



Speech by

**Hon. R. GIBBS**

**MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA**

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Hansard 22 October 1998

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Committee (Cognate Debate)**

**Estimates Committee G**

**Report**

**Hon. R. J. GIBBS** (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (4.49 p.m.): Firstly, I wish to express the view that I have held for quite a few years that I am not a particular admirer of the Estimates committee system. After being a member of this place throughout the years the system has been operating, I have come to wonder what it achieves. We often hear the term "accountability" used in this place. However, I tell members now that, in terms of accountability, I do not believe that this whole process that we go through means much to my constituents, who are more interested in issues other than those mentioned during the Estimates process. I say that for a number of reasons. I realise the great effort that goes towards the preparation of these Estimates within my own department. For example, some evenings there were people working until 2 a.m. the next day preparing for this exercise. However, I have never considered the Estimates committees to be anything more than a blood sport.

I certainly congratulate the member for Lytton on the way in which he chaired the committee. I take great comfort in the following point that he makes in his foreword—

"The committee believes the individual skill of members in interpreting the budget papers and asking pertinent questions will always be the underlying reason for success of the estimates process."

It certainly disappointed me to see Opposition members come to that committee who, quite frankly, were not across the portfolio programs and had very little knowledge of the facts contained within the Budget papers. That was borne out by the abysmal performance of the member for Toowoomba North, who simply could not seem to absorb the fact that there had been a \$5m increase by this Government in the budget of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation. The member for Barron River was quite correct: he went the length and breadth of Queensland uttering untruths about the Budget and, much to his embarrassment, he now realises that what he was saying was incorrect. There should be some process whereby the Opposition members can come to some understanding of the rudimentary fundamentals of the Budget before they come to the Estimates committees.

The member for Warwick referred to the firearms issue. I am not against people legitimately joining sporting clubs because they want to participate in the sport of shooting. That is a recognised and legitimate pastime. The point that I made at the Estimates committee was that, over the past 18 months, an extraordinary amount of money has gone into shooting clubs. Of course, it is no coincidence that that happened at a time when the National Party was doing its best to defend its support base in the bush. Although it is true to say that there was a massive growth in the number of members of shooting clubs, the participation rates in those clubs declined. It was nothing more than a cheap political exercise of encouraging people to join shooting clubs so that they could keep their weapons. That is what it was all about. By encouraging people to join shooting clubs so that they could keep their weapons, the organisations were rewarded with massive grants.

A concern was expressed at the committee in relation to the review under the National Competition Policy of the liquor licensing laws of Queensland. I have given certain commitments in that

regard. However, there is one commitment that I am not going to give, and I want to make that clear here today, as I did when I addressed the annual dinner and awards function of the Queensland Hotels Association last night. The previous Government had a tendency to react to issues that it believed would be vote catching or popular. Despite the attitude expressed at the recent local government conference, I want to make it very clear that I am not going to be part of any move to reduce trading hours on the evenings of Anzac Day, Good Friday, or Christmas Eve. The simple reality is that, if we did that, we would become the laughing-stock of this country. We are a major tourist destination in our own right. Only two States in Australia restrict trading, and they are Tasmania and Western Australia. Our liquor licensing laws are now recognised as among the very best in this nation. It is certainly not my intention to change them simply because some yobbo happened to disturb a dawn service somewhere in Queensland and the former Premier happened to be offended by it.

I am proud to note the massive growth in the Sport budget. When Labor came into office in 1989, the Sport budget was \$6m. This year, it is \$94.25m—a massive increase owing to the foresight of the Government of the time of introducing poker machines into Queensland to stop the plundering of Queenslanders' money, which went over the border and into the coffers of the New South Wales Government. That has paid handsome dividends for our sporting organisations. If there is one regret, it is that poker machines were kept out of this State for years because of corruption and underhand payments.

Time expired.

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