



Speech by

Hon. M. FOLEY

MEMBER FOR YERONGA

Hansard 3 December 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Electoral Redistribution

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (9.44 a.m.), by leave: While yesterday we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the first Labor Government in Queensland in 32 years, an incident which occurred in this House on the eve of that celebration shows the fight against the forces which led to the Fitzgerald inquiry and an end to corruption must go on. In the dark old days of the Bjelke-Petersen era, Queenslanders saw the most valuable tool in their democratic arsenal short-circuited— their vote— when the coalition shamelessly rigged the electoral system to keep themselves in power. But that rigging of the electoral system ultimately backfired when the corruption which inevitably followed was exposed and that regime was repudiated by the public.

Electoral reform was one of the most important reforms resulting from the changes started 10 years ago. But on Wednesday night, the eve of the 10th anniversary of that historic occasion, we saw members of the National Party advocating a radical change to the electoral system. During debate on the Electoral Amendment Bill, the member for Toowoomba South and the member for Gregory both proposed a reduction in size of the larger electorates in Queensland. The member for Toowoomba South, Mr Horan, said the alternative he proposed was—

"... to reduce the size of these electorates so that members can give people personal representation instead of making the electorates bigger and bigger and bigger."

This can only mean more politicians or a return to the zonal malapportionment which propped up the Bjelke-Petersen regime. The member for Gregory, Mr Johnson, said he hoped his proposal would be treated favourably—

"... so that we can once again have more equitable electoral boundaries so that members can represent their constituents fairly."

Mr Johnson: Yeah, that's right.

Mr FOLEY: He endorses that by saying, "Yes, that's right." I take the interjection from the member for Gregory. This is code for a radical change in the electoral system. There are only two ways of implementing the Horan/Johnson plan. One is increasing the number of politicians. The other is a return to the zonal electoral system. To suggest such a thing on the eve of the anniversary of the election of a Labor Government charged by Queenslanders to stamp out electoral rorting was flabbergasting. To hear such a proposal from the two major contenders for the Opposition leader's job shows how vigilant we must all be, particularly when we consider how shaky the member for Surfers Paradise's hold is on the position. Is this why he has not publicly distanced himself from those reckless remarks? Will he maintain his silence in the face of those remarks, even though the Nationals—

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. I wonder whether the member has consulted with the member for Mount Isa and the member for Cook.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr FOLEY: Absolutely unrepentant is the member for Gregory, which is all the more reason for some leadership to be shown by the Leader of the Opposition. Will he maintain his silence in the face of those remarks, even though the Nationals supposedly support the current fair electoral system recommended by EARC? I can assure those Queenslanders who suffered the consequences of the corruption which the Joh gerrymander allowed to flourish that this Government will not countenance such a proposal.