



Speech by

SHAUN NELSON

MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS

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CITIZENS' INITIATED REFERENDUM (CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT) BILL

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—ONP) (10.25 p.m.): I would like to believe that if One Nation had introduced the CIR Bill, and not the Independent member for Nicklin, we would have been treated as fairly by the Premier. Call me a cynic, but I certainly believe that if I had introduced it I would have been absolutely hounded out of this place. However, we all know that the vote of the Independent member for Nicklin is needed in this House for the time being. Therefore, he is always treated with kid gloves when it comes to this sort of issue. But I say to the Independent member for Nicklin that the only supporters of his Bill in this House are the members of One Nation. The members of the other two parties have had their chance to have a say, and they both said "no" straight out.

Right from the very start, One Nation had the whole concept of citizens' initiated referenda—or citizens' based referenda, as we call it—at the heart of our platform in the firm belief—and I accept the member for Warwick's comments—that sometimes politicians stay here for quite some time and very soon forget why they are here. Or they get voted in because some people vote for them without ever coming in here and watching politics; they never see the realism in this House. So politicians sometimes forget why they are here, or they forget their grassroots or where they are coming from. That is representative in the Queensland Parliament. One Nation won 11 seats in this House—five National Party seats and six Labor Party seats—simply because people were disillusioned with what was happening with major politics.

What would have happened if there was no such thing as One Nation? To fulfil their obligation as citizens of this State, those 438,000 Queenslanders would have had to have voted. Therefore, they would have gone along and voted for the same old party ticket because they had no other option.

Mr Sullivan interjected.

Mr NELSON: But in reality, especially with the way in which the preference system is set up, the major parties had a stranglehold. No-one denies that they have lost their way. We have had Beazley say that, we have had Howard say it and we have had Fischer say it, and they are trying to get themselves back on track by addressing issues. Never has this been more blindingly obvious than when we are coming up to an election. In this House, in debates and in media releases from members, we have seen an immediate pitch to the One Nation vote from both sides of the House. We saw it at the National Party annual State conference in Toowoomba, where I could have given a policy speech and handed out membership forms all day because, let us face it, it was basically a One Nation meeting, because every single policy that was addressed there was brought up by us.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr NELSON: It certainly was—and the member knows it.

Mr Rowell: You don't know what you're talking about.

Mr NELSON: My oath, I know what I am talking about! I have 12 letters in my office from branches which sent letters back to the conference saying, "Wake up you guys, or else."

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr NELSON: I do not have to make an assumption. I have the letters to prove it. I will take them down to Tully and show them to the member.

The simple fact is—and most wise members of the National Party would know this—that One Nation represents the disillusioned people out there who would sincerely love their voices to be heard a little more strongly in this House. I am not saying that I support the exact details of the Bill that was introduced into the House by the Independent member for Nicklin. At a later date, One Nation will be introducing into this House our own Bill dealing with citizens' based referenda. It goes to the same points, but it makes them a little differently.

Mr Feldman: We can't change his.

Mr NELSON: We definitely cannot change his. And if we brought those amendments into the Chamber, it would be an absolute mess, and I do not support that at all.

I agree with the member for Warwick's statements. We do not ever want to take away from the role of the Parliament. We admit that, in a democratic society, people have the right at the ballot box to make changes. That leads me to the mandates discussion. We are always hearing about mandates. If any minority party in Federal Parliament can say that it has a mandate, it is One Nation, which received over one million votes.

Mr Nuttall interjected.

Mr NELSON: I hear the member for Sandgate having a whinge. One Nation received the third-highest vote, especially in this State.

Mr Nuttall: You are oncers.

Mr NELSON: Exactly. I say thank you to the member for Sandgate who is interjecting even though he is not in his correct seat. He is exactly right. That is the reason we need citizens' based referenda. I thank him for highlighting that. Those over one million people have only one voice in the Senate.

Mr Springborg: 860,000.

Mr NELSON: Where did the member get that figure from? If he looks on the Internet he will see that the figure is over one million.

We hear the Democrats on their soap box saying how much of a mandate they have. Many others talk about mandates. Those one million One Nation voters have one senator. She will be the most overworked woman in the country. That illustrates why we need citizens' based referenda. People would be able to say, "We have not been heard at the ballot box" for whatever reason. I will not go into the argument about preferences. As the member for Sandgate has so rightly indicated, they have every right to be heard, but their voice is stifled because of our system.

Mr Nuttall: Preferences are what got you elected.

Mr NELSON: No, preferences did not get me in here. I watched a National Party Minister scrounge around on the floor looking for Labor Party preferences to try to maintain office. I sat and watched Labor Party preferences go to the National Party. A couple of my mates watched National Party preferences go to the Labor Party. That was quite a shocking state of affairs. As a person who formerly voted National and Liberal, I found it absolutely abhorrent to watch a National Party Minister scrounge around on the floor for votes to keep him in office. I am sure that a couple of Labor Party members did exactly the same thing. We will see that happen again in Mulgrave. We know that the National Party certainly does not want the member for Mulgrave to sit on the opposite side of the House; neither do One Nation members. It will come down to a do or die situation. Where will the preferences go to enable the people of Mulgrave to have a voice?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! Could the member please address the Bill before the House?

Mr NELSON: That is exactly the point—thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The point is that, because of the shonky preference deals that will occur unless some sense intervenes, the people of Mulgrave will be robbed of their voice. There are people in that electorate who had a One Nation member and had a voice in this House who will have that voice stolen away from them because of shonky preference deals. That will send representative democracy out the window. As has been illustrated, parties can be kept out of the Houses through preference deals.

I return to the tenet of the argument, which is democratic——

Mr Lucas: You hide your preference cards.

Mr NELSON: You—the Labor Party—can talk about preference cards!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will address the House through the Chair.

Mr NELSON: The ALP should talk about preference cards! We will not talk about ALP members dressing up and doing all sorts of things to try to get their shonky deals through.

Mr Feldman interjected.

Mr NELSON: Exactly! Ours are not. I thank the member for Caboolture.

Mr Lucas: How are you going to go on your primary vote this time?

Mr NELSON: We will see. I will get on with it, because I do not want to waste any more of the House's time. Unlike the member for Lytton, I have an important duty, that is, to represent the people of my electorate. They voted for citizens' based referenda. They want to see it happen, as do the 438,000 Queenslanders who are represented in these One Nation seats.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr NELSON: I say to the member for Lytton—through the Chair—that we should let them make that decision. That is a part of democracy. If they do not vote for me, that is their choice. I accept that. I do not inherit my seat; I earn it, unlike the member for Lytton and every other member on that side of the House.

We must consider citizens' based referenda because we have seen the erosion of——

Mr Feldman: True democracy.

Mr NELSON:—true democracy in the country. The Democrats had the same problem for 21 years of their existence when they did not have a member of the House. In reality, they would probably agree with us, which is quite weird to say the least. The simple fact remains that there has to be some accountability, a voice.

The Premier has tied up the member for Nicklin with a lot of double talk about delegations to Community Cabinet meetings, but the simple fact is that any commitments given at those meetings are non-binding. I have led delegations to the Premier at which commitments had been given, but they are non-binding. The delegations walk in and the Premier says, "Yes, no worries." Every member knows the letters that are sent out that contain a big paragraph here and a little paragraph there; I do not even have to read the words any more.

Mr Lucas: How long did you serve?

Mr NELSON: You would not know about the Army; you would not have the courage to serve.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will address the House through the Chair.

Mr NELSON: I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker. We all know what that letter looks like. The clowns opposite probably do not know what it looks like, because they do not have to put up with being snubbed off all the time. That letter stops us——

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr NELSON: My military service is none of the business of the members opposite.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr NELSON: I have 10 minutes left to speak. I do not get any protection from the Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lytton!

Mr NELSON: I will speak about my military service. I like to tell a good war story every once in a while. I did four and a half years in the Army as a soldier. I have an honourable discharge from the Department of Defence. I do not know whether members are allowed to look up military records.

Mr Lucas: Where did you serve?

Mr NELSON: I served with the 7th Signals Regiment, Electronic Warfare, at Crows Nest.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Will the member return to the Bill before the House?

Mr NELSON: Those members want to know. I am just answering questions. If they want to waste my 10 minutes——

Mr REYNOLDS: I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Tablelands will resume his seat. The member for Townsville?

Mr REYNOLDS: I rise to a point of order. I would like to know the relevance of the latest statement to the Bill before the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr NELSON: The relevance is that we are discussing democracy and the fact that citizens' initiated referenda are a way for people to be heard. Questions are being asked of me and I am quite happy to answer them. I am quite proud of my military service. My family has a long history of military service.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I will make it plain again to the member: this is not a question time; it is a Bill before the House. Would he please——

Mr NELSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, if you ask the members to stay quiet, I will speak to the Bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. I will give him one more warning. If the member does not address himself to the Bill before the House, I will sit him down and call the member for Gladstone.

Mr NELSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask for your protection while I finish my speech.

Returning to citizens' initiated referenda—obviously the concept is dear to the heart of the member for Nicklin. I ask him not to be whitewashed by the Community Cabinet meetings. I ask him to stick to his guns. He has our support. We will stand up for him in this House, especially on this issue, because we think this issue goes very much to the heart of why One Nation members were elected. I thank the member for Nicklin for raising the issue. I hope he sticks to his guns.
