



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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MR DEPUTY SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (5.43 p.m.): In joining this debate, I point out to the House that, despite the fact that some members have tried to trivialise it, this debate is probably one of the most important debates that we could have. We are really looking at how high or how low we set the high jump bar in this House when it comes to standards.

I will comment first of all on the speech by the member for Mansfield. I do not think I have ever heard such a mixed up, guilty speech in all my life. The member for Mansfield likes to talk a lot about Rugby League. I know that he has put a lot of time into various levels of Rugby League. He more than anyone else would know how sacrosanct the men in the middle are. He more than anyone else would know how important it is that people do not swear, backchat, shirt front or push the referee or the officials. If we start to allow that in this House, bit by bit it will get to the point where it becomes quite all right in this place to say "the bloody Clerk's office", and then we will be talking about the "bloody Speaker's office" and "the bloody Premier's office". The behaviour in this place will just degenerate.

I remember when I first came to this place in 1991 that we were given material—and Mr Sullivan would remember this as he won a by-election at about the same time—that referred to the sorts of words members should not say in this place and the sort of language that we should not use in this place. They were the sorts of traditions that we, as newcomers, were supposed to learn. If this dissent motion fails, tonight's debate will have been about setting new standards, and a new lower standard, in this place with the sort of language that we can use.

The member for Yeronga pontificated in his normal way. He talked about our former Attorney-General, but we have never ever forgotten how he hid \$120m of the workers compensation fund—never told a soul. Talk about propriety! He never told a soul. If we want to get down to the pedantics of what he said about our former Attorney-General, I point out that only one person was thrown out of the last Parliament. We had a highly respected Speaker who was very fair and magnanimous in how he took things. He threw only one person out in the entire Parliament.

An Opposition member: Who was it?

Mr HORAN: The member for Yeronga! So he should not lecture us about parliamentary standards.

To get to the Premier's pathetic defence, he spent the first half of his speech talking about how he did not really say this unparliamentary thing and then he spent the next half of his speech talking about Nino Culotta and all those sorts of people in trying to justify that the word really was not a swearword, really was not an unparliamentary word and he is not quite sure—he certainly told us he did not say it. Of course, once it was there in Hansard, then the Premier had to admit that he said it.

I return to the very events of that day. It is a shame that we have to be here trying to maintain some level of standards in this House because, as I have said, if this dissent motion is not passed, we have a precedent which says that it is quite okay to talk about "the bloody Clerk's office". If honourable members opposite want to be pedantic about saying that an office is not a person, the Premier would have said "the bloody office of the Clerk".

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I assure the member that I will be stopping that sort of language after this debate.

Mr HORAN: I think we have to use that word because that is what we are arguing about in the House, and I understand that.

To get back to what happened on that particular occasion, I was one of the members sitting here in the Parliament at that time. Immediately that the Premier made the comment, the Opposition Leader stood up and took a point of order. I think the member for Noosa did, as well as the member for Indooroopilly. I know I did, and I made the comment that I was probably sitting as far away as anyone, and I heard it quite clearly. It really should have been resolved. I was amazed. I think I said at the time that I was surprised that the Premier did not resolve it. I thought he would have just stood up and said, "Yeah, I said it"—end of story. But he did not. He got up and denied it. He said, "I did nothing of the kind." Then further on he said, "This is not what happened."

This is where it was made difficult for a young Deputy Speaker. When four of us got up and said that we had heard it, he could have resolved the situation and said, "Premier, they say that you have said such and such. I ask you to apologise to the Clerk", but he did not, because he had been jammed in a corner. It is this young Deputy Speaker's first time in the Parliament, he has not learned a lot about life, has not been around, has not crossed too many dry gullies and he is jammed in a corner because his Premier, his leader and his boss sitting there beside him said, "No. I didn't say it." What can he do? I am not blaming the Deputy Speaker. The fault lies squarely with the Premier.

The Premier has form. When he was Opposition Leader we had to remind him to pay the bill for the gravy train. He had forgotten the little matter of a cheque.

Mr Borbidge: The cheque was in the mail.

Mr HORAN: That is right. We have had to remind him about his pecuniary interests. Do honourable members remember when he was Opposition Leader and he said that he did not want a raise? We had to remind him that he had written to the then Premier, the Honourable Rob Borbidge, saying that he was quite happy to take the raise. It goes on and on. In the midst of the net bet scandal, with Labor people involved in business operations and so forth, the Premier has come out, arms akimbo, and said, "Politicians should be politicians. They should not be involved in anything else." I presume that means that members should not write theses and should not write books when they are serving in Parliament. But that is quite all right. That is not business! They do not sell the books at the book shop, do they? They give them away!

The coalition, the people of Queensland and the media see a pattern forming. It is the pattern of doing backflips, where every time there is a story on the front page of the paper the Premier changes his mind. He says, "No, we are not doing that. We are not going to privatise the nursing homes. We have never considered it." We are seeing a pattern form. He is just so quick to say, "Not me. It might have been them. It might have been all the Labor mates, but it was not me. I didn't have any meetings. I didn't know about any of this. I am squeaky clean." I think a lot of us in the House have said before that when the Labor ship hits the rocks the captain will be the first person to jump off. Too bad about the women and kids!

Tonight's debate is important. Members opposite have tried to trivialise it. If this dissent motion is not passed, the bar is lowered. I know that in this place there is a lot of tough debate. It gets pretty agricultural and hard in here at times. Ultimately we have to respect the Chair. There are times when some of us transgress and we have to get up and apologise or withdraw. Last week we saw a blatant disregard for the truth. The Premier said something that was heard quite clearly by four of us on this side of the House. It is in Hansard. He immediately got up and said, "No, I didn't say it." He jammed a young Deputy Speaker into a corner. The Premier put him in a very difficult position. No matter how robust it gets in here at times, if we really believe in this place we have to pass this motion tonight. Otherwise the Premier has brought us down.
