



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.11 p.m.): I am pleased to second this motion. This 49th Parliament is a different, unique Parliament, the likes of which Queensland has not seen before. On the opposite side of the House sits the Labor Party, which recorded 38% of the primary vote. On this side of the House sit members representing the National Party, the Liberal Party, the One Nation Party and two Independents. It is a different Parliament.

One of the principles on which the minority Labor Government obtained the support of the Independent member for Nicklin was set out in the letter written by the Premier to him. The letter stated that the Government would ensure Standing Orders allow adequate opportunities for all members to do a number of things, including moving private members' Bills and having them debated. The letter said "all members". How can we achieve that in this uniquely different Parliament under the Sessional Orders suggested by the Labor Government? Consideration of the statistics in relation to how many private members' Bills would get through would reveal the farce of the principle espoused in the letter from the Premier to the Independent member for Nicklin.

In the case of a Bill moved today, under the 90 day rule, that Bill would not be due to be debated until next January. The 90 days would take us up to the end of November, which is around the time of the Christmas recess. The sittings of the House usually recommence sometime in February. The Bill would be debated for a certain period and it would probably not go through until June or July. The subject matter of private members' Bills—particularly those of the Opposition and the other parties—will no doubt be different in philosophy and principle from the policies of the Labor Government. No doubt, the Government will want to have approximately 20 members speak to the Bills. Were 10 members from this side of the House and 20 Labor members to speak to the Bills, that would add up to approximately 10 and a half hours of debate. Only two and a half hours of debate are allowed for private members' Bills on each Wednesday night. If time for discussion during the Committee stage is added to that figure, the result could be that months and months go by before those Bills go through. If members consider the parliamentary year and note the Easter recess, the winter recess and the period in September set aside for Estimates committees when the Parliament is not debating legislation, they will realise that the result of the Government's proposal will be only one or two private members' Bills at the most getting through each year. By the time of the next election, we will be lucky to have had four or five private members' Bills debated.

We on this side of the House recognise that Labor has formed Government and been sworn in as a Government and that we do not have a right to dominate the proceedings of this place. However, in this uniquely different Parliament, we have the right to have a reasonable and fair number of private members' Bills debated as per the points of principle raised in the Premier's letter. The passing of this motion will provide the opportunity to do that. If we made a total meal of it and started moving too many private members' Bills to the point of being totally unfair in view of the fact that members opposite constitute the Government, the Government would have the opportunity to seek the support of the Independent member for Nicklin. However, if the House follows the method set down by the Government, by halfway through or two years into this 49th Parliament, hardly a private members' Bill of any consequence will have been debated. At that stage, it would be too late to say that the system is not working and that we should turn back.

The only workable system is the one set out in our motion, which will give a fair, reasonable, principled go to the members on this side according to the principles espoused in the letter from the Premier to the Independent member of Nicklin. We find the Government's proposal intolerable. The system of private members' Bills—which are new and different to this Parliament—would be a farce if the rules of 90 days and then two and a half hours on Wednesday nights applies. A controversial Bill would take six months to a year to be debated to a conclusion. That would make an absolute farce of the process. We on this side of the Chamber believe that, if the House agrees to 60 days and a reasonable time on Wednesdays, we can give it a fair go. We would do that reasonably and fairly and not monopolise the time of the Government. I put it to the Independent member of Nicklin that that is the only way to go.

Time expired.
