



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) (1.36 a.m.): I second the amendment. We have a very, very different Parliament from any that Queensland has ever seen before—a Parliament made up of the Labor Party, the National Party, the Liberal Party, One Nation and two separate Independents. The Labor Party currently holds Government with 38% of the vote. The balance of the vote resides with the other parties and the Independents.

As a result, in endeavouring to form Government, the Premier gave a letter outlining certain principles to the Independent member for Nicklin, who agreed with it. Part of that letter stated that all members would have the opportunity to introduce private members' Bills. Although members have been able to introduce private members' Bills before, they were not able to have them debated in the Chamber. The Attorney-General spoke sanctimoniously earlier about how he had introduced an historic private member's Bill. That was only because the Goss Government allowed him to do so. In that session of Parliament, I remember that a private member's Bill from the member for Warrego sat on the Notice Paper for year after year. The Government never allowed the Bill to be debated. But things have changed and things are different.

What will happen if this amendment is not supported and we stick with the 90-day provision? The CIR Bill was introduced this week. It would be Christmas before the 90 days were up. We probably will not come back here until some time in February. We will have a week of sittings in February and one or two weeks in March, and then it will be Easter. If there is significant interest in that Bill, as there would appear to be, it could well be that there are 20 speakers on one side and 10 on the other. That adds up to 600 minutes. If we have only Wednesday night on which to debate it, that means it would take about four weeks of Parliament before we even finished the second-reading debate. Then it would have to go to the Committee stage. It would probably be about August or September—getting into next year's Estimates—before that Bill was passed.

We have three Bills on the Notice Paper. We have the one introduced by the shadow Attorney-General, the one by the member for Nicklin and one by the Opposition Leader. Already there is significant interest in it. If we are going to have some principles and if we are going to stick by the principles not only of being able to introduce these Bills but also being able to debate them, then we have to have reasonable Sessional Orders to allow this to happen.

I point out to the member for Nicklin—if he has some principle in this matter about wanting to have Bills introduced and debated not just for himself but for anybody else—that it could well be that, over the next three years, if each shadow Minister, one or two members from One Nation and the two Independents all have one private member's Bill, there would be something in the order of 22 Bills. The only way that we can deal with that is if we have the 60-day rule and the balance of it as proposed in this particular amendment.

It is essential that we apply the principle to this. The Leader of the House has said that, if it does not work, we will try some other way. I say to the House, particularly to the member for Nicklin, that this is an historical and significant change in this Parliament. It is a matter of high principle—of very high principle—for everybody in this House, regardless of which party they represent or whether or not they are an Independent. We must abide by those principles. That means that we should approve this amendment. That means that we should give this a chance. If we do not, in about July or August next

year we are probably going to end up with one third of the 49th session gone and the chance for this new historic principle and Sessional Order of this Parliament 30% gone and finished. In that time we will have probably lost the opportunity for some four or five other members who have a Bill that is close and dear to their heart to be able to bring it into this House.

I say again to the member for Nicklin that he brought into the House this week a Bill which is very much close to his heart. It is a Bill in regard to which he holds high principles and it was very important for him to be able to bring that Bill into this House. He wants to have it heard, debated and adjudged in this House. If that Bill is passed, he will probably have another one to follow it. Likewise, all of us have a desire to introduce particular private members' Bills into this House.

For that reason I say that, if our amendment is approved, that will give strength to the principles that are espoused in the letter of the Premier to the member for Nicklin. It means that we can then go ahead with this new historic Sessional Order not just to have private members' Bills introduced but to actually be able to debate them. It will give everybody a fair go and we will not waste one year or more of the three years of this particular parliamentary session and lose the opportunity to have those private members' Bills debated by the members who introduce them into the House. If we were then making a welter of it, then that is the time to say of the 60-day rule and then the two and a half hours as the amendment provides, "We are making a welter of it; we have to adjust it." At least then we will not have thrown away one year of the three-year term.

In seconding the amendment, I commend it strongly to each and every member of this House on the principles espoused in the letter from the Premier to the member for Nicklin. I hope that everybody will abide by those principles.
