



Speech by

Hon. M. FOLEY

MEMBER FOR YERONGA

Hansard 6 August 1998

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (6.31 p.m.): I rise to support the amendment moved by the Leader of the House, Mr Mackenroth. This is not a debate to change a sessional order. This is a debate about a debate to change a sessional order. It is an extraordinary waste of the Parliament's time for the Opposition to be bringing forward this matter for debate, well knowing that it is to be debated in this Parliament in accordance with a substantive motion, notice of which was given on 30 July by the Leader of the House.

The people of Queensland could be forgiven for thinking that it is passing strange that we are not here debating the big issues of the day—jobs, job security, health care, education, law and justice. We are having a debate about a coming debate. This is a nonsense! It is a nonsense brought into existence simply because the Opposition fails to do what a decent Opposition should do, that is, approach the reform of Parliament in a constructive way.

For the first time in the history of the Queensland Parliament, there is the prospect of a guarantee in the Sessional Orders for the debating of private members' Bills. That was the historic motion moved by the Leader of the House, Mr Mackenroth. Instead of welcoming that, the Opposition has sought a different view. It is entitled to a different view. It is entitled to move an amendment to Mr Mackenroth's motion and have it debated. Instead, it wants to have a debate about the having of a debate. It is a sterile and pointless exercise into which the Opposition has plunged this House.

Mr Horan: We just put forward a straightforward motion. You are the one who is going on about a debate about a debate.

Mr FOLEY: The honourable member seems blithely unaware that this is in fact not a debate about the sessional order. It does not give rise to a new sessional order. It simply maintains this waste of precious parliamentary time.

Let us look at this in context. What was the first private member's Bill in recent history to get through this House? It was the Parliamentary Papers Bill of 1991. It came about as a result of cooperation amongst all parties. I had the honour of introducing that Bill, which went on to become the Parliamentary Papers Act. That occurred under the Goss Labor Government. It occurred because the Labor Party brought to this Chamber a new approach, an approach which respected the role of the private member's Bill.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr FOLEY: The honourable member has had a strange case of amnesia. Where was the honourable member's protest when his Government ignored the Government Publicity Control Bill, moved by the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr Beattie? Where was he when the Freedom of Information Amendment Bill languished on the Notice Paper? Where was he? He complains loud and long now, but he refused to take action then. It was only as a result of the actions of the Labor Party in Opposition that the Carruthers Inquiry Enabling Bill was passed. That historic achievement came from the Labor side of politics, because Labor believes in the importance of the role of the private member of Parliament.

The honourable members opposite should take a leaf out of the book of Sir James Killen. They should remember that their duty is to this Parliament and to show some dignity and respect. They should not bring down the standards of this Parliament by such a sterile waste of time as engaging in a debate about a debate. No wonder the people of Queensland are dismayed at the folly in the priorities of the Opposition. The Government strongly supports private members' Bills and is taking action to ensure that the Sessional Orders in this House provide that they are debated.
