



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 28 July 1998

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (10.41 a.m): I welcome all members to the Forty-ninth Parliament. It is my privilege and honour to nominate the member for Redcliffe as Speaker. Ray Hollis has the experience, temperament, determination and ability to fulfil the demanding duties of Speaker in the Forty-ninth Queensland Parliament. It will be a Parliament far more complex than any in recent decades because it comprises representatives of four political parties and two Independent members. It is up to the Speaker and all of us not only to make this Parliament work but also to make it effective and to restore the respect in it to which the public are entitled.

I am determined that my Government will play its part by setting high standards of honesty and accountability. The new Standing Orders that we will be putting forward will make the Government more accountable to Parliament. Ministers will not waste time in question time. Ministers will have three minutes to answer each question. Private members' Bills will actually be debated. In the past couple of years some members may have escaped being ejected from the Chamber for unparliamentary behaviour because it would have upset the very delicate numerical balance in the House. We can solve this problem by sending any unruly member to a parliamentary sin bin for a period of time. They will lose the ability to speak during debates but will be allowed to vote. This new power will be in addition to the existing Standing Order which allows a member to be excluded for both debating and voting.

The Speaker will face a difficult task. Queenslanders do not want this Parliament to resemble a bearpit. They want it to be the people's forum of positive ideas. They do not want proceedings to be little more than a childish squabble. They want it to be a debating Chamber where members work to improve Queenslanders' lifestyles. They do not want sittings to be used as an opportunity to make crude, unfounded allegations. They want a parliamentary Chamber that is treated with respect and dignity. All Queenslanders deserve a Parliament that they can respect, so all members will have to lift their standards. I say "all members" and I intend to lead by example.

We should all seek to ensure that when Queenslanders hear excerpts from a parliamentary debate on radio, when they see parliamentarians on the television news and when they read about Parliament in newspapers, they are impressed—not depressed. That is not to say that debate should not be robust. It does not mean that the Government should not be attacked when a member believes that it has got something wrong. There will be no attempt to stifle or neuter legitimate criticism. But the public expects logic, well-reasoned argument, facts and figures—not innuendo, smear and half-truths. I believe that the member for Redcliffe will display the authority, fairness and impartiality to guide this Parliament along those lines. It is also essential that the person who becomes Speaker should have the confidence of this House. I believe that the member for Redcliffe has the credentials to instil that confidence.

Raymond Keith Hollis was born in England 58 years ago, so he is someone who had the good sense to choose to live in Queensland. He was brought up in a depressed area of London by his mother, a single parent, from the age of two. Leaving school at the age of 15, he worked as a farmhand and then as a galley boy, cook and steward before settling in Australia at the age of 22. He then worked as a porter, guard and signalman, as a cook at Woomera Rocket Range, as a paper mill worker and prison officer and then ran his own carrying business for 13 years before entering Parliament. It was while working that he passed his higher school certificate and spent a year at

La Trobe University studying behavioural science. He is married to Diane and has brought up four children.

Ray has always been deeply involved in community activities and was elected to this Parliament on 2 December 1989. Ray recognised in his own way some years ago that there was a danger that parliamentarians were distancing themselves from the average Queenslander. His answer was to hold morning teas at his home. More than 1,600 constituents have been made welcome at his home. With nine years' parliamentary experience he knows the rules, regulations and traditions of this place and was chair of the Public Accounts Committee from 1992 to 1996. He is ideally suited to be the 31st Queensland Speaker. If Ray is successful in this vote, he would like to be remembered as the Speaker who restored dignity to the Parliament. I have faith that he will maintain a cool head in the hot seat.
