



Speech by

**Mr S. SANTORO**

**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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Hansard 14 April 1999

### ANZAC DAY TRADING HOURS

**Mr SANTORO** (Clayfield—LP) (6.27 p.m.): We on this side of the House respect and admire the sincerity of certain members opposite, in particular that of the honourable member for Bulimba. However, we still feel compelled to say that it is a matter of regret that the member for Gladstone has had to move a motion that this Government allocate sufficient parliamentary time to allow debate on the Liquor Amendment Bill introduced by my colleague the member for Toowoomba North.

As a member cannot debate the merits of a Bill before the House, by its very nature the debate on this motion is constrained and artificial. However, in essence, as the Bill my colleague has introduced seeks to ensure that licensed premises cannot operate after midnight on the eve of Anzac Day, it is essential that it be debated by this House before Anzac Day. After tomorrow, this Parliament will not be meeting again until 27 April—two days after Anzac Day. By not allocating sufficient time to debate legislation which must be determined before 25 April, the Government is rendering it totally useless by the back door but without having to nail its colours to the mast.

A failure by this Government to allow the Parliament of Queensland to debate legislation designed to recognise the solemnity and dignity of Australia's only truly non-religious day, which draws every one of us together as a nation, would be an insult. Firstly, it is an insult to the RSL and its members who, in recent years, have been raising concerns about the activities of drunken individuals who have interrupted dawn services and shown a distinct lack of respect for all of those Australians, young and old, who revere this day of remembrance.

Secondly, it is an insult to the men and women of Queensland, whether they fought in an armed conflict for Australia or her Allies, whether

they have or had family, relatives or friends who did, or to the hundreds of thousands of others who want to give thanks to fellow Australians who put their lives on the line to fight for the freedom that we now enjoy. Thirdly, it is an insult to the intelligence of all Queensland voters who believed in and voted for the Labor Party at the last State election.

Let us not forget that it was the Premier who promised again and again that he would introduce a new level of debate into this Parliament; that he would get Parliament back to the people and rejuvenate the process of law-making. Who can forget all of his solemn promises to the member for Nicklin which secured his vote and therefore Government? Where are all of those high-sounding principles now? We know from the behaviour of the Premier and the Labor Party in Parliament over the past six months that the only new level of conduct introduced into this House has been one of heightened contempt for Parliament and the parliamentary process.

Right now we have 11 private members' Bills on the Notice Paper. The irony is that the non-Government members of this House have been almost as active as this Government has been in introducing legislation. It is richly ironic that this so-called reforming Government has by and large used its time to date by reintroducing legislation left on the Notice Paper by the previous coalition Government or processing initiatives that were already nearly completed. The major exception to this has been in the area of industrial relations, where again and again we see the union-dominated agenda of the Beattie Labor Government. So although Parliament has sat irregularly since last June, the vast majority of its time has been spent on Government Bills and on non-legislative general business.

We still have on the Notice Paper proposed legislation introduced by non-Government members last year and which still have not been debated—four, in fact. We have draft legislation introduced by non-Government members ranging from citizens initiated referendums to organ transplants that, irrespective of their merits, this Government has not even allowed sufficient time to debate. We still have on the Notice Paper the Fines Bill, introduced by my colleague the member for Warwick, which would save the taxpayers millions of dollars and ensure that prison overcrowding was effectively dealt with.

I do not want to be unkind, but when I compare the importance of some of these proposals with Government legislative initiatives, such as the Justice Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which we debated yesterday or the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which is still to be debated, it is clear that matters of great importance to the community are being allowed by this Government to waste away on the Notice Paper. The fact that none of the non-Government Bills that I have mentioned have been considered by this House makes a mockery of the Premier's attempt to portray himself and his Government as wanting to introduce a new era of debate and real community input into the workings of this Parliament.

However, as bad as all of this is, the fact that a Bill aimed fairly and squarely at reinforcing the solemnity of Anzac Day will not be given time to be debated before Anzac Day elevates this whole unsatisfactory situation to a new level of disrespect. No Government of whatever political complexion owns Parliament. No Government should ever be permitted to run roughshod over its opponents because, by doing so, that Government is running roughshod over the community.

The member for Gladstone should never have had to move a motion such as this. The Government should have shown enough decency and commonsense to the feelings of war veterans, the RSL and the general community to have allocated extra time before Anzac Day to debate this Bill. The fact that even honouring Anzac Day and those who gave their lives for the freedom to have a fully functioning democracy within a Parliament to debate in has not moved this Government is a testament to the ignorance, arrogance and lack of sensitivity of the Beattie Labor Government. As the honourable member for Callide suggested, if there is only one incident prior to the debate of a Bill such as this that warrants that it be debated, the Minister should allow the debate to occur. The Beattie Government should allow this debate to occur.

Time expired.

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