



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 4 August 1998

AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (10.07 a.m.): I put one proposition very clearly to the House: if the Leader of the Opposition is right that the old rules worked so well, why is this Parliament held in such low esteem by the community? It is very simple: the rules as they currently exist are not good enough. All of us have to share some responsibility for that. What we also need to do is accept that the rules need to be changed to improve the performance of this Parliament and to restore its dignity and respect in the community. I am not prepared to sit by and allow the Leader of the Opposition to derail these attempts to improve the standards of this Parliament. I gave a commitment to the people of Queensland and to the Independent member for Nicklin that I would do everything in my power and my Government would do the same to restore the dignity of the Parliament.

Let us be very clear about the Standing Orders. This amendment does not reduce the existing Standing Orders. The Standing Orders and the powers of the Speaker remain. There is no changing or reducing the powers of the Speaker. We are enhancing them. We are giving the Speaker an additional power to remove someone but not to take away his or her vote. We all know that only one member was ejected during the term of the last Parliament. That was the case because the Speaker was concerned about the delicate balance of numbers in this place. The Speaker sought to be fair to all members, and we have the same delicate balance of numbers. Through these changes, the Speaker is being given an extra power to enforce discipline.

Some comment was made by the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Indooroopilly about the reference that I made to a sin-bin. Yes, I made a reference to a sin-bin, and I did it very clearly because the community understands what a sin-bin is all about. The community knows what it means. It means that the player is not sent off for the whole game but he or she is removed for part of it.

There is no trickery or games in any of this motion. This is about lifting the standard of the Parliament. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that I will be saying to the people of Queensland that what my Government introduced into this House today was an extra measure to improve the performance of the Parliament, and I will have to say that the Leader of the Opposition opposed it. I will let the people of Queensland know clearly where he and I stand in relation to the standards of behaviour in this House.

I cannot understand the argument of the Leader of the Opposition. The powers of the Speaker remain. They are not eroded in any manner, shape or form. He has been given an additional power. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that if somewhere along the line we had eroded the existing powers that the Speaker has under the Standing Orders, then his argument would have validity. However, that is not what has happened. We have given the Speaker an additional power.

All members know that if a member is ejected from this Chamber without a vote, it affects the very balance of the House and it affects the very outcome of legislation and matters of considerable importance. The Speaker retains that power and it would be used in those cases in which a member has clearly and simply gone beyond the pale. This amendment gives the Speaker an extra shot in the armoury to maintain discipline in this Parliament.

In conclusion, I have to say that I am very disappointed in the Opposition for opposing this measure, because this was a genuine and sincere attempt to improve the standard of behaviour in the

House. We did not seek to ambush the Leader of the Opposition. He knows that. We sat down and collectively had a discussion. Everyone was represented.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: No, the Leader of the Opposition knows that everyone was represented. There was no ambush. There were no tricks.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: No, we did not. We sat down in a room. The Leader of the Opposition was represented and the Leader of the House ran the meeting. We had every representative. Everyone was invited to be present. We did not seek to ambush the Leader of the Opposition. At that meeting, it was put very clearly on the table.

In the interests of restoring the dignity of this Parliament, I ask the Opposition to reconsider. I conclude where I started: if the old rules were so good, then why are we held in such disrepute in the community?
