

QUEENSLAND



HANSARD

Legislative Assembly

FIRST SESSION OF THE FORTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

Appointed to meet

AT BRISBANE ON THE THIRD DAY OF NOVEMBER, IN THE FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1992

TUESDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 1992

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

Pursuant to the Proclamation by Her Excellency the Governor, dated 15 October 1992, appointing Parliament to meet this day for the dispatch of business, the House met at 10 a.m. in the Legislative Assembly Chamber.

The Clerk read the Proclamation.

COMMISSION TO OPEN PARLIAMENT

The Clerk acquainted the House that Her 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 Wayne Keith Goss, the Honourable Thomas James Burns and the Honourable Keith Ernest De Lacy, 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 Wayne Keith Goss—Logan): Honourable members, we have it in command from Her 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 Her 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 Her Excellency the Governor, at such time and place as Her Excellency shall appoint.

I produce a Commission under the public seal of the State, empowering myself and two other members of the House therein named, 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 required by law to be taken or made and subscribed before any member can sit or vote in the said Legislative Assembly.

The Clerk read the Commission.

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: "John Szczerbanik	"Callide: "Diane Elizabeth McCauley
"Archerfield: "Leonard Arthur Ardill	"Caloundra: "Joan Mary Sheldon
"Ashgrove: "Demetrios Fouras	"Capalaba: "James Peter Elder
"Aspley: "John Nelson Goss	"Charters Towers: "Robert Alan Mitchell
"Barambah: "Trevor John Perrett	"Chatsworth: "Terence Michael Mackenroth
"Barron River: "Lesley Ann Clark	"Chermside: "Terence Boland Sullivan
"Beaudesert: "Kevin Rowson Lingard	"Clayfield: "Santo Santoro
"Brisbane Central: "Peter Douglas Beattie	"Cleveland: "Darryl James Briskey
"Broadwater: "Allan Maxwell Grice	"Cook: "Stephen Dominic Bredhauer
"Bulimba: "Patrick Douglas Purcell	"Crows Nest: "Theo Russell Cooper
"Bundaberg: "Clement Bernard Campbell	"Cunningham: "Jannion Anthony Elliott
"Bundamba: "Robert James Gibbs	"Currumbin: "Merri Rose
"Burdekin: "Mark David Stoneman	"Everton: "Rodney Jon Welford
"Burleigh: "Judith Margaret Gamin	"Ferny Grove: "Glen Richard Milliner
"Burnett: "Douglas John Slack	"Fitzroy: "James Pearce
"Caboolture: "Jonathan Harold Sullivan	"Gladstone: "Neil Patrick Bennett
"Cairns: "Keith Ernest De Lacy	"Greenslopes: "Gary Bernard Fenlon

- "Gregory:
 "Vaughan Gregory Johnson
 "Gympie:
 "Leonard William Stephan
 "Hervey Bay:
 "William George Nunn
 "Hinchinbrook:
 "Marcus Hosking Rowell
 "Inala:
 "Heinrich Palaszczuk
 "Indooroopilly:
 "Denver Edward Beanland
 "Ipswich:
 "David John Hamill
 "Ipswich West:
 "Donald Wallace Livingstone
 "Kallangur:
 "Kenneth William Hayward
 "Kedron:
 "Patrick Comben
 "Keppel:
 "Vincent Patrick Lester
 "Kurwongbah:
 "Margaret Rosemary
 Woodgate
 "Lockyer:
 "Andrew Anthony Fitzgerald
 "Logan:
 "Wayne Keith Goss
 "Lytton:
 "Thomas James Burns
 "Mackay:
 "Edmund Denis Casey
 "Mansfield:
 "Laurel Jean Power
 "Maroochydore:
 "Fiona Stuart Simpson
 "Maryborough:
 "Robert Henry Dollin
 "Merrimac:
 "Robert Joseph Quinn
 "Mirani:
 "James Henry Randell
 "Moggill:
 "David John Hopetoun Watson
 "Mooloolah:
 "Bruce Edric Laming
 "Mount Coot-tha:
 "Wendy Marjorie Edmond
 "Mount Gravatt:
 "Judith Caroline Spence
 "Mount Isa:
 "Anthony McGrady
 "Mount Ommaney:
 "Peter Malcolm Pyke
 "Mulgrave:
 "Frederick Warren Pitt
 "Mundingburra:
 "Kenneth Henry Davies
 "Murrumba:
 "Dean MacMillan Wells
 "Nerang:
 "Raymond Thomas Connor
 "Nicklin:
 "Neil John Turner
 "Noosa:
 "Bruce William Davidson
 "Nudgee:
 "Kenneth Hamilton Vaughan
 "Redcliffe:
 "Raymond Keith Hollis
 "Redlands:
 "John Andrew Budd
 "Rockhampton:
 "Paul Joseph Braddy
 "Sandgate:
 "Gordon Richard Nuttall
 "South Brisbane:
 "Anne Marie Warner
 "Southport:
 "Michael Desmond Veivers
 "Springwood:
 "Molly Jess Robson
 "Sunnybank:
 "Stephen Robertson
 "Surfers Paradise:
 "Robert Edward Borbidge
 "Tablelands:
 "Thomas John George Gilmore
 "Thuringowa:
 "Kenneth Victor McElligott
 "Toowoomba North:
 "Graham John Healy
 "Toowoomba South:
 "Michael James Horan

“Townsville:

“Geoffrey Norman Smith

“Warrego:

“Howard William Thomas

Hobbs

“Warwick:

“Lawrence James Springborg

“Waterford:

“Thomas Alfred Barton

“Western Downs:

“Brian George Littleproud

“Whitsunday:

“Lorraine Bird

“Woodridge:

“William Theodore D’Arcy

“Yeronga:

“Matthew Joseph Foley”

MEMBERS SWORN

The Commissioners, who with other members of the Ministry had been sworn in before Her Excellency the Governor on 2 November 1992 and subscribed the roll, then administered the oath or affirmation of allegiance to the following other members, who thereupon also subscribed the roll—

Ardill, Leonard Arthur, Esquire
 Barton, Thomas Alfred, Esquire
 Beanland, Denver Edward, Esquire
 Beattie, Peter Douglas, Esquire
 Bennett, Neil Patrick, Esquire
 Bird, Mrs Lorraine Rita
 Borbidge, Robert Edward, Esquire
 Bredhauer, Stephen Dominic, Esquire
 Briskey, Darryl James, Esquire
 Budd, John Andrew, Esquire
 Campbell, Clement Bernard, Esquire
 Clark, Dr Lesley Ann
 Connor, Raymond Thomas, Esquire
 Cooper, Theo Russell, Esquire
 D’Arcy, William Theodore, Esquire
 Davidson, Bruce, Esquire
 Davies, Kenneth Henry, Esquire
 Dollin, Robert Henry, Esquire
 Edmond, Mrs Wendy Marjorie
 Elliott, Jannion Anthony, Esquire
 Fenlon, Gary Bernard, Esquire
 Fitzgerald, Andrew Anthony, Esquire
 Fouras, Demetrios, Esquire
 Gamin, Mrs Judith Margaret
 Gilmore, Thomas John George,
 Esquire
 Goss, John Nelson, Esquire
 Grice, Allan Maxwell, Esquire
 Healy, Graham John, Esquire
 Hobbs, Howard William Thomas,

Esquire
 Hollis, Raymond Keith, Esquire
 Horan, Michael James, Esquire
 Johnson, Vaughan Gregory, Esquire
 Laming, Bruce Edric, Esquire
 Lester, The Honourable Vincent
 Patrick
 Lingard, Kevin Rowson, Esquire
 Littleproud, Brian George, Esquire
 Livingstone, Donald Wallace,
 Esquire
 McCauley, Mrs Diane Elizabeth
 McElligott, Kenneth Victor, Esquire
 Mitchell, Robert Alan, Esquire
 Nunn, William George, Esquire
 Nuttall, Gordon Richard, Esquire
 Palaszczuk, Heinrich, Esquire
 Pearce, James, Esquire
 Perrett, Trevor John, Esquire
 Pitt, Frederick Warren, Esquire
 Power, Ms Laurel Jean
 Purcell, Patrick Douglas, Esquire
 Pyke, Peter Malcolm, Esquire
 Quinn, Robert Joseph, Esquire
 Randell, James Henry, Esquire
 Robertson, Stephen, Esquire
 Rose, Mrs Merri
 Rowell, Marcus Hosking, Esquire
 Santoro, Santo, Esquire
 Sheldon, Mrs Joan Mary

Simpson, Miss Fiona Stuart
Slack, Douglas John, Esquire

Spence, Ms Judith Caroline
Springborg, Lawrence James,
Esquire
Stephan, Leonard William, Esquire
Stoneman, Mark David, Esquire
Sullivan, Jonathan Harold, Esquire
Sullivan, Terence Boland, Esquire
Szczerbanik, John, Esquire
Turner, The Honourable Neil John
Vaughan, Kenneth Hamilton, Esquire
Veivers, Michael Desmond, Esquire
Watson, Dr David John Hopetoun
Welford, Rodney Jon, Esquire
Woodgate, Mrs Margaret Rosemary

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

The Clerk having called upon the longest serving member, not being a Minister, to preside—

Mr J. A. Elliott (Cunningham) took the chair as the Presiding Member.

The PRESIDING MEMBER: Order!

Honourable members, before calling for proposals for Speaker, I draw your attention to the Standing Orders, which provide that any member present in the Chamber may be proposed as Speaker. Every proposal shall be seconded. Any member who has been proposed as Speaker is required to indicate whether the proposal is acceptable. Debate shall be relevant to the question. Speeches shall not exceed five minutes for each member. I remind honourable members that the provisions of Standing Orders apply to this debate. I now call for nominations.

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier and Minister for Economic and Trade Development) (10.45 a.m.): It is my privilege and honour to move—

“That the member for Ashgrove, Mr Jim Fouras, do take the chair of the House as Speaker.”

Honourable members, in February 1990 I moved a similar motion nominating the member for Ashgrove for this position. At that time, I said that Jim Fouras had the credentials and the ability for this important position. Today, I can add another important ingredient—the experience.

The role of Speaker is a most challenging one. In the member for Ashgrove, we have a person equal to the task. A former research scientist and economist, Jim Fouras was elected to this House in 1977 as the member for South Brisbane. He served with distinction until 1986. During that period of service, he was a hard-working, capable member who, for a number of years in this Chamber, was a member of the panel of Temporary Chairmen of Committees. Jim Fouras was re-elected in 1989, and again in September of this year. During a three-year imposed break from being an elected representative, he worked as a senior consultant to the Human Rights Commission inquiry into homeless children.

The strength of the member for Ashgrove's candidacy is his character—his personal principles and integrity. Above all else, he is widely recognised as possessing an innate sense of fairness, not only in this Chamber but also in his whole approach to life. He is deeply committed to the institution of Parliament as the basis of our democratic system of government. Jim Fouras is a fair person who believes strongly in the basic democratic rights and freedoms which our system of representative parliamentary democracy embraces.

As I observed three years ago, it is particularly fitting that Jim Fouras, born in Greece, the birthplace of democracy, should preside over this Assembly. Jim Fouras does more than epitomise the reality of our multicultural society; he embodies the strengths that come with cultural diversity. I referred previously to his innate sense of fairness and, I believe with that, a sense of decency. Those are important qualities for the person who presides over this Chamber, both in the discharge of that person's responsibilities as Speaker and, as Jim Fouras has demonstrated, outside the Chamber. Unfortunately, on occasions, that sense of fairness and decency has been exploited. Hopefully, during this term of Parliament, it will be more respected than exploited.

Jim Fouras has the necessary practical perspective to know that the circumstance of there being a controversy—of finding himself in the difficult position of not being able to satisfy either side—is not necessarily a calamity. I know that he likens his job to that of a football referee: "Call it as you see it." From where I sit, I believe that on occasions I will see it differently from the way in which Jim Fouras sees it. From where other honourable members sit, I believe that they, too, will see it differently from the way in which Jim Fouras does. However, to state the obvious, I remind members that none of us will be seeing it from where the Speaker sits and, to state the slightly less obvious, from the perspective that comes from the Speaker's vantage point.

I am confident that in entrusting the affairs of this Chamber and this Parliament to Jim Fouras for the next term we will be making a wise choice. My party and my Government are thoroughly pleased to put forward and support the nomination of the member for Ashgrove as the Speaker of this House.

Hon. T. J. BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Premier, Minister for Administrative Services and Minister for Rural Communities) (10.50 a.m.): I am pleased and proud to support Jim Fouras and to second his nomination as Speaker. I believe that with the new rules and regulations, some of the fun has gone out of this place. Members are now allowed only five minutes in which to speak to the motion for election of the Speaker. When I first entered this place, during the debate on the motion for the election of the Speaker, a fellow by the name of Tom Aikens spent half an hour giving judges a bucket. That was the only occasion in this Parliament on which members were able to attack judges without the judges being defended by the Speaker. Members have now been told that they can speak to the motion for the election of Speaker for only five minutes. After that time, the Presiding Member will shout, "Order!" I am not sure whether the election of this Presiding Member was very democratic. I understand that he was given that position because his surname begins with "E" and the surname of the fellow who entered this place at the same time as that member begins with "L". Under those circumstances, democracy appears to be working on the basis of the surname of one's parents.

Let me speak a little about Speakers and this Chamber. The Premier spoke about fair play. I believe that Jim Fouras has been a fair Speaker. I do not like referees and umpires, and I do not have much time for Speakers—as an occupation. I have some bad memories of Speakers. I look around this Chamber and see a former Speaker who claimed that a particular matter was sub judice when I believe that he did not even know the term or what it meant. I remember one Speaker who was alleged to have stolen furniture and lowered it by rope over the railing in order to pay his betting debts. I remember a story about one Speaker who drove his car along a road and into a hole that had been dug for tram tracks. His car became jammed in that hole. The road workers, who all knew him, lifted him out—car and all. The next day, people from a particular organisation, which could be compared today with Q-Fleet, could not understand how that Speaker could damage both sides of the car, including both doors, in one accident.

I remember the first occasion on which I was involved in a debate on a motion for the election of a Speaker. On only one occasion have I voted for a member who was actually elected to the position of Speaker. I refer to "Bugger 'em" Bill—Bill Lonergan, who was given that name because he would often say, "Bugger 'em. He was partly deaf,

and as Speaker he could not tell which member was interjecting. In those days, members had to jump to their feet in order to get the call if they wished to ask a question. There was no such thing as questions without notice. All questions were asked on notice, and members had to jump to their feet if they wished to get the call. Members jumped to their feet from all parts of the Chamber. If Bill Lonergan, as Speaker, did not give a particular member the call, that member would abuse him. Because he was partly deaf, Bill Lonergan often threw out the wrong member—not the one who had abused him. Part of my record probably stems from being thrown out of this place when I did not deserve to be thrown out.

Today, we are continuing a tradition. There has been a lot of fun in this place, and a lot of anger. What the Premier said was correct: not always does a member agree with the Speaker—the referee. The dignity of this place and the way in which people regard it depends on how members perform here. It is really up to us as to whether this place performs well and whether, in the eyes of the members of the public, Parliament is a place for which they have some respect. Members must show some respect for the Chair and for the rules of this place. I admit that, when possible, I have used and abused the rules of this place to my own advantage. However, I always keep in mind one important factor: this is where the laws that affect each and every one of our mates and friends out there are made. If people have no respect for this place, they will have little respect for the law. Therefore, it is very important that members elect a Speaker who has the support of us all and who receives our assistance when things get tough.

During the past three years, Jim Fouras has experienced some pretty tough times. I must say that I did not agree with some of his actions. I would have thrown out more members more often. I would not mind being Speaker for the last six months of my parliamentary career. If I were Speaker, debates would run smoothly because half the members would not be present in the Chamber.

Mr Borbidge: Do you want to be nominated?

Mr BURNS: No, do not nominate me today. I am seconding the nomination of Jim Fouras, who is one of those really decent young men who believes in a fair go and fair play. In this place, he has attempted to achieve that. I respect him for it. I think that, deep down, all honourable members respect him for that. He deserves our support.

The PRESIDING MEMBER: Does the honourable member accept the nomination?

Mr FOURAS (Ashgrove) (10.54 a.m.): I accept the nomination.

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Leader of the Opposition) (10.55 a.m.): I move—

“That Mr Denver Edward Beanland do take the chair of the House as Speaker.”

I am proud to have this opportunity to nominate the member for Indooroopilly as the Opposition's choice as Speaker of this Parliament. It is the view of the Opposition that Mr Beanland has the necessary qualifications to fulfil the role of Speaker. Since 1986 he has been a member of this place and has served on many parliamentary committees and in positions of leadership within the Liberal Party. He will come forward with a commitment to this Parliament and to members from both sides of the Chamber.

The standing of the institution of Parliament that was referred to by the Deputy Premier—it was a bit like hearing Nero call the fire brigade—is at a low ebb. If a conscious effort is not made to make Parliament work, this place will become unwanted, uncared for and irrelevant. I agree with the comments that have been made that the onus—the responsibility—falls on all members. In this era of reform and change there remains a need to protect the sovereignty and the supremacy of this Parliament so that it cannot be undermined by an unelected body or by Executive Government. Therefore, the role of Speaker assumes even greater significance than before.

The role of Speaker is almost as ancient as the Parliament itself. The office dates back to 1337, although its origins are considerably older. The first record of the House of Commons selecting one of its own to be its spokesman dates from 1376. It was not until 4 January 1642 that the modern Speaker's first duty of office was irrevocably stated when Speaker Lenthall told Charles I that—

“I have neither eyes to see, nor tongue to speak, but as the House is pleased to direct me.”

Mr Gibbs: That's original.

Mr BORBIDGE: It is important for this House to acknowledge for the benefit of the honourable member opposite the expectation from the community of the need to reform public administration in Queensland and the need for greater recognition of the role of the Parliament by Executive Government. That rather inane interjection proves that some people will never learn.

Every member of every modern Parliament has the right to expect that the Speaker will seek to carry out impartially the duties of this ancient office and that absolute impartiality will be observed at all costs. Today, the Government has again departed from the Westminster tradition that the Speaker should not be proposed or seconded by a Minister of the Crown, the nominator and seconder of the current Speaker being the Premier and the Deputy Premier respectively. That practice ceased some 200 years ago in Westminster when William Pitt recognised that it provided further evidence of Cabinet domination of the position of Speaker. The Parliamentary Service Commission, originally established to secure the administrative independence of Parliament, has largely failed to secure its objective. Rather, it has enabled the Government of the day to increase its control over the operation of the House. Budgetary control is, likewise, secured through the Budget process, unlike the processes of the Commonwealth Parliament where the parliamentary appropriation is dealt with as a separate, single item. I strongly believe that there is a need for all parties to establish a framework of legislation and conventions to secure an independent Speaker of this Parliament modelled upon arrangements elsewhere and to transfer all matters of parliamentary administration and budgetary control to the jurisdiction of such a Speaker. It is paramount if this House is to regain the degree of respect from the public which should attach to it. For our part, we acknowledge the need to improve the standing of the Parliament. It is always a source of some concern to most members of Parliament who work very hard that, in Australia today, the standing of politicians and the standing of Parliaments is not all that it should be.

Today I renew my call for the proceedings of Parliament to be televised and for media outlets to have access to all aspects of parliamentary debate. The current era of communications demands that the Queensland Parliament move with the times. For this Parliament to be one of the few which does not even allow television and radio outlets to take voice excerpts from question time is a true blot on our collective commitment to reform. The ultimate right of the members of the public to scrutinise the performance of their elected representatives depends on their having greater exposure to parliamentary proceedings. I call on the Government to move quickly to improve access to the proceedings of Parliament. The Opposition will support any move in that direction and is prepared to enter into discussions with the Government to make the role of Speaker truly independent.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Leader of the Liberal Party) (11 a.m.): I support the nomination of the member for Indooroopilly to fulfil the role of Speaker. Mr Denver Beanland brings enormous expertise to the job and will show a streak of true independence. He has been a member of this House since 1986. Before that, he was Deputy Mayor of Brisbane. He is a member who has an excellent grasp of Standing Orders and is a person who, I believe, would preside very fairly over the proceedings of this House. If all members are serious about having a truly independent Speaker, I believe they have no choice other than to select the member for Indooroopilly. Members on this side of the House realise the importance of an independent Speaker, a

Speaker who puts himself or herself above party political interests. The coalition agreement that was signed yesterday between the Liberal and National Parties contains a proposal for the appointment of a Speaker who is independent of party politics, who will not attend party meetings or be engaged in party politics, and who will not be obliged to participate in the promotion of policy or be eligible to be appointed a member of the Cabinet or of any other office. That, I believe, is a formula for a truly independent Speaker.

I realise that the Speaker has the most difficult job of anyone in this place, but I believe the task is made much more difficult by two major factors which come into play every sitting day in this Chamber. The first is that the Standing Rules and Orders of the Queensland Legislative Assembly are, in many cases, outdated and inadequate. As a matter of urgency, the Standing Orders must be upgraded so that Parliament can more adequately discharge its obligations to the people of Queensland.

One area in which urgent reform is needed is question time. This year, we have seen the disgraceful circumstance of only 362 questions being asked in 25 sitting days. On 21 June this year, the former Speaker, Mr Fouras, stated in an interview with the *Sunday Mail* that if he was re-elected major parliamentary initiatives would be introduced.

Mr J. H. Sullivan: Have a look at the bloke on your right and you will improve question time.

Mrs SHELDON: I suggest that if the honourable member listens he may find out some information. Those initiatives would include the entire 60 minute question time being spent on questions without notice; the abolition of what the Government's former Speaker branded "archaic" practices, such as questions being asked one day and Ministers reading out prepared answers the next day; and every backbencher being permitted to ask in writing one question a day by a certain time to be answered in writing by Ministers the next day. The answers would be tabled and incorporated in *Hansard* but, importantly, not read out as a waste of time in Parliament. The former Speaker stated that no other Parliament retains such an archaic system of questions, and that we need the change. I heartily agree. That has been my thinking since I entered this House.

The second factor that detracts from the performance of Mr Speaker's duties is his membership of the party in Government in Queensland—the Australian Labor Party. It is obvious to anybody in this Chamber that Government Ministers exert extraordinary pressure on Mr Speaker to dance to their tune at all times. In particular, I refer to the Premier and to the leader of Government business in the House, Mr Mackenroth. Those two individuals in particular, and Labor in general, believe that if the Government has the numbers, Parliament is no more than another arm of its public relations machine.

Parliament should be the forum for public scrutiny for the public, and the effective exercise of the checks and balances which are the true lifeblood of parliamentary democracy. But the institution of Parliament has a sorry history over the past decade or so whenever Labor has had the numbers. Labor's control of Federal Parliament for 10 years has left a million Australians unemployed and a record of parliamentary abuse in both meanings of the word. It has turned Australia into a laughing-stock. That must not be allowed to happen here. The office of Mr Speaker is the main safeguard against Parliament becoming a catspaw for Labor in Queensland with the capacity for abuse which that entails. To illustrate my point, I draw the attention of honourable members to the extraordinary events of Thursday, 7 May. That day, two full questions and answers—answered by the Premier—and an entire debate which followed, were expunged from the record of the Queensland Parliament. A number of people in this House acted improperly that day, and some acted improperly as well as incompetently, starting with the Premier himself. The Premier started by trying to mislead the House. He then tried to explain the inexplicable, and talked himself into trouble. The Government moved to have my questions to the Premier and the Premier's answers all struck from the official record. A lengthy debate ensued, at the end of which, naturally,

the Government used its numbers to expunge the questions and answers. This was literally hours after the media had covered the start of question time and had broadcast and transmitted the subject matter of those questions and answers far and wide. The then Speaker was quite prepared to allow the destruction of his own parliamentary record when such extraordinary and unparliamentary action would achieve nothing in limiting publicity of so-called sensitive matters.

The PRESIDING MEMBER: Order! Does the honourable member for Indooroopilly accept the nomination?

Mr BEANLAND (11.05 a.m.): It is an honour for me to accept the nomination.

Mr LINGARD (Beaudesert—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.06 a.m.): It gives me great pleasure to support the nomination of Mr Beanland. Mr Beanland has the experience and the credentials to be an excellent Speaker. There is no doubt that the next three years in this Parliament will be particularly challenging and robust. It is essential that the Speaker, regardless of the party in power, undertake the role with complete political detachment in a way to ensure that the rights of members in all political parties are dealt with evenly and fairly.

It was to the credit of Prime Minister John Major that upon reflection he chose a Speaker from the Labor ranks for the House of Commons. I call upon the Government to show leadership and bipartisanship by supporting the election of the Speaker from the Opposition ranks. I cannot support the nomination of Mr Fouras for the position of Speaker. Any man who, when appointed Speaker, has his wife appointed to a very high profile Government job has to expect criticism. Any Speaker who appoints a friend as his secretary and then creates a position in this Parliament so that that person can receive a higher salary must know that that will create discontent. A Speaker has to be trusted by members of Parliament. One member from the Opposition—I am not speaking about myself—provided the Speaker with confidential information. That member then found that the information was across the front pages of the media within days. Clearly, that is wrong. During this last session of Parliament, personal information about members has been distributed far and wide. Surely that is not what a Speaker should do. Massive amounts of money have been spent on gymnasiums, carpets and air conditioning in this Parliament. But consider what is happening to new members in this Parliament. Many new members do not even have an office and are working from their houses. That is an absolute disgrace. I believe that the condition of this Parliament—the lifts, the passageways and the untidiness around Parliament—is a disgrace. The Speaker should act on the decisions of this Parliament. During the last session of Parliament we witnessed the removal of the Union Jack from Parliament. Once again, the Speaker must act as this Parliament directs. It is not the Speaker's role to decide which flag should fly outside Parliament.

Finally, I refer to the article in Sunday's paper regarding the Speaker. Mr Fouras was contacted before that article appeared. He was not able to give a satisfactory answer to the claim, and that is why the article was printed. I invite Mr Fouras to rise on a point of order now and to give this Parliament a clear "Yes" or "No" answer to the question: has he ever hired a vehicle, charged it to the parliamentary accounts and taken his family members with him? Yes or no?

Government members interjected.

Mr LINGARD: Mr Presiding Member, I can only take it from the member's reluctance and refusal to take a point of order, and to give me an honest "Yes" or "No", what this Parliament should believe.

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts) (11.10 a.m.): Mr Presiding Member, the allegations which the honourable member opposite has made against Mr Fouras are untrue and defamatory.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr WELLS: I repeat: they are untrue and defamatory. Mr Fouras has advised me today that he has never been on a camping holiday, either in a campervan, or a caravan, or a tent, in his life.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr WELLS: I repeat: in his life. The sorts of attacks which the honourable member opposite is making on Mr Fouras are cowardly attacks on a man who he knows cannot stand to defend himself in the context of this debate. The context of this debate is that Mr Fouras has been proposed as Speaker of this House. Mr Presiding Member, what members of the Opposition wish to do is demean this process by not only flinging around gratuitous defamations and gratuitous slurs about the honourable member—and I emphasise the word “honourable”—but also, in a cowardly, snide and sniping manner, by attacking his wife. His wife’s appointment to a body attracted no remuneration. I repeat: no remuneration. That lady——

Mr Lingard interjected.

Mr WELLS: That honourable lady was appointed to a body to serve the community in the education system at no remuneration and no benefit to herself, and at no advantage to herself other than the performance of a community service for the benefit of the community which she, as a nominee on that body, represents. The gratuitous slur shows the extent to which members opposite are prepared to demean this process—a process by which this Parliament elects a Speaker, a process in the context of which this Parliament, of all times, ought to be on its most decent behaviour. To make this a forum for the flinging around of gratuitous defamations and gratuitous slurs shows, I think, the extent to which the new Opposition coalition is prepared to descend. This slur by the Deputy Opposition Leader obviously is condoned by the members for Surfers Paradise and Caloundra. It shows that the Liberals and the Nationals have learned nothing. It is a sad indictment on the Opposition that they should start this parliamentary session with point-scoring and mud-slinging. After three years in Opposition, they still cannot debate positive policies. They still cannot address the issues.

The member for Beaudesert demonstrates that the National Party and the Liberal Party will say anything and do anything to denigrate this Parliament and to bring politics in this State down to the gutter level that we have just seen demonstrated in those untrue, gratuitous and defamatory statements by the member for Beaudesert. At the recent State election, the electorate rightly rejected the mud-slinging tactics of the Opposition. The voters turned away from the Liberal Party’s appalling American-style politicking. But have the Liberals and the Nationals learnt anything from this?

Government members: No.

Mr WELLS: I thank honourable members for their response. As elected representatives, we have a duty to set a standard for the community, but on the first day we have the Liberal/National Party leadership—the new coalition leadership launching an attack on the member for Ashgrove. This attack is without foundation and is without a shred of basis in fact. The new coalition leader and his deputy should stand up in this Parliament and be counted on this. Do they support the appalling attack made by the member for Beaudesert, or will they show some real leadership and repudiate him?

Honourable members, I think it is significant that it was not the Leader of the Opposition himself nor the Deputy Leader of the Coalition who launched this grotesque attack; it was the honourable member for Lingard——

Opposition members interjected.

Mr WELLS: The honourable member for Fassifern, or Beaudesert, or whatever he is. Mr Presiding Member, never was there a better nor more accurate Freudian slip in the Parliament because that is what he represents in this House. I invite the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Coalition to stand and say that he does not represent the lowest common denominator of the people on the Opposition side of the

House. He does not represent any widespread standard that is adhered to by members of Parliament. That sort of guttersniping and that sort of mud-slinging is just not something which is appropriate in the context of a debate such as this.

Time expired.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (11.15 a.m.): Mr Presiding Member, today I take great pleasure in supporting the nomination of the member for Indooroopilly, Denver Beanland, in the ballot for the Speakership of this place. This office is one which requires a member who is well versed in procedures and traditions of the Westminster system. During his time in this House, the honourable member for Indooroopilly has shown a great understanding of our parliamentary system and traditions, and I am sure he would perform the duties and responsibilities of the Speakership with honour and distinction. It is a shame that in recent years there has been a move towards breaking the traditions of our Parliament. I believe this Parliament has lost worthwhile and meaningful traditions by various efforts which have been made to make this place more relevant, whatever "relevant" may be. I believe it was a retrograde step to remove the Union Jack from the flagpoles on the corner of George and Alice Streets. I support the comments made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition who referred to that matter. That flag did not indicate allegiance to another country, as some misguided critics have claimed. Rather, it provided a reminder of our parliamentary history, that is, that our Parliament operates under the Westminster system, despite the ALP Government's attempt to bastardise the system to its own advantage. We now have an empty flagpole which sits there, symbolic of the gap which exists in our history when we try somehow to deny our past.

I know that the member for Indooroopilly would pay proper attention to our history, as evidenced by that flag, and return it to its rightful place. Similarly, in recent years the decision has been made to diminish what I call the aura of the Speakership. The wig and gown traditionally worn by the Speaker are, again, symbolic of our history. I believe that their absence from this place has contributed to the lack of decorum which is sometimes seen in this Chamber. I believe that the member for Indooroopilly is a better candidate for the Speakership because he understands the histories and traditions of our system and understands the symbolism of these sorts of things.

During the first term of the Labor Government, the House came under unprecedented physical attack. Those honourable members who were present in the last Parliament will well remember that day in May 1991 when protesters shook the gates of the George Street frontage, just outside the Chamber, vandalised the sandstone supports holding the gates and eventually pushed them over. That action could well have resulted in the deaths of protesters, police or media, but that was of no apparent consequence to the rent-a-crowd mob, which was more intent on creating a spectacle for the television cameras. After they pushed the gates down, they then tried to make it into this building, but efficient action by members of the Queensland Police Service foiled that attempt. However, the protesters were successful in tearing down the Australian flag from the flagpole and inserting in its place the Aboriginal flag. I hear no interjection from members opposite about that point. That was a black day in the history of this Parliament, when it became clear that respect for the institution was no longer as it should be. The Parliament needs a strong Speaker who would not allow such things to recur, whilst also restoring the dignity of the Parliament and winning back the respect of the people of Queensland. I believe that the member for Indooroopilly is that person.

I wish to raise one other matter of great importance, that is, the growing politicisation of the Speakership. Legislation should be enacted that would allow the appointment of a Speaker who could be independent of party politics, as is the case in Britain and other countries that follow the Westminster system. Again, I heard no interjections to the very valid point made by a member preceding me in the debate that John Major did appoint as the Speaker a member of the Opposition party. We want all parties to agree that the Speaker not be challenged at the forthcoming election so that

he can go about his business in a fair and impartial manner without fear of losing his post if he upsets the powerbrokers. Of all members who were in this House during the past term, nobody in dignity and conscience could say that that person up the back, for whom the Liberal Party extended enormous support, never came under pressure from the Government. Irrespective of one's partisan position, one would have to be blind, a fool or naive to walk out of the House and suggest to people in the gallery or in the community that that was not the case.

Under the current system, even if the Speaker is impartial, and irrespective of how hard he tries to be impartial, there remains a public suspicion and perception that he will do the bidding of his party. Thus, I suggest that the Parliament needs to make changes to ensure that not only is the Speaker a respected and impartial figure but also that he is seen by the public to be respected and impartial and not dirtying his hands in everyday dealing of party politics. The Speaker should not be required to attend party meetings, be obliged to support party policy, as the incoming Speaker was obliged to do, or be eligible to be appointed to Cabinet or to any other party political positions. Those principles are detailed and embodied in the coalition agreement that was signed yesterday by the Liberal and National Parties. I am proud to support Mr Beanland, and I ask all honourable members to do likewise.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—Minister for Transport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development) (11.20 a.m.): This morning, we are seeing the fallout of the lengthy, tortuous and well-reported coalition discussions that were held over the past few weeks. I was quite amazed that, on Sunday, the parties held nine hours of discussion. That is an hour for each Liberal member of the House. Still, they could not resolve their outstanding issues. This morning, I picked up the *Courier-Mail* because I was interested to see who would be taking on the weighty responsibilities of shadow ministries. I was looking through the list to find out who might—

The PRESIDING MEMBER: Order! I draw the Minister's attention to relevance to the debate.

Mr HAMILL: It is indeed very relevant, Mr Presiding Member. When I looked through the list to see who was the shadow Minister for Transport, I found that there were two—one urban and one regional. I thought that was most peculiar, because all the portfolios seemed to be there. When I added up the numbers of the portfolios, I found that there were 19. Obviously, during those lengthy discussions, someone had miscalculated—

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. This debate should be relevant at least to the person being nominated or to the whole concept of the Speakership. What the Honourable the Minister is saying has no relevance to the debate.

The PRESIDING MEMBER: I suggest that the Minister take the point of order; otherwise, I will have to sit him down.

Mr HAMILL: The relevance is obvious to everyone but the member for Clayfield. There were 19 people in that line-up. Obviously, in the debate this morning, members opposite found that they had to jettison one. The one that they want to jettison is the one that they jettisoned as Liberal Party leader some time ago, that is, the honourable member for Indooroopilly, who is the candidate for the Speakership.

The PRESIDING MEMBER: Order! I give the Minister one last warning. If he wishes to participate in the debate, he will have to obey the Chair.

Mr HAMILL: I was coming to the unique qualities of the member for Indooroopilly for the lofty office of Speaker. Not only is he superfluous on the Opposition front bench—

The PRESIDING MEMBER: Order! The Minister will resume his seat. I call the member for Lockyer.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (11.22 a.m.): I rise to support the nomination of Denver Beanland, the member for Indooroopilly, for the office of Speaker. As is being

demonstrated in this House now, the person in the chair sometimes has difficulty controlling the House unless he has the respect of all members. When we elect a Speaker, it is important that we have confidence in that person. In the office of Speaker, we need somebody who is independent and is seen to represent all the members of the House. That is why the Speaker is elected by the members to represent all the members. The Speaker has a responsibility to see that the will of the House prevails. That means that, if the Executive arm of Government has control of the House through the membership of his party, the legislation is passed.

The other point that is just as important is that the Speaker must protect the individual rights of every member of this House. We have all been elected to represent electorates. All honourable members have been elected to a place in this House. The role of the Speaker is to protect the rights of individuals. Even if an individual differs from everybody else, his rights must be protected. Throughout the world, we have seen demonstrations of that. Speakers have gone against the will of the majority of the House to protect the rights of an individual. That is very, very important.

The Speaker must also have control of the House and be able to control a group of members who vigorously want to put forward their points of view. The position of Speaker is very difficult. From time to time, we have seen all of the Speakers of this House run into difficulty. It is how they handle themselves when the going gets very, very tough and how they act when matters suddenly arise that is important. That happens when Opposition and Government members try to outdo themselves to score political points. If some decorum is not shown in this House and if there is no respect for the institution of Parliament, this House loses the respect of the community. It is said that the Government loses when the House is in uproar. I do not agree with that. I believe that when the Parliament is in uproar, the whole House loses the respect of the community. It has also been said that Oppositions used to play up. I know that the honourable member for Lytton used to say, with a lot of vigour, that Governments lose when the House is in disarray. As he admitted today, quite often he created many of the problems, and he was sent out of the House on a number of occasions. Sometimes he lost his temper, there is no other way of putting it. When such things occur, the whole House loses the respect of the members of the general public. If we wish to restore to the House the respect that it deserves, the onus is on us to elect a Speaker who will control the running of the House.

Quite often, in response to questions from the media, Speakers say how they will control question time, what they will allow and what they intend to do. The Speaker really has to interpret Standing Orders, and he has to do it accurately. If the Standing Orders state "shall", the Speaker must do what the Standing Orders say. The Speaker has a lot of freedom in interpreting various matters. I like what happens in the New Zealand Parliament during question time. If a question is too long or the answer is too long and not relevant, the Speaker stands up and calls for the next question to be asked. Any Speaker should give consideration to implementing that procedure. I believe that the Speaker must interpret the Standing Orders and be responsive not only to the will of the House but also to the rights of every individual in the House.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (11.27 a.m.): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to support the nomination of Jim Fouras for Speaker. In this debate we have heard a lot from the Opposition—or the new coalition—about the Westminster system and traditions. However, we have seen the demeaning of the Parliament by a most disgraceful attack on the Speaker of this House by the honourable member for Beaudesert. Quite frankly, if we as a Parliament cannot even carry out a simple task such as electing a Speaker without the need for mud-slinging, the community will never support us and will not respect us. I believe that the disgraceful attack on Jim Fouras today starts this Parliament off on a very low and a very unfortunate note. I believe that, for the election of Speaker, we could have conducted ourselves in a more appropriate way. I think that when people in the community read the debate today they will simply shake their heads and again say, "The politicians are back for the first sitting of Parliament and they are at it again." That reflects on each and every one of us. For the

life of me, I cannot understand why in this debate such a vicious attack had to be made on Jim Fouras. It was gross misrepresentation.

I read in the *Sunday Mail* article the accusations that the honourable member for Beaudesert made against Jim Fouras and which he denied unequivocally. That denial was clear to anybody who could read English—and the member for Beaudesert is a former school principal. It was clear that Jim Fouras denied them. He was unequivocal in his denial. I do not believe that the member for Beaudesert participated fairly in this debate. For all of us who want to see the importance of this House recognised by the community, be it through parliamentary committees or the conduct of members, the performance of the coalition in this debate has been a disgrace. We see a new coalition formed and we see a disgraceful performance in the House.

I turn now to some of the other issues. Reference was made to the flag. I will get away from the rhetoric and tell the truth. The reality is that the Queensland flag and the Australian flag are flying outside this place today. Apart from the House of Commons, no other Parliament under the Westminster system flies the Union Jack. I ask members opposite: why does the Liberal Party Government in New South Wales not fly the Union Jack? Why does the Liberal Party Government in Victoria not fly the Union Jack? Why does the Liberal Party Government in Tasmania not fly the Union Jack? They do not do so because, apart from the House of Commons, no other Westminster Parliament flies the Union Jack. I am a proud Australian and a proud Queenslander, and the flags flying outside this place will do me any day.

Reference was also made to the importance of the Conservative Party in the House of Commons supporting a Labour Party Speaker. I have to say: what a commendable state of affairs! John Major is on record, however, as saying that the numbers were so tight that he was delighted to get rid of another Labour member into the chair. Let there be a bit of honesty in this debate. Those of us who sat through the last Parliament saw from time to time that Jimmy Fouras did get into trouble with some matters in this House. Do honourable members know why? Because Jimmy Fouras is too fair; that is why. Jimmy Fouras has done everything he can to give everyone in this House a fair go. From time to time, all of us have disagreed with some of his rulings. I have, too. I agree with Tommy Burns' comment in that regard. However, Jimmy Fouras has tried to do the right thing. I do not believe that anybody can do the job better than he does. My only regret is that this debate was not conducted in a more sensible and mature way. During the remainder of the sittings of this Parliament, I hope that there will be no more mud-slinging and personal assassination, as there was today. I think it was a disgrace.

Mr CAMPBELL (Bundaberg) (11.31 a.m.): I support the nomination of Mr Fouras as Speaker. The speech that was delivered by the member for Beaudesert gave cause for concern. Many demands and pressures are placed on the families of members of Parliament. No member of an honourable member's family should be degraded in this House. New members of Parliament can learn one lesson from today, that is, to leave the families of members of Parliament alone. Family members already face enough pressure. An honourable member will be more highly regarded if he or she sticks to the issues and does not attack individuals, especially the members of an honourable member's family. If a member must attack individuals, let that member attack them where they can defend themselves. If members of families are attacked, they cannot defend themselves. The action on the part of the honourable member for Beaudesert was despicable. I am certain that anyone could find failings with a member of the family of any member of this Chamber. It is time that such gutter tactics ceased.

Some aspects of this Parliament's processes must be examined. A person is not just appointed to the position of Speaker; he or she is also provided with the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders of this House must be scrutinised. A major review of them should be undertaken because they are out of date. The Speaker should be provided with modernised Standing Orders with which he or she can work. For a start, the Standing Orders are in illogical sequence and many of them are irrelevant and out of

date. I request that, for the first time in years, a proper review of the Standing Orders be conducted so that this Parliament can be modernised. On a number of occasions, honourable members have referred to the aspects which must be examined. Question time is one of those aspects. Questions on notice should not be part of question time. Instead, they should be placed on the notice paper and the answers incorporated in *Hansard*. Question time should be reserved for questions without notice. Questions should not be complex; rather, they should be short and easy to understand so that the cut and thrust of question time can be returned to this Parliament.

A need exists for members of this Parliament to act together. Three players participate in the parliamentary process: Executive Government, Government members and Opposition members. Some areas should be modernised, especially the introduction of legislation. In some ways, it is discourteous to an Opposition that the Opposition spokesmen are not advised of the date on which legislation is to be introduced. It is the responsibility of the Opposition to ensure that debate is relevant and not repetitious. If time is wasted with repetitious argument, the role of Parliament is demeaned.

The third issue I raise pertains particularly to those members of Parliament who may become members of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee. I reject the criticisms by the Chairman of the Criminal Justice Commission of parliamentary committees and their role. I believe that most committees work effectively. However, because of an Act of Parliament, I believe that the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee did not work well.

The PRESIDING MEMBER: Order! I have given the honourable member for Bundaberg a fair bit of latitude. I realise that he is taking this opportunity to point out some fairly meaningful problems as he sees them. However, having regard to the commitments that all members must meet, the honourable member should return to the subject of the debate, which is the election of Speaker.

Mr CAMPBELL: Standing Orders are an important aspect of this Parliament and the role of the Speaker. It is important that the proper roles are defined. One Standing Order and one Act of Parliament in particular affect the privileges of members of Parliament. I refer to the Criminal Justice Act, which states that the Chairman of the Criminal Justice Commission can decide whether a member of a parliamentary committee has acted with criminal intent or not, even though that member of Parliament may feel that he has acted in his role as a member of a parliamentary committee. Honourable members should consider that point and read that Act. That provision attacks the privileges of the members of this Parliament. They can face criminal charges even though they believe that they are acting in the interests of Queenslanders and in the interests of this Parliament. I join my colleagues in wishing Jim Fouras the best in his position as Speaker.

The PRESIDING MEMBER: Honourable members, a ballot will now be conducted. I draw the attention of all honourable members to the form of ballot paper which will be used. It will list only the names of those members who have been nominated and seconded and who have accepted the nomination. You are required to place a cross in the square immediately to the left of the name of the member whom you choose to be the Speaker. As your name is called, please come forward to receive the ballot paper. After voting, place your paper in the ballot box on the table.

At 11.37 a.m.,

In accordance with the provisions of Standing Orders No. 6 and 7, a ballot was taken by the Clerk, with the following result—

Mr Fouras	54
Mr Beanland	34

Mr Fouras submitted himself to the pleasure of the House and, on being called, was conducted to the chair by the mover and the seconder.

Mr SPEAKER: I thank honourable members for electing me for what is now a second time. I am conscious of the high honour that has been bestowed upon me today. I am very much aware of the responsibilities attached to the office of the Speaker. On occasions, it is not an easy task to preside over this Chamber. However, I will continue to endeavour to treat all members with fairness and without prejudice. I hope that, with the assistance of all honourable members, we will all work together in a way that will reflect credit on this Assembly and on our parliamentary system of government.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier and Minister for Economic and Trade Development) (12.15 p.m.): On behalf of all Government members and, I believe, on behalf of all members of this House, may I extend to you, Mr Speaker, congratulations on your election to the position of Speaker—an election which I think is well justified. I would simply note in passing that the Deputy Premier and Treasurer join with me in extending those congratulations. Unfortunately, they have had to leave to attend a funeral and they have to catch a plane.

The debate we have had this morning has been robust. In all cases bar one, the speeches during the debate canvassed a range of issues to be considered for the election of the Speaker of this Parliament. Mr Speaker, you have a difficult task. As I said in my comments in nominating you, you are in a situation in which you will frequently find yourself in a difficult position because people on the Government side of the House, people on the other side of the House and I will not see things from the same perspective as you do. However, I hope, as I said before, that all members will realise and appreciate that they do not see matters from the unique vantage point that the Speaker has. I wish you well in your Speakership during the course of this Parliament.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Leader of the Opposition) (12.16 p.m.): On behalf of members of the Opposition, I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election and to assure you of the cooperation and support of members on this side of the House. From time to time during the previous Parliament, relations were strained. We accept the fact that the Speakership is probably one of the most difficult tasks that any member can have and that the experience of Parliament is something that grows with the incumbents; indeed, it grows with everyone who occupies a seat in this place. The Opposition puts aside those differences of the past. We are in a new Parliament. We have many new members. We have many new challenges before us. In the coming weeks and months, you will have an enormous responsibility.

As I indicated when nominating Mr Beanland, for a wide range of reasons the institution of Parliament is increasingly the subject of cynicism and derision. Despite the fact that members of Parliament on both sides of the House work hard, we have to look seriously at the future of our institution. The future of our institution is inevitably weakened when there are excesses on the part of Executive Government. Past Executive Governments were certainly more than capable of those excesses. Members should consider the recent experience of the royal commission in Western Australia and the subsequent report of that royal commission to be presented to that Parliament which will make very dramatic recommendations in respect of the accountability process and the proper role and the proper function of the Parliament. Lessons are to be learnt from that, just as lessons were to be learnt from Fitzgerald by each and every one of us. We simply must make this institution work better. If we do not make it work better, this institution, as precious as it is, will simply become unwanted. I am sure that none of us would like to see that happen.

Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Opposition, I extend congratulations to you. I also offer my personal congratulations to you. I can assure you that, within the confines of

robust parliamentary debate, we will seek to extend as much cooperation and courtesy to you as we possibly can.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Leader of the Liberal Party) (12.17 p.m.): Mr Speaker, as Deputy Leader of the Coalition and Leader of the Liberal Party, I congratulate you on your election as Speaker. I draw your attention to the concerns that I raised in my speech. I know that you share many of them yourself. Question time must become more relevant. We have a unicameral Parliament. Therefore, for the Opposition to be relevant and to be able to question the Ministers on their performance and the performance of their departments, it is most important that question time be reformed. After all, all members here represent the people of Queensland, and it is our right to ensure that the Parliament copes with the complex problems that are presented to it and is answerable to the people. I support you in your position. We wish you well. Thank you.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly) (12.18 p.m.): Mr Speaker, I too rise to add my personal congratulations to you on your election as Speaker of this House. I know that from time to time, as has been indicated by members on both sides of the House, enormous pressure will be placed upon you in your role as Speaker. Members on both sides of the House look forward to fair and just interpretation of Standing Orders and fair and just treatment from you as Speaker, which I am sure they will receive. My very best wishes go with you in your role.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I am grateful to those members who have spoken and for the remarks that they have made on this occasion. In reflecting on those remarks, I am conscious of the responsibilities of the office of Speaker in this Chamber and in the wider context in which a presiding officer is required to carry out those responsibilities. I also appreciate the standards of fairness which are an inherent characteristic of this honourable office. I shall strive to maintain the highest standards. During this term, the Parliament will face many challenges and changes. For example, during this session the EARC report on the future development of the committee system will be tabled. That is likely to be the most significant development in the role of the Assembly committee system since it was established. Also during the next year, there will be a number of administrative reforms and technological developments which will be aimed at improving services to members and the efficiency of the administration. I also intend to convene an early meeting of the Standing Orders Committee so that it can consider a number of reforms to question time and undertake further reviews of the Standing Orders.

It is a challenging time to be Speaker, as there is an urgent need to improve the standing of the Parliament. The public attitude to politics and politicians is at an all-time low. During the next three years, I will actively support a series of seminars and education programs, which will aim to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of the significance of the Parliament. I hope that, in some small way, that will address the public misconception of the Parliament and parliamentarians.

For the benefit of the number of new members, I have made it clear throughout my time as Speaker that my door is always open and I welcome the opportunity to discuss with all members any matters of concern. In conclusion, I again thank you for placing your trust in me. I will tackle the task with enthusiasm in a way that I trust members will approve. Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF MR SPEAKER

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier and Minister for Economic and Trade Development) (12.21 p.m.): I desire to inform honourable members that Her Excellency the Governor will receive the House for the purpose of presenting the Speaker to Her Excellency at Government House today at 3.45 p.m. Cars will leave outside Parliament House at 3.20 p.m. sharp.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier and Minister for Economic and Trade Development) (12.22 p.m.): I move—

“That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 2.12 p.m. tomorrow in the late Legislative Council Chamber.”

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 12.23 p.m.