



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

Hansard 4 August 1998

AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.12 a.m.): I rise to support the Leader of the Opposition in opposing this motion. Once again, in staging this motion we see the Premier getting involved in deals and theatrics just to save Labor's own soul in case something goes wrong with such a delicately balanced Parliament. We have heard much about the term "sin-bin". The Premier used it in his speech this morning. However, can members imagine a sin-bin where, say, Darren Lockyer from the Broncos gets sent off. When the Broncos have the opportunity to kick a goal, he is brought back on! That is what is happening here. Another example could be when a player is sent off, the opposing side gets the ball, and when the team needs its full 13 players for defence, that player comes back on! Can members imagine that at all?

That is what this motion is about: saving the Labor Government in a very delicate situation. It wants another option. Mr Beattie and the Labor Government want to have another option in case one of the Labor members is unruly and there is the chance that that member will be removed from the Chamber. They still want that member to be able to come back into the Chamber to vote.

If this motion is passed, it is going to place heavy pressure on the Speaker and certainly compromise him. Previously, we had a rule whereby the Speaker could warn a member. If the Speaker thought that further action was necessary, he sent the member from the Chamber and that member lost his or her vote. What would happen if, in one session during the term of this Government, a Labor member is sent to the sin-bin and comes back in to vote and on another occasion an Opposition member is sent out but without the right to vote? That is going to place enormous pressure on the Speaker and compromise the position of the Speaker. I think that is totally unfair.

There should be one rule that makes it simple for the Speaker: that he warns a member and then after further warnings given to that member the Speaker makes the decision to send out the member, who then loses a vote. That is the ultimate penalty, and ultimately it is what we have to consider.

All honourable members who were here during the term of the previous Government would remember the delicate balance of that Parliament and their fear of being sent out and missing a vote when one vote could make the difference. That fear made members behave. Many times, I can remember Labor members being warned and seeing the current Leader of the House saying to the members of his party, "Quieten down. You have been warned." That worked, because the members knew that if they transgressed once more they would be sent out, miss the vote for the day, and Parliament's delicate balance of power would be lost. Today, we are talking about a lessening of discipline in this House—another way to lessen the discipline, another way to save the Labor Government if it gets into a tricky situation.

Much has been said about the public's attitude towards this House and the fact that we now have television coverage of the proceedings of the House, particularly question time. At times, question time is a little bit more robust and theatrical, for example, when the current Premier held up a big dummy so as to get himself on the 6 o'clock news. That is what the public see. However, if the Speaker has the power to remove someone from the Chamber, that is the ultimate discipline.

This motion is nothing more than a theatrical stunt to make people think that we have all this reform and we are going to have this lovely, you-beaut, euphoric Parliament. Ultimately, the power for a member to be sent out of the Chamber and lose the vote has been lost. We know that the Premier has always been involved in stunts since the day he met Joh down at the back of the cowshed at Bethany. Recently, in relation to an issue relating to Lang Park, the Premier could not hold a media conference without holding a football in his hand, even though it was an Australian Rules football and Lang Park is a Rugby League ground. Here again, we have seen the same thing—all this lovely warm stuff, telling the people of Queensland that we are going to have this new way of making Parliament really good, this new system to make people behave. However, what is really behind it is a lessening of discipline of members. There will be less pressure on members to behave in this place. Ultimately, it is really about making sure that the Labor Government, in a delicately balanced Parliament, has another way out so that it does not lose one crucial vote.
