



Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR WARWICK

Hansard 11 November 1998

CITIZENS' INITIATED REFERENDUM (CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT) BILL

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (10.21 p.m.): The Opposition, in common with the Government, is unable to support the legislation brought before the Parliament by the honourable member for Nicklin. The policy of the coalition is not in support of citizens' initiated referenda. This was reaffirmed only recently by both the National Party annual State conference and the Liberal Party annual State conference.

I would like to make it clear to the honourable member for Nicklin and all the members of this House that the coalition—the National Party and the Liberal Party—are organisations that are driven from the grassroots up. That is a very important point. Our membership—the many tens of thousands of members right around Queensland—have had opportunities through the branches, the electoral councils, the divisional councils and right through the various decision-making arms of the various parties to be able to put forward policy views on a whole range of issues.

When it came to making a decision on this particular issue, the membership decided collectively that it was not in support of citizens' initiated referenda. I believe that it is very important that we reaffirm our belief as well—as a coalition and as an Opposition—that, when it comes to these sorts of issues, what our members want is very important. Our membership, which in turn makes policy for this party, does so after it moves around the State and consults with various members of the community. We have a broad range and a broad reach of people who are involved in our organisation. It is important that we respond to them and respect their particular decision.

I must say that I do agree with the Premier that there is a need for Governments, Oppositions and politicians in general to continue to be responsive to community needs. I suppose that it is fair to say as well that the political process and the process of parliamentary democracy and government from time to time is seen to be in disrepute. However, I believe that it is also very fair to say that just about all members of Parliament on all sides—whether they be members of the Labor Party, the National Party, the Liberal Party, Independent members of Parliament or members of any other party—try to represent their electorates and the people of Queensland to the best of their ability and in response to what they believe their needs are.

That is the fundamental reason why our membership and the Opposition are opposed to this Bill, which was introduced by the honourable member for Nicklin. We do have a system of representative democracy. At the end of the day, our electorates have the opportunity to elect us to come into this place and to make decisions on their behalf. If we do not do that well enough, and if we do not do that in a responsive enough manner, then we do not come back to this place. That is the view that the membership of the National Party and the Liberal Party have taken collectively on this particular issue—whether it be our branch members or our members of Parliament.

We are, of course, vitally concerned that a move towards citizens' initiated referenda—albeit as noble as it may sound on the surface—does remove and attack the foundations of representative democracy as we know it. Of particular concern for us would be any move which bypasses the Parliament, because the Parliament is made up of the people's representatives who have been put here to make decisions on behalf of the people of Queensland. The Opposition will not be supporting this Bill, which has been introduced by the honourable member for Nicklin.
