



Speech by

Mr G. HEALY

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Committee (Cognate Debate)

Estimates Committee G

Report

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (4.24 p.m.): I place on record my appreciation for the way the Chairman of Estimates Committee G, the member for Lytton, conducted proceedings before, during and after the hearings. I think he displayed a certain amount of professionalism and as a result he gained complete cooperation from all members of the committee, including the non-Government members. I also thank the research staff for their cooperation and assistance.

As to the Estimates committee process in general, I suppose by the time Estimates Committee G came around most of the mechanics were running pretty smoothly, although I do feel—I agree with the member for Kurwongbah—that in the future perhaps consideration could be given to allowing a little more time for the portfolio of Tourism, Sport and Racing to give a little more time for questioning.

Mr Lucas: Your colleagues might not agree with that.

Mr HEALY: They agree with it. It is a large portfolio area—I am sure the Minister will understand that—with a lot of different areas that require examination. Another half or three-quarters of an hour would have allowed more time for us to examine in detail the Estimates of the various areas of portfolio responsibility.

Also in the area of Tourism, Sport and Racing—this is no criticism of the Minister—the Minister requested that certain departmental officers be present in a particular order to assist with the answering of questions pertaining to certain parts of the department. That is fair enough, but a problem arises with the 20-minute blocks allocated to both Government and non-Government members.

The Government members may have only a few questions pertaining to, say, liquor licensing in their 20-minute block while the non-Government members may have a lot more, even carrying over into their next 20-minute block. Either the relevant departmental officials would then have to come back or the committee would have to split up the 20-minute questioning periods. This all became very confusing, particularly for the research staff in working out just how much time was left for the Government and non-Government members at the end of the day. I think this is something that can be worked out down the track. If the Minister does require that certain departmental officers be in attendance at particular times that is fine, but I think we have to work on an improvement to the system, particularly in an area such as Tourism, Sport and Racing, which contains some other departmental people who may not be required for the questioning.

The Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing followed exactly the same pattern as most of the other Ministers by using the hearing to answer Dorothy Dix questions from Government members of the committee and to launch an attack on the previous coalition Government and the initiatives that either were included in the May Budget document or had been announced as part of the lead-up to the election. That is somewhat hypocritical, given the fact that the Labor Party did not radically change the content of the coalition's Budget but in fact mirrored many of its initiatives.

In the couple of minutes remaining to me, I will concentrate my comments on the Racing area of the portfolio. I will have more to say about this subject in my speech to the motion that will be debated tonight. As everybody knows, a decision will be made at the Labor Party State conference

next month which could have the most enormous ramifications on the future viability of the racing industry in the State—probably even since Statehood.

Mr Lucas: If you join the party, we will get you a seat there.

Mr HEALY: You have no chance of that, my friend.

Mr Springborg: But you're still alive.

Mr HEALY: That is a point. We on this side of the Chamber are still alive. The point I make—I will reiterate it later tonight—is that this infamous catchcry of the Premier of "jobs, jobs, jobs" will mean absolutely nothing if the Labor Party does not agree to the privatisation of the TAB. If Labor members reject privatisation, the jobs of thousands of their fellow Queenslanders will be immediately at risk. That is something they have to remember. It is about employment as well as all of the other areas of the racing industry. Over 25,000 people are employed in the racing industry in this State. If the Labor Party decides to reject privatisation, it will be at its peril.

Time expired.
