



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 6 August 1998

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (6.21 p.m.): I second the amendment to the motion moved by the Leader of the House. In doing so, I say that all members of this House should be clearly aware of what is going on. The Leader of the House gave a clear indication that this matter could be debated next week. So we are going to have two debates. No-one was disadvantaged by the matter being debated next week.

If we are going to have these silly little games, which is what they are, the running of this place will be made very difficult. This is a tightly numbered Parliament. We tried to act with some dignity in this matter. I gave the member for Nicklin a clear undertaking, which is in writing, that says that private members' Bills can be moved and debated. It is very clear. It is in black and white. I will honour that commitment and tonight I restate that commitment.

It is absolutely ridiculous to have a situation in which the Leader of Opposition Business, Mr Beanland, brings on a matter that is going to be debated next week. When it came to these Standing Orders, right from the beginning we acted properly. I promised that the leaders of the various parties and the Independents would get together and discuss the issue of Standing Orders. Inevitably, these things are organised as quickly as possible. I understand that the member for Gladstone could not come to that meeting and apologised. That was clearly understood. The Leader of the Opposition had difficulty in getting there. He apologised as well, but was represented by Mr Beanland. That was made very clear. David Watson, the Leader of the Liberal Party, was at the meeting, if I recall correctly; One Nation was represented by the member for Caboolture and the member for Ipswich West; and Mr Mackenroth and I were there representing the Government. We had what we thought was a very sensible discussion. One of the issues that was on the agenda was private members' Bills. We restated our commitment that not only would we allow them to be introduced but also that they would be debated.

This is in stark contrast to what happened in the previous Government. We have from the Opposition one standard in Government and another standard in Opposition. During the term of the previous Parliament, I introduced two private members' Bills which the then Premier refused to allow to be debated in this House. One Bill was in relation to freedom of information.

Mr Borbidge: Wrong!

Mr BEATTIE: Wrong, my foot! The Leader of the Opposition should look——

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Up to the House! Talk about a double standard! The Leader of the Opposition stands condemned because of his double standards. During the term of the previous Parliament, I introduced two Bills. One was in relation to freedom of information—to prevent Cabinet from exempting the FOI rules. Other private members' Bills were also introduced. At that time, the Government refused to allow those Bills to be debated. The other Bill that I introduced was in relation to Government advertising.

The Leader of the Opposition is complaining about this process when I have given a clear undertaking that there will be a debate on private members' Bills. Yet what did the Opposition do when it was in Government? It gagged us! It would not allow private members' Bills to be debated. That is on

the public record. During that time, I introduced two Bills, and the then Government refused to allow them to be debated. The Opposition is absolutely hypocritical. It has no credibility on this issue. I introduced two Bills into the House and twice the former Government refused to allow them to be debated. Tonight, the Opposition says that it wants private members' Bills to be debated. Yet when it was in Government and had the opportunity to deliver on such matters, did it deliver? No! It refused to allow the Bills to be debated. That is the end of it. The Opposition is absolutely exposed because, when it was in Government, it would not allow private members' Bills to be debated. What absolute hypocrisy!

If this motion moved by the member for Indooroopilly is passed, it would be possible for an unscrupulous Opposition—and I suspect we have seen evidence of that already—to table a large number of private members' Bills, wait for 60 days and then filibuster for as long as possible, thereby preventing a democratically elected Government from getting its Bills onto the Notice Paper. The result would be an unworkable Government. Let every member of this House understand what this motion is about: it is about trying to make this Government unworkable. This motion is about stopping this Government from having its legitimate agenda debated in the Parliament.

The Government has given an undertaking that these Bills will be debated within 60 days. The Leader of the House has outlined the process by which this will occur. This motion is about the Opposition trying to stop the democratically elected Government from getting on with its program. It is about destroying jobs, it is about being negative and it is about whingeing. If the Opposition had behaved differently when it was in Government, it would be a different story. It did not.

Time expired.
