



Speech by

Dr DAVID WATSON

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Hansard 8 December 1999

BILLS: REMAINING STAGES

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (11.59 a.m.): I rise to support the Leader of Opposition Business in this place decrying this outrageous attempt to stop members on this side of the House representing the legitimate concerns of their constituents and of people who want to support the coalition in Government. I can remember that 10 years ago—and there was a 10-year anniversary just last week—when I came into this place, the member for Chatsworth had a reputation as somebody who was extremely well organised, somebody who controlled this place and controlled his members to the utmost degree. When I came into this place no-one on that side of the House or anyone else had the temerity to question the member for Chatsworth, the Leader of the House, and he ruled with an iron fist.

The member for Indooroopilly was right; this year we have seen that, even though the Government has had the numbers since December of last year, the Leader of the House has been unable to control the business of this place. Time and time again we have seen, for example, that he has not been able to control his own members in terms of speaking and that Bills which should have been passed in this place in an efficient process have simply failed to go through, usually because of the incompetence of Ministers. We have seen the Leader of the House lose control of the agenda in this place. We have seen the Government not being able to control the agenda in terms of inappropriate behaviour on the part of Ministers. One of the problems that we have had in this House was caused by the inability of the member for Ipswich, who is sitting right next to the Leader of the House, to control the licensing of Internet betting.

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order. The claim made by the Leader of the Liberal Party is not only untrue, it is personally offensive, and I ask for him to withdraw it.

Dr WATSON: I withdraw it. He was able to control the process of Internet betting and he made sure that he gave it to members of the Labor Party. That is what he did, and that was the problem. The time of this place has been spent fixing up the mess caused by Ministers of this Government. The people who stand condemned in this place are the Ministers in the Government. They cannot control the agenda. They cannot make appropriate decisions. This Parliament has to fix up the mess that they create.

That reflects upon the member for Chatsworth, the Leader of the House. He has not been able to control this place for the past year. I can understand him having difficulties controlling the House when it was a tied vote and he depended upon one of the Independents. If we still had a tied vote and he depended upon the member for Nicklin, I would have hoped that, given the deal he signed with the Premier, the member for Nicklin would not have allowed this kind of nonsense to occur. I presume that the member for Nicklin would not have supported the actions taking place today—actions that have come about not because of the Opposition, but because of the continuous failure of this Government.

Today we woke up to headlines in the Courier-Mail about the Government's response to panic tree clearing. What we have today is the Government's response to panic Bill clearing. That is what this is. This is occurring because the Government does not know how to run its own agenda. Not only can it not get it right out in the electorate—and we can understand the difficulties that it has in terms of trying to get things right for the rural areas of a decentralised Queensland, but it cannot even get it right in this place when it has the numbers.

This is a five minutes to midnight action, except there is not just one; there is a whole series.

Mr Hamill: It's five past midday now.

Dr WATSON: It is five minutes past midday. Not only that, it is a whole series of five minutes to midday actions. I do not believe in this place we have ever seen the number of Bills—

Mr Beanland: Amendment Bills.

Dr WATSON: I was not actually going to say that; I was going to say "passed by use of the guillotine". The member for Indooroopilly reminds me; it is true. I have never seen so many Bills having to be amended by Ministers. They bring a Bill into this place; they do not do it properly; and then they get up time and time again amending their own legislation.

I notice the Minister for Primary Industries disappearing. The other day in relation to one of his Bills, the Minister moved more amendments than the whole of this side of the House. That is the reason that that Bill took five days to be passed. It took five days because the Minister was so incompetent in bringing the Bill to the House that we had to spend the time of this House and the Committee debating issues that should have been cleared up before we on this side of the House had even seen the Bill. That is the problem.

Now that the Government has created those problems itself, the Parliament and the Opposition are the ones who are going to be denied a fair go in terms of addressing the issues. It is Opposition members who are going to be denied having a reasonable say in these debates on behalf of their constituents. I refer in particular to the Vegetation Management Bill, which was introduced today and which is to be passed on Friday through the use of the guillotine. It is the Opposition that is going to be denied any opportunity—

Dr PRENZLER: I rise to a point of order. I would like to remind the member that One Nation and the Independents want to have a bit of a go as well.

Dr WATSON: I take the member's point. Not only is the Opposition, but all members on this side of the House—

An honourable member: All non-Government members.

Dr WATSON: All non-Government members are going to be denied the opportunity to consult their constituents about a Bill which has significant ramifications on their livelihood and the way that they should be going about their business. Members on this side of the House are not going to be able to go back to their constituents and then represent their views. The Bill is going to be guillotined and we have not yet seen the guidelines. We find out that the Bill is going to be passed by 4.30 on Friday and we do not know even what we are going to be discussing yet.

Mr Littleproud: No guarantee of money to back it up.

Dr WATSON: There is no guarantee of money. The opportunity was there today for the Premier in his ministerial statement to table the guidelines. He talked about them. I interjected and asked, "When are you going to table the guidelines? Where are they?"

Mr Springborg: What does the member for Nicklin think, because this is a disgraceful attack?

Dr WATSON: I presume that the member for Nicklin will get up and assert his concerns about what the Leader of the House is doing. The Opposition opposes what the Government is doing. We oppose it vigorously. We will oppose it all the way until the Government finally uses its numbers to kill debate on this.
