loaded the dice in favour of the A.L.P. If that custom is to be followed, A.L.P. members will have the opportunity to speak once every four weeks on grievance day, whereas non-A.L.P. members will have that right only once every 23 weeks. If that is fair, just and equitable, I do not know anything about the matter.

I finish on this note: the A.L.P. is on the way out. It is on the way out because of rottenness, corruption and cupidity at the top. I will not elaborate on Barramundi Jack. The story I tell about him one of these days will curl anybody's hair. However, in the Federal House is a party in worse odour with the people than any other party has been since federation. I do not know any political party that has stunk in the nostrils of the people more than does the Federal A.L.P. today. Its latest scandal is blowing up into one of the biggest in the history of Australian politics—one which has a parallel with the Watergate scandal in the United States of America.

When the Watergate scandal broke, of course, it was a joke. It was really a vaudeville show staged by half a dozen irresponsibles. Everybody regarded it as a joke. If at the time President Nixon had said, "This is a joke. There is nothing in it. I will hold a public inquiry so that the people of the United States and the world will see that there is nothing significant or surreptitious in this and there are no sneaking overtones," the whole matter would have been blown out of the window. But Nixon didn't. He began by duplicity and subterfuge in an attempt to sweep the Watergate affair under the carpet. The stage was reached where the people were so sick and tired of this sneaky attitude of the Nixon administration that Nixon had to do what no other President of the United States has ever done—he had to resign his office. His top-ranking officers at that time are now going to gaol.

In the Federal Parliament, we presently have a parallel of Watergate, known as the Ditchburn, or Morosi, case. I am a little confused as to what her right name really is. However, she calls herself Junie Morosi and that will do. At the outset let me say that I have absolutely nothing to say about what Miss Morosi does with her body. That is her affair, and her affair only. I do not think anybody has the

right to tell her whether she is right or wrong. What I am concerned about, however—and this affects me as a Labor man, because I am a dinky-die Labor man, and it should have affected Gough Whitlam and the members of his party, but they have been cravenly silent on it—is the charge that was laid in the Federal Parliament the other day.

The charge was that Miss Morosi ingratiated herself with one Minister or another to the extent that she was able to bring into Australia scores and scores of young Filipino women. She farmed them out at slave wages under shocking working conditions to anybody who would take them. They had to pay back to Miss Morosi's mother a percentage of their earnings. Then—and this is the worst part of it—Miss Morosi stood over them, by using blackmail and threats, and said, "If you complain about what is happening to you I—Junie Morosi—will have you deported." That is monstrous.

That charge was laid on the floor of the Federal Parliament and I would expect any Prime Minister or leader of a party against which such a charge was made to stand up immediately and say, "I can't have this said about my party. I will take immediate steps to clear the air." He could have said that.

I do not know whether the charges are true or false, but they have been made publicly. If they are true, or even partly true, they are a scathing indictment of the rottenness and corruption of the Whitlam Government. Any Prime Minister worth his salt would have immediately taken steps to have the whole matter investigated. Instead of doing that, he launched a vituperative attack on the Leader of the Opposition. Not that the Leader of the Opposition does not deserve it, because, when all is said and done every time that Whitlam gets into a pickle he can rely on Snedden, Gorton, Killen, Chipp and the rest of them to pull him out. In this case Whitlam launched a vituperative attack on Snedden in order to throw up a smoke-screen to hide the fact that he was trying, by subterfuge, deceit and deception, to sweep the Morosi case under the carpet.

I know what the people are saying about the Morosi case. They are saying many things that, quite frankly, I would not say because I am a fair-minded, tolerant man. A letter appearing in today's "Townsville Daily Bulletin" is pretty illuminating. When these things are being published in newspapers and said on street corners and at women's meetings, it is about time that any leader of any party against which the charges were made did something about it. If something is not done about it, we will have, in the Morosi case, another Watergate in the Federal Parliament of Australia.

Having made those few amiable, affable and conciliatory remarks, I hope that Mr. Speaker will take some note of what I have said about the lopsided nature of this Chamber

—the proportion of 7 to 1 or 6 to 1 in party representation—during question time and at all other times when members are to be called on to do something, and grant any concessions or privileges on the basis of the individual and not the party to which the individual belongs.

I congratulate Mr. Houghton on his nomination. I know he will be elected. I know he will walk to the chair very proudly because no man will ever have sat more proudly in that chair than Jim Houghton. I thank him for the advice and assistance he has given to me when I needed it. If he ever needs any assistance from me, I can assure him I will do my best to give it to him, although I will never be able to completely repay him.

Mr. MURRAY (Clayfield) (1.34 p.m.): I understand that the motion before us concerns the election of Mr. Speaker and I shall address myself briefly to it. The decision we are making is vital to the opportunity we all have to preserve and strengthen the institution of Parliament. I believe that Parliament treats the election of Mr. Speaker far too lightly indeed.

Two customs have grown up which I think should be challenged. One, in the narrower sense, is that the senior coalition partner has the automatic right to fill the position of Speaker while the junior coalition partner fills the position of Chairman of Committees. We should question customs such as this. We all recognise the importance of the role of Speaker in this Parliament, but the selection of Government nominee is restricted to the ranks of the senior coalition partner. If we accept, as I think we would in these circumstances, that the spate of new members would probably not be eligible for election by virtue of their lack of experience, in spite of their potential and qualities, the selection is made from a very small group of members of the senior coalition party. I think that this very definitely should be questioned. It raises considerable doubts about the wisdom of letting customs become too firmly entrenched.

The second custom to which I wish to refer is that Mr. Speaker automatically ceases to be Speaker when there is a general election. If there were a reversal of the strengths of the coalition parties, I suppose there would be a change of Speaker. This, I think, is quite frivolous, and should be looked into very closely indeed.

This all highlights the party-political approach that we have to the selection and election of Speaker of this House. What we should have, in an attempt to choose the best man for the job, is a truly deliberate selection of Speaker by the Parliament itself. We would then get rid of the first custom, and we could work towards abandoning the second, thus raising the office of Speaker above party politics and giving Mr. Speaker some continuity of office. He would then

remain in office until he left by resignation or decision of the House. I am sure that great benefit would accrue to the Parliament if this practice were adopted.

All who were in this House for a number of years when Sir David Nicholson was Speaker will recall how, with time, he improved enormously. He gained status, authority and respect, and it was time and experience that did it for him. The changing of Speakers, perhaps quite rapidly, is not good for the institution of Parliament. I therefore urge that we move towards raising the office of Speaker above party politics, even to the extent of parties agreeing not to contest his seat. The House would benefit greatly indeed if this were done.

At the moment, we live with what is virtually a closed-circuit system of selection, which means that it is quite irrelevant to deal with the merits of others.

Mr. Aikens: Would you like to see the English system instituted?

Mr. MURRAY: Yes. I think it has a great deal of merit.

I think Mr. Houghton would be the first to agree that there are others in this Chamber who would fill the office of Speaker very well. However, Mr. Houghton will be elected, and I know that he will do well. Fortunately we have already had an advance sample of his form in the last Parliament. He showed that he is a man of authority and decision, and I am sure that the House will give him full support. He is accepting enormous responsibilities, and his sense of justice and impartiality will be very fully tested in this Parliament.

I make the suggestion to him that he remove himself from party-political party meetings, and raise himself above party-political manoeuvres. Mr. Speaker must give every appearance of being impartial, and I believe that this is particularly so in the present circumstances. There is in this House a decimated Opposition, and this quite unique situation will present special problems. Opposition members are not entitled to special privileges, as the honourable member for Townsville South pointed out, but it will be essential for Mr. Speaker to see that their rights are fully protected.

I also ask Mr. Houghton to give consideration to accepting questions himself during question time on matters relating to his responsibilities in the environs of this House. I think it would be of great benefit to the Parliament if he would do that, because every now and again matters arise that concern the Speaker and it is not possible to ask him questions on them. Standing Orders do not specifically debar the directing of questions to Mr. Speaker, but if what I suggest requires a change in Standing Orders, I suggest that that be done. It would be of great benefit indeed if honourable members could ask questions that concern Mr. Speaker and

receive an answer immediately or very soon. That would be much better than allowing the matter to smoulder.

Also we could hope—and I am sure we will find—that Mr. Houghton will ensure that the standing committees over which he presides will meet with more regularity and purpose and will report to this Parliament. The record of these committees in the past is best left unpublished.

Parliament has lost considerable public respect; there is no doubt about that. Indeed, it is looked on by many with considerable contempt and the institution of Parliament is being questioned and attacked. It is in our hands, the hands of each and every one of us—ours alone, no-one else's—to change that situation, and we should certainly show our respect for the institution by our behaviour in the Chamber and by our attitude to the Chair. If we assist Mr. Houghton to play his role effectively, I am quite sure that he will assist us in playing ours.

Mr. JONES (Cairns) (1.41 p.m.): I cannot help noticing the contrast between the situation in which we find ourselves today and the situation when Parliament met for the first time in 1972. As a North Queenslander, I think it is only right that I should recount what happened on that occasion.

The honourable member for Clayfield has challenged the right of the senior coalition partner to fill the position of Speaker. On that occasion the present nominee for the position was chosen by the senior coalition partner in caucus, then the Country Party but now the National Party. His nomination was also endorsed by the joint Country Party-Liberal Party caucus in 1972 and later placed before honourable members on the first day of the sitting.

As the honourable member for Clayfield said, the position of Speaker is a very important one, and we, as members of this Assembly, will have no opportunity to review in the next three years the appointment of the person whom we elect today, unless, of course, some unfortunate circumstances arise. It is our right to make a selection, but that right will automatically cease when the Speaker takes the chair.

In 1972 the person who is now the nominee of the Government parties was selected by the Country Party caucus. On that occasion a member from North Queensland—the honourable member for Burdekin—stood up in caucus and nominated another member.

Mr. Bird: That is incorrect.

Mr. JONES: I cannot certify to what happened in caucus, but Mr. Lonergan was nominated in caucus and he said, "I will leave it to the House to decide." Later, in this Chamber, Mr. Armstrong nominated Mr. Lonergan, who represented the electorate of Flinders, and his nomination was seconded by Mr. Bird, the honourable member for Burdekin. Those honourable members said

that the nomination was made in protest, and Mr. Lonergan's own words were, "I am going to contest the position of Speaker on the floor of the House. I am very unhappy with the way that members of Cabinet have been selected, and particularly with the lack of adequate Cabinet representation of North Queensland." On that occasion the election went to a secret ballot on the floor of the House, and Mr. Lonergan won the contest against the present nominee by 47 votes to 32, three votes being informal. The sole reasons for the exercise were the method of selection and the fact that North Queensland representation in the Cabinet of the day was inadequate. North Queensland is again neglected in the composition of the Cabinet. There is a grave silence in the House today, but the contrast with 1972 is quite noticeable.

As we were challenged during the election campaign to stand up and be counted, I want to know now why North Queensland members are not standing up today and demanding Cabinet representation for their area. Where are the Mr. Birds and Mr. Armstrongs today? Where are the Mr. Deerals, the Mrs. Kippins and the Mr. Tennis? Where are the North Queensland members who should be standing up on this occasion to seek Cabinet representation for North Queensland? They have departed from the scene, and I will say why; it is left to one man to select the Cabinet.

Let me recount a little more history. The Country Liberal Party Cabinet in 1972 contained 14 members. The Premier selected Country Party Ministers and the Deputy Premier selected Liberal Party Ministers.

Mr. Moore: Don't you know that my soup is going cold?

Mr. JONES: There is no compulsion under the Standing Orders for the honourable member to remain in the Chamber. If he wants to have lunch he is quite at liberty to leave at any time. He is answerable only to his electors, not to anybody in this House. If he does not want to hear what I have to say he may leave. But I am sure that the people of Far North Queensland will be very interested in what I have to say.

In 1972 the Cabinet contained 14 members. At that time the rebellion was on. The honourable members for Mulgrave and Burdekin were able to get enough support in this House to topple Cabinet's decision and have a Speaker elected from Flinders to represent Far North Queensland. Cabinet representation for that part of the State must have been important in those days, so why is it not important now? In 1972 Cabinet included five metropolitan members and five members from South-east Queensland, a total of 10 representing the south-east corner of the State. Central Queensland had three representatives in Cabinet. The one Minister referred to as a North Queensland member was the honourable member for Whitsunday. From my end of the State he is regarded as representing an area in Central Queensland.

Surely the Minister for Mines and Energy (Mr. Camm) does not consider that he is in North Queensland when his electorate is 400 miles south of Cairns. North Queensland representation in that Cabinet was limited to one member. That is what was being protested about at the time. That is what was rebelled against.

Contrast that with Cabinet in Labor's day. From 1932 to 1942 the Forgan Smith Cabinet of 10 consisted of one metropolitan Minister, one Minister from South-east Queensland, two Ministers from Central Queensland and six Ministers from North Queensland. From 1942 to 1946, the Cooper Cabinet of 10 comprised two metropolitan Ministers, two Ministers from South-east Queensland, three Ministers from Central Queensland and three from North Queensland. The Hanlon Cabinet from 1946 to 1952 had two metropolitan Ministers, two Ministers from South-east Queensland, three Ministers from Central Queensland and three Ministers from North Queensland. From 1952 to 1957 the Gair Cabinet of 11 contained three metropolitan Ministers, two Ministers from South-east Queensland, three Ministers from Central Queensland and three Ministers from North Queensland.

Of course, under Labor caucus elects the members of Cabinet. Under this Government the Ministers are elected by the party leaders. In this way the bias against Far North Queensland is indicated.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: I know which system Gough Whitlam would prefer.

Mr. JONES: Fortunately this is a State House, we are masters of our own destiny just as Government members are masters of their own destiny in their own caucus rooms. It behoves Government members to arrive at decisions regardless of what happens in the other States, in the Federal Parliament or in the British Commonwealth of Nations. We are here today to elect our Speaker and we will do so without the help of anyone who is not an elected representative of the people. Our first duty, and one of our most important duties, is the election of Mr. Speaker. He will be elected on numbers, and it will be his responsibility to preside over the Parliament, to maintain good conduct and order in the parliamentary proceedings and to protect and foster the workings of this Parliament. In turn it is our responsibility to ensure that he is given the opportunity to do the job he is elected to do.

I have made my comments on behalf of North Queensland. I want to ensure that the interests of this Parliament are safeguarded. This is the only opportunity we will have of electing a Speaker. If no other member is nominated, Mr. Houghton will be elected unopposed. I ask Government members to assess carefully who is to be in charge of their rights and privileges for the next three years and to make sure they select a man who will not interpret rights and privileges as moods and bias dictate.

We are the elected representatives of the people and we have the bounden duty to represent them fairly. This is our prime responsibility. At this moment we are not bound by any party policy. Rather are we guided by our duty to the electors.

Mr. Aikens: That's a joke!

Mr. JONES: I am pleased to have the honourable member's interjection, but I am sure that his electors will not be pleased to learn that he is not representing them.

There is no questioning the right and privilege of a member of Parliament to represent his electors as he chooses. He can either affiliate with a political party or remain an independent. My affiliations have been clearly stated on many occasions, and I stand by them on all occasions.

Mr. Lee: You're a socialist.

Mr. JONES: Yes, I have had that thrown at me many times. Being a member of a socialist party I am a socialist. It is only when someone goes further that he gets into trouble, as is happening in my area as a result of the political campaign that was waged.

Every honourable member must remain vigilant to ensure that the customs, rights and privileges of this House are not derogated in any way. Once this vote is taken, honourable members will have no way of defeating the Speaker's attitudes. The matter is in our hands. The Speaker, with complete impartiality, must allow free deliberations in this House. I believe that in this lop-sided Parliament his task will be a very onerous one. I suggest that if he feels constrained to give latitude beyond the realms of impartiality he should give it not to Government members but to those of Her Majesty's Opposition. This should be done particularly during question time, which has been referred to by the honourable member for Townsville South, who is, of course, concerned only with the honourable member for Townsville South.

Mr. Aikens: A damned good man, too.

Mr. JONES: That is questionable; it is only a simple and singular opinion.

I urge the member who is elected as Mr. Speaker to exercise strong control over Ministers' answers to questions, particularly those that contain a great deal of verbosity and little information. I hope that the Speaker will endeavour to contain provocative and irrelevant answers and will try to obviate political bias, personal attacks and reflections. I hope that he will not allow members and Ministers to indulge in propaganda rather than ask positive questions and give factual replies.

We on this side expect no quarter. If we impregnate our questions with politics we can only expect politics in return; but I do not think that we should expect pro-

paganda and politics if we merely seek information in the course of our duty in this Assembly.

I believe that the recommendation on committees should be brought back and debated in the House so that the short-falls in the deliberations may be brought to light. We have heard about the Standing Orders Committee. I believe that this is one facet that the Speaker, to ensure fairness to all, should certainly have reviewed. I hope that when Mr. Speaker assumes office he will carry on in the best traditions of the distinguished role and that he will utilise all his ability and integrity, and above all else impartiality, so that all members will be equal in his eyes.

At all times Mr. Speaker should seek to improve conditions not only in the Chamber but also downstairs. In my former job, and in this House, I always advocated better conditions. The impartiality and integrity of most Speakers have been beyond reproach, but blunders have been committed in this Assembly. As members of Parliament we should all interest ourselves in the functions of Parliament. Mr. Speaker should head the list in guarding Parliament's rights and privileges. Parliament is the supreme body in this State. Any denigration of any member of Parliament denigrates the institution of Parliament itself. The way in which we work here does not accord with my ideas of good organisation and management. In certain circumstances Opposition members are being less favourably treated than others in this place. I hope that Mr. Speaker does not show bias. He was elected for only three days of the last Parliament. I hope that in the next three years he will grasp the nettle firmly and give the high office he holds the dignity and decorum it deserves.

I conclude on the note that we are not here, as members of Parliament, with a licence to abuse each other, or other persons or parties who cannot defend themselves in this House, examples of which we have witnessed today. If we act in that way we do nothing but downgrade the office we hold in this place. I hope that Mr. Speaker, when elected, will continue in office for the next three years and ensure that we attain a democratic process in this Assembly.

Mr. FRAWLEY (Murrumba) (1.59 p.m.): I listened with a great deal of amusement to the speech by the honourable member for Cairns, especially his complaint that question time has been used by members of this House to perpetrate attacks on the characters of various people. He should not talk; members of his party were the main culprits. In the 40th Parliament Labor members did nothing but attack the Premier, Deputy Premier and every Minister of the Crown with filthy, rotten innuendoes. This was especially so in the case of the former member for Albert. Thank heavens he is not here today. He was one of the worst

offenders. The former member for Everton did likewise. Those two members did nothing but denigrate the Premier, Deputy Premier and other Ministers.

Mr. K. J. Hooper interjected.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I ask the honourable member to wait a little; I have something for him, the big anarchist.

I support the nomination of Mr. Jim Houghton as Speaker. I have known him for probably a lot longer than any other member of this Assembly. I knew him when he was the first mayor of Redcliffe after it became a city. While mayor of Redcliffe, and since 1960 when he became the member for Redcliffe, he has given good representation not only to the people of Redcliffe but also to the people of Queensland through some of the things he has done. I have no hesitation in saying that he will make a very fair and impartial Speaker. We had a clear indication of that during the short time he was Speaker in the previous Parliament.

I do not intend reading my speech word for word, as did the member of the Opposition who has just resumed his seat. He read a carefully prepared brief from Trades Hall. He is nothing but a Trades Hall parrot, mouthing the instructions he receives. In the previous Parliament we saw some of the shameful tactics of members of the Opposition, who rose at every opportunity, read prepared briefs from the Trades Hall and denigrated Ministers. That is representation not of their electors but of a sectional group from the Trades Hall comprised of Left-wingers and Communists. If people from electorates that are now held by members of the A.L.P. came here to see and hear their representatives, I venture to suggest there would be even fewer members of the A.L.P. as parliamentary representatives after the next election.

The Leader of the Opposition complained bitterly about accommodation provided in this building for him and his colleagues. I go on record as saying that the accommodation has been allotted strictly and impartially on a proportional basis. The Leader of the Opposition conveniently forgets that in the last years of the Labor Government in this State—1956 and 1957—the Leader of the Opposition received nothing. When Frank Nicklin, as he then was, was Leader of the Opposition, he did not have a car or a driver. All he was supplied with was a secretary. There were 14 members of the Country Party in the big room below this Chamber. It had only two telephones.

When Frank Nicklin became Premier, one of his first steps was to ensure that the Leader of the Opposition received adequate facilities. I do not oppose the provision of secretarial facilities or a car and driver for the Leader of the Opposition. But I ask honourable members not to forget that it was the National-Liberal Party Government

that provided those facilities to the Opposition. The coalition Government did not do as Labor had done when in office. It did the right thing.

Earlier today we witnessed a perfect example of some of the sickening hypocrisy of the A.L.P. All of us in the Chamber today took the oath, which I will read. It says—

“I do sincerely promise and swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II as lawful Sovereign of Australia and Her other realms and territories and to Her heirs and successors according to law.”

I watched the honourable member for Archerfield place his hand on the Bible and take that oath. He is a confirmed centralist and an associate of Communists. On 5 September 1974 he said in this Chamber—

“I am a Republican, and the sooner Australia becomes a republic the better. As far as I am concerned, the monarchy and all its appendages, such as the Governor and the Governor-General, should be abolished.”

On 11 September 1973 he made a similar statement. He said that Australia would become a republic and that the monarchy reeked of humbug, cant and hypocrisy. He also said that the monarchy served no useful purpose other than bolstering the corrupt capitalistic system. Those statements were made in this very Chamber and are recorded in “Hansard”. He proved exactly what representation he offers to the State of Queensland and what would happen if the A.L.P. ever again became the Government in Queensland.

It is interesting to note that, of all the electorates visited by the honourable member for Archerfield in his barnstorming tour with the previous Leader of the Opposition before the last election on 7 December, not one was won by a Labor candidate. In fact, the only one involving him that was won by Labor was Archerfield, his own electorate, which he did not visit. He kept away from Archerfield and won the seat. He did exactly the same thing during the floods in January 1974. People in the electorate of Archerfield who were trying to obtain assistance could not find him. They had to approach the Minister for Community and Welfare Services, who looked after their interests. When the floods were over and after all the work had been done by Mr. Herbert, the member for Archerfield crawled out of the big funk hole he had dug, as if nothing had happened, and took over again.

By taking the oath of allegiance after denouncing the monarchy, the member for Archerfield has now deprived the Leader of the Opposition of the title of champion somersaulter of the A.L.P. That proves what I said on more than one occasion in the last Parliament: the A.L.P. really scraped the bottom of the political barrel in its quest

for candidates for the 1972 elections and also for the last election. The electors of Queensland are well aware of the dangers that would face them if the A.L.P. ever became the Government. They clearly demonstrated this awareness at the election on 7 December by ignoring many of the misleading and, at times, untruthful statements made by Labor candidates.

Australian Labor Party members, including the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Cairns, as well as the honourable member for Townsville South complained about representation of the A.L.P. on certain committees in this Parliament. The honourable member for Townsville South also expressed the hope that there will be a fairer apportionment of questions at question time. So there should be. Why should members of the A.L.P. have the same representation on committees as they had during the previous Parliament? There are only 11 of them; they do not even have a 12th man. So what are they whingeing about? They should not have the same representation on committees. As the honourable member for Townsville South said, it should be in proportion to their number.

Unlike some previous speakers, I do not intend to waste time. I state here and now that notwithstanding anything that has been said to the contrary, the election of Speaker will be carried out in a democratic manner. The joint Government parties have already decided on the nominee and I have no hesitation in saying that I support the election of the honourable member for Redcliffe (Mr. Jim Houghton).

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (2.6 p.m.): I enter the debate mainly because there are certain restrictions upon private members in commenting on the role of Speaker. Honourable members who were in the previous Parliament will recall that I almost faced a charge of being in contempt of Parliament because of comments I made outside this Chamber. According to "Erskine May" our only opportunity to make such comments is in fact before Mr. Speaker is elected. That is why I am speaking in this debate.

I stress what we are about to perform is a vitally important function. The election of Speaker is not merely an election to some position in Parliament. He is one of the most important persons in Parliament, if not the most important. On him rests the responsibility of ensuring that this Parliament acts as a true Legislative Assembly, that work is carried out and that Bills are debated in a proper and orderly manner. Therefore the members of this Assembly are required to be careful in choosing such a person because responsibility weighs very heavily on him.

The chief characteristics of this office are, firstly, great authority and, secondly, allegedly great impartiality. We give the Speaker tremendous authority to decide what will be allowed to be debated in this Chamber, who

can speak, when he shall speak, and so on. The Speaker is beyond criticism. His actions in fact cannot be criticised in debate or upon any form of proceeding except by substantive motion. And even when there is a motion to disagree with the ruling of the Speaker, the debate is very limited. We have very little opportunity to put forward the views we might have on the office of Speaker.

"Erskine May" states—

"Confidence in the impartiality of the Speaker is an indispensable condition of the successful working of procedure . . ."

That reference book explains how, in the British House of Commons—

" . . . conventions exist which have as their object not only to ensure the impartiality of the Speaker but also to ensure that his impartiality is generally recognized."

So, as we follow those conventions in this Parliament, the Speaker does not vote in a ballot, nor does he take part in debates in the House or in Committee. We accept that he plays a somewhat independent role. Under Standing Order 123A we give him wide authority to repress disorder by making members withdraw from the House. He can refuse to accept motions. He can rule on major points of order, where he has a wide discretionary power. It is this discretionary power that one brings forward on the question of impartiality. The discretionary power comes back to the interpretation of the Rules of the Assembly. It is the Speaker's task to decide how they will be interpreted. It is his task to decide what is unparliamentary and what words can and cannot be used. I am sure all honourable members realise it is a rather unenviable task.

The Standing Rules and Orders were printed in 1951, yet we are a modern Parliament. We use them to decide and direct the administration of this House. I suggest that all new honourable members take time to read through them. They will not enjoy doing it but it will be an exercise worth undertaking. The Standing Orders are totally out of date. Numerous amendments have been made and glued into the booklet. Mine contains only half of them, yet I am supposed to know the Standing Rules and Orders. They cannot be interpreted without reference to "Erskine May" and copies of that authority are as scarce as hen's teeth. These matters have to be interpreted in line with "Erskine May". There are numerous debates and arguments recorded in the "Hansard" of this Parliament in which members have challenged Standing Orders. All members, on both sides of the House, know that this is so.

There are so many doubts in the workings of this House. There is doubt about what is sub judice. When does a matter become sub judice? Is it when the writ is issued? Or is it when publication of the writ is made known? It is impossible to get a Speaker to be consistent in rulings on this matter. Towards the end of last session I was going

to speak on a certain matter, but I was quickly told by the then Speaker that it was sub judice. I asked him in fact when the writs had been issued and by whom, but that was not known. I assure honourable members that I shall have great difficulty in obtaining this information now, because in this House there is no way in which a member can ask Mr. Speaker anything unless he sees him privately, and then the Speaker is not obliged to give an answer.

There are also serious questions about the rights of private members to comment on the workings of Parliament. If a member dared to do so outside the Chamber, he could be brought before the House for contempt. He could also be breaking the privileges of the House, and again he could be dealt with by the Assembly.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: It would have to be a very serious statement for that to be done.

Mr. WRIGHT: I wonder. If one goes through "Erskine May", one finds that the discretion is always left with Mr. Speaker. He decides what is unparliamentary; he decides when the privileges of the House have been broken. Again, responsibility lies solely with him.

I suggest that private members have gradually lost their status, and that that situation will continue unless all private members take a stand on the matter. We play no part in Government. If new members think they will because they are on the Government side, they have a lesson to learn. They will have no say in what goes on. We talk about the committee system and Cabinet Government. New members will soon find out that this State of ours is controlled by a bureaucracy, and by regulations and subordinate legislation. Yet this is the highest authority in the land, and what say do we really have?

There are restrictions on all types of activity in this Chamber. There are restrictions on questions. There is no obligation on Ministers to answer anything. A question may be of the greatest importance, yet if a Minister does not feel disposed to answer it, he can simply not do so. There is no enforcement on answering; as Mr. Speaker will say, it is up to the Minister.

Mr. Speaker decides if questions will be allowed. We know that questions have been changed because their wording was apparently unparliamentary, or for some other reason which is often never known. Many questions have in fact never been answered.

Before I entered this Parliament in 1969, I heard of the tremendous chance that I would have as a private member to bring forward legislation, and I was told of the avenue of the private member's Bill. I ask all new members to study their Standing Rules and Orders and note the restrictions on private members doing anything about introducing legislation. Let a member try to introduce

a private member's Bill, and see what happens. The restrictions are massive. Notice of intention to apply for leave to bring in a private member's Bill has first to be given. This has to be published four times in four consecutive weeks in the Government Gazette. It must then be published in a Brisbane newspaper, and then in a country newspaper. The general objects of the Bill must be stated. A member must then petition the House with a printed copy of the proposed Bill, and a certain number of copies are required. The total cost of this procedure is, I am told, approximately \$2,000.

It is then necessary to obtain leave to bring in the Bill, and in 1951 a deposit of £25 had to be submitted before any further step could be taken. And before any other action is taken, a select committee has to be set up to decide on the objects of the Bill.

Mr. Camm: It would be far simpler to win an election.

Mr. WRIGHT: Yes. But I am talking about the rights of members of Parliament, and pressure groups and other responsible groups in the community, to have a say in the legislative functioning of this State. At present they have none, from outside or from inside.

Mr. Camm interjected.

Mr. WRIGHT: Very few Cabinet members apparently have much say, the way the Cabinet system functions at the moment.

Few members, I admit, will probably ever want to introduce a private member's Bill. New members will find that they will have people coming to them saying that some matters should be raised in the House; that some sections of an Act should be amended; or that some other provision should be introduced as legislation. But mostly members will be involved, as everyone else has been for many years, in the daily running of the Assembly.

It is at this point that I return to the office of Speaker. In our involvement in this Chamber, we are totally dependent upon the wisdom, or otherwise, of Mr. Speaker. It is therefore vital that his decisions have some consistency; that they be impartial; and that they be based on accepted Standing Rules and Orders, or long-accepted conventions. If one goes back over a number of decisions given by Speakers over a long time, I say that it will be seen that they have lacked consistency and impartiality. There is always a serious doubt about impartiality in this State, and that is not the fault of the Speaker, whoever he may be. It is because of the Speaker's party allegiance. He is a member of a political party; he participates in party meetings; and he is dependent upon a party force for the security of his office. So it is understandable that a big question mark remains as to his impartiality.

We have seen incidents in this Chamber that should never have occurred—for example, when the Premier, in charge of the House, has directed the Speaker what to do and how to deal with certain people. If one goes to “Erskine May” and looks at the Standing Rules and Orders, one sees that the Speaker is supposed to be supreme. He is supposed to be completely in charge of the House. Yet we find that, in this Chamber, Ministers, and more especially the Premier, have been able to overrule the Speaker and direct him in a number of instances. Ministers have been given preference over private members in debate, yet this is supposed to be a place where every man is equal.

There has been a lack of consistency in decisions by Speakers. Rule 119 states that a member shall not use any unbecoming or offensive words in reference to another member of the House, but that is going to happen. We have heard today, the first day of sitting, an instance of that, when offensive language was used by one fellow here—what is his name?

Mr. Jones: Frawley.

Mr. WRIGHT: He is not worth remembering. The filthy things he comes out with are disgusting and appalling. He is known as “The Garbage”, and I can understand why. He speaks about people being associated with Communism—

Mr. Frawley: You are a good politician. You got up and made a speech in a Baptist church in Biloela and said you were a Christian. Wherever you went as a school teacher, you said that you belonged to whatever the predominant religion was.

Mr. WRIGHT: I can call this man a liar because there is no-one present to enforce the Standing Rules. May I say, sir, that you are a dirty liar.

Mr. Frawley: You say that tomorrow!

Mr. WRIGHT: If I did that tomorrow, the Speaker would quickly make me withdraw.

Let us go back to the most important point, that is, that consistency in decisions is needed. We had instances in this Chamber only last year in which a Minister was allowed to say what he liked about another member, more particularly an Opposition member, and when that member rose to his feet and asked for a withdrawal, nothing was done. But when the Opposition member concerned called the Minister a liar, he was then made to withdraw from the Chamber.

Let us have some consistency. In this instance I speak of the office of Speaker, regardless of who holds it. The rules of the House are needed, but they should be enforced fairly and impartially, and I believe that a heavy weight will lie on Mr. Houghton when he is elected. He must judge these issues impartially; he must go back to Standing Orders and give members some basis for his decisions. It is ridiculous to

simply say that he will decide, because, according to “Erskine May”, the decisions that the Speaker makes are then passed on to subsequent Speakers and members and are held in the highest esteem. So I suggest that the greatest obligation Mr. Houghton will have will be to ensure that there is consistency in his rulings.

Honourable members will also hear about a mysterious list of words that allegedly are unparliamentary. Try to find them and you will simply be told that the Clerk of Parliament has a book that has been passed down from one Clerk of Parliament to another through the years. It contains an unwritten list of words. I know, for instance, that one cannot say that a member has no guts, but one can say that he lacks intestinal fortitude. One cannot say that a person is a liar, but one can say that he deals loosely with the truth.

These are vitally important questions, and I stress again that consistency must be a part of this new Parliament. We have to have impartiality.

I also believe that the Speaker must accept all his responsibilities. Not only does he have a responsibility to use discernment in this Chamber; he also has administrative duties to carry out. It is his task to decide who gets which seat in this Chamber and who gets which accommodation in this building. It really bugs me that the Premier decided who went where when parliamentary offices were allocated.

It is also the Speaker's task to see that the parliamentary standing committees work. I suggest to honourable members that they look in the front of “Hansard” to see what committees are appointed by the Queensland Parliament and then try to find out when those committees last met. I suggest that they try to find out when the Library Committee met, when the Standing Orders Committee met, or when the Refreshment Rooms Committee met. Surely these are part of the Speaker's obligations and administrative duties. They have not been carried out in the past.

Mr. Casey: What is more, the committees should report to the House.

Mr. WRIGHT: Of course they should report to the House.

It is also the Speaker's task to see that this Parliament functions properly. We had a test last year of the establishment of a select committee, and I suggest that it worked extremely well. I congratulate all members who served on that committee. Government members and Opposition members alike worked as members of one Legislature for the good of the State. We need more of those. To achieve what is desired, we have to review the Standing Orders. They are shockingly archaic. We need to review them and bring them up to date. We need to streamline parliamentary procedures. Only by doing this will we have the consistency and impartiality that this Chamber deserves.

Mr. YEWDALE (Rockhampton North) (2.21 p.m.): At the risk of increasing the hunger pangs of those members who are still in the Chamber I should like to take a few minutes to raise a subject that I believe I am justified in raising. I refer to the inadequate accommodation in Parliament House. Today some members have referred to it as being adequate and others have said that it is better now than in the past, but let me contrast what this Parliament has decreed as minimum accommodation standards for workers with what is available in Parliament House for honourable members. Subclause 6 of rule 1 under the Factories and Shops Act provides—

“Floor area and air space. Not less than 25 square feet of floor space exclusive of any encumbrance and not less than four hundred cubic feet of air space shall be provided for each employee.”

According to law an employer has to provide that space.

Mr. Lane: You are the shop steward over there, are you?

Mr. YEWDALE: I would sooner be a shop steward than a drunk-roller which the honourable member was in the past.

When I refer to the space that was provided for members during the last Parliament I speak mainly from my own experience and that of my colleagues. I shared a room with two other members and we were reasonably comfortable. We now have a fourth member in that room. It means that we have to climb over the chair of the party whip to hang our coats on a hanger. A room that was previously occupied by five members is now occupied by six. My sympathies go mainly to metropolitan members when I say that it is impossible to have a confidential talk with constituents or a confidential telephone call.

Mr. Speaker makes all decisions pertaining to this House, and he has very wide powers. I take the opportunity of raising this subject prior to the election of a Speaker. If after they have worked here for a short time Government members consider that their working conditions are adequate, they just do not know what it is like to work under reasonable conditions. The accommodation is just not good enough, and something should be done about it.

Mr. HOUGHTON: Honourable members I am deeply conscious of the honour proposed to be conferred upon me, and I submit myself to the pleasure of the House.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

There being no other nomination, **Mr. Houghton**, on being called, was conducted to the chair by **Mr. Bjelke-Petersen** and **Mr. Herbert**. Speaking from the dais he said: Honourable members I thank you for the high honour you have conferred upon me.

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier) (2.23 p.m.): **Mr. Speaker**, on behalf of the Government I should like to congratulate you very sincerely on your election to the high and very responsible office you now hold in this Assembly. We all know, particularly from the remarks made by many honourable members here today, that you are held in high regard. Everyone realises and recognises that you administer your responsibilities in the office of Speaker with fairness and justice to all. I congratulate you on behalf of the Government.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (2.24 p.m.): On behalf of the Opposition I wish to congratulate you on your election to this high and respected office in the Parliament. I hope that your health will stand the pressures that the job has put on your predecessors, the last two of whom have suffered from the position you now occupy. The Opposition will cooperate with you and work with you for the betterment of the Parliament.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable members, I thank you for the congratulations that have been offered to me.

I should like to draw attention to a couple of matters. For the information of everybody in the House—the lack of decorum and dignity which we witnessed this morning will not be tolerated from this point onwards.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. SPEAKER: I should like to express appreciation and thanks to the electors who saw fit to send two female parliamentarians into this Chamber. Their presence is very fitting during International Women's Year. I am quite sure that they will do an excellent job on behalf of their constituents. I might add that this is the first Queensland Parliament privileged to have two female members. Some earlier Queensland Parliaments have had one female member, but never two.

This is also the first time an Aborigine has been elected to our Parliament. I have no doubt whatever that he will do a fine job on behalf of his fellow Aborigines and all his electors as well. I am quite sure that the customs and experiences that he enjoys will be imparted to us from time to time and that we will derive great benefit from them.

Unfortunately the Opposition Whip, **Mr. Evan Marginson**, is absent today very ill. On behalf of all honourable members, I express to him our best wishes for a speedy recovery and the earnest hope that he will be back in his position in the very near future.

As has been stated, the position of Mr. Speaker is quite an onerous one, and no Speaker can carry out his duties without the co-operation and assistance of all honourable members. To new members I say, "Don't be misled or misguided by the scenes you have witnessed this morning." As I have said, similar scenes will not be tolerated in the future. I hope that, as the Leader of the Opposition has remarked, the senior members will give every assistance to the new members in the conduct of this House. The Speaker alone cannot do all that is necessary in this direction; much of it is up to the members.

I firmly believe that the conduct and operation of Parliament is a true reflection of the people it represents, that is, of the people of the State of Queensland. A low standard of behaviour in Parliament—not only in this Parliament but in others as well—is a shocking indictment of our democracy. As I have already said, I am not prepared to tolerate it. Everyone is, of course, entitled to just consideration, but my prime duty is the implementation of Standing Orders, which are drawn up by the members as the representatives of the people.

I look forward to a successful term of office. Honourable members can feel assured of my co-operation and assistance in every way. I might add that the Government realises that the accommodation provided in this building is not all that could be desired. However, the shortage of accommodation will be overcome when the new building is completed.

Finally, I thank all honourable members for the high honour bestowed upon me, and I look forward to a very happy term of office.

PRESENTATION OF MR. SPEAKER

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier): I desire to inform honourable members that His Excellency the Governor will receive the House for the purpose of presenting Mr. Speaker to his Excellency at Government House this afternoon at 3.30 o'clock.

Mr. SPEAKER: I wish to inform the House that at 3.10 p.m. today I shall leave for Government House, there to present myself to His Excellency the Governor as the member chosen to fill the high and honourable office of Speaker, and I invite such honourable members as care to do so to accompany me.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier): I move—

"That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 1.57 p.m. tomorrow in the late Legislative Council Chamber."

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 2.30 p.m.