



Speech by
**Mr DENVER
BEANLAND**

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPIILLY

Hansard 5 October 2000

MR SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (8.32 p.m.): The motion has not been seconded yet, Mr Speaker, but that never seems to bother members on that side of the Chamber. Has it been seconded?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! It has been seconded, yes.

Mr BEANLAND: I rise to speak against this motion that has been moved by the Leader of the House this evening and seconded by the Attorney-General. Never has there been such an outrage. This, Mr Speaker, is what you are here to protect—the ability of members in this place to speak. Already in the past few days of this sitting members have been denied the ability to ask some questions, yet other questions have been allowed to be asked and were answered by the Premier. In fact, the Premier has indicated that he has double standards and you, Mr Speaker, have allowed that to occur. We have seen that on a number of occasions. One has only to check Hansard to see what I am talking about.

Tonight, because the Opposition has moved dissent from Mr Speaker's ruling on 10 occasions—and some of those motions were moved only today; they are not even on the Notice Paper yet—the Leader of the House now comes into the Chamber to apply the gag, the king of all gags, to pick up 10 dissent motions in one hit. It is worth while noting just how this Government travels on the gag, because it is the Government of the gag.

Mr Healy: The megagag!

Mr BEANLAND: The megagag, as the member for Toowoomba North says.

The Goss Government applied the gag on 22 occasions in six years and eight months. There were two occasions during the Borbidge/Sheldon Government. This Government's record is that it has applied the gag on some 26 occasions in less than two years and four months. I repeat: the gag has been applied on 26 occasions! What a farce it makes of the Premier's stance just after the last election and all his writings and mouthings to the member for Nicklin about the openness, transparency and accountability of his Government and how it would act in this Parliament! What a worthless piece of paper this is, dated 25 June 1999 and addressed to the member for Nicklin! It is not even good fire paper. It is totally worthless, signed by Peter Beattie, the then Leader of the Opposition. What a mockery it makes of the democratic processes. It talks about questions, a commitment to Parliament, a commitment to question time, a commitment—

Mr Springborg: A commitment to Peter Beattie—

Mr BEANLAND: As the member for Warwick says, it is a commitment to Peter Beattie. That is all it is—a commitment to Peter Beattie and no-one else.

That is what we are seeing here this evening. The Government does not have the courage to debate these dissent motions one by one. Sure, they might take an hour apiece, but if the Government had the courage we would debate all 10 dissent motions, one by one. But, no, it has not got the courage to do that. Despite what the Leader of the House says, he knows he has not got the courage to do it. It is easy to sit on that side of the Chamber when he has the numbers; it is much more difficult when he has not got the numbers, as I always tell people who sit on that side of the Chamber. It is very easy indeed. If it comes to a tied vote this evening—and I hope it does—then, Mr Speaker, I trust that

you will be casting your vote with the members on this side of the Chamber because you have a duty to members of this Parliament.

We have seen what has happened this week. These 10 motions are dissenting from your rulings, Mr Speaker—no-one else's rulings. Now you are going to be the person who will cast the deciding vote on your own rulings. That will certainly go down in history. That casting vote will be on not one ruling, but all 10 of them. Casting the deciding vote on all 10 dissent motions in one fell swoop is what you are talking about doing this evening.

I had to smile when I read the headline of the editorial in the Courier-Mail this morning. It said "Speaker's rulings gag rorts debate". Of course, the whole gag is a rort. The Courier-Mail is right about that. The gag is a rort, a rort being perpetrated on this Parliament this evening by the Labor Party.

The situation is that the seven dissent motions listed to date are listed separately on the Notice Paper. The Leader of the House picked up the other two or three that were moved today and that have not even appeared on the Notice Paper yet. So we have 10—and there could be other debates. The situation is that those debates are entitled to be given an hour apiece and members are each entitled to up to 10 minutes in which to speak. I know what Standing Order 117 says in relation to this, as do you, Mr Speaker. It is quite clear that today we have a situation in which this Government is not prepared to face the Parliament, to face the people, in relation to this issue.

But, of course, it is a bigger issue than just dissent motions, because it is about the rorting of the electoral rolls of this State. It is about members in this place asking questions—appropriate questions, not questions that are out of order. We have noticed that certain questions are allowed and others are not. I am sure that after some of these questions are allowed to be asked, the Premier says, "I am happy to answer that." We have had the Minister for Tourism and Racing stand in this place and raise a matter of privilege on a question. That is unheard of!

Mr Borbidge: On a question that was ruled out of order.

Mr BEANLAND: Mr Speaker, you ruled the question out of order. Yet the Minister stood and said, "I take a point of privilege, Mr Speaker. I want to answer that question that you have ruled out of order." What a farce it is! What a mockery it makes of the whole process!

Then of course on top of all of this we had the farce yesterday in which the member for Crows Nest was ordered from this Chamber under Standing Order 123A by you, Mr Speaker, and you refused to allow him to vote in divisions in this place. It was only today when this matter was clarified through the Hansard that you came into the Chamber and apologised. But the point is that there were at least three divisions yesterday of which I notice there were two in which the ayes were 40 and the noes 39. Had the member for Crows Nest been able to cast his valid vote in those divisions, the result would have been tied and that would have required you, Mr Speaker, to cast your vote. So the sins are double in relation to this matter because you, Mr Speaker, were able to get away with not casting your vote yesterday on those issues, and no Speaker casts his vote lightly in those situations.

Together with corruption of the electoral rolls, tonight the rorting is flowing into this Chamber in a way in which no Government has ever done in the past. In order for this Government to simply survive, it has to crush the Opposition—all members of the Opposition and Independent members. So much for accountability and transparency! It is dead in the water, as it was the day—25 June 1998—the then Leader of the Opposition, Peter Beattie, sent this worthless letter to the member for Nicklin. It was dead that day, and it has been dead ever since.

This Government has shown that by gagging debate time and time again. It has now reached an all-time record—27 occasions in less than two years and four months compared with two occasions in two years and four months by the Borbidge Government. In six years and eight months, the Goss Government gagged debated on 22 occasions. This is the Premier who likes to hold himself up as being better than anyone else. Of course it makes a nonsense of the whole process. We know that the Labor Party in this place laughs it off. I say to the Premier of this State, Peter Beattie: you cannot simply laugh this off. It is far too serious.

I have already highlighted the erratic behaviour of Ministers. There is also the situation in which Mr Speaker has had to decide which questions to allow whilst having the Premier say, "I want to answer that one." In those instances, Mr Speaker allows the question to go to the Premier whether or not it was ruled out of order. Nevertheless, the Premier has answered a number of questions dealing with the issue of electoral fraud. I want to highlight that, because there have been a number of questions asked by members on this side of the Chamber which one would have expected to be ruled out of order when compared with questions from the Leader of the Opposition or the Leader of the Liberal Party. Some of those questions should have been ruled out of order in this place, but because it suited the Premier at the time to answer them, he answered them. One such question on electoral fraud was from the member for Gregory to the Premier—the very issue which Mr Speaker tried to suggest he would not entertain questions about. However, it is headed in the Hansard record as "Electoral Fraud". Again, the Speaker allowed the Premier to answer that question.

This is a case of double standards. Those double standards are being shown again this evening. The fact that Mr Speaker is prepared to accept and support this motion is a very sad day indeed for the Parliament of Queensland and a very sad day for debate in this place. As for democracy, transparency and accountability and as for this Premier standing up in this place and saying, "I'll answer that and we'll do this and do all these wonderful things for the people of Queensland and make these changes for the Parliament of Queensland for the betterment of debate", what a farce, what a mockery has been made of this whole process by this Labor Government and by the moving of this motion this evening.

Again, this Government presides over a record number of times that debate has been gagged. On 8 December last year the Government picked up a whole range of motions in order to apply the gag. Tonight, it is exceeding that number and excelling itself in the way in which it uses the gag. Under the Standing Orders, members are entitled to a minimum of one hour to debate each of these 10 motions of dissent. Each member is entitled to 10 minutes in that hour, according to Standing Orders, in which to speak. All of that will be wiped this evening if the Government gets this motion through the House. That is why I say this to Mr Speaker: if it comes to a tied vote, you have a duty to vote this motion down to protect members of this place.

One of the basic, primary roles of the Speaker is to uphold members' right to debate. There is no clearer right than that this evening on this very issue, particularly as Mr Speaker's rulings themselves are the subject of the debate this evening. Therefore, Mr Speaker's role is even more pivotal and more important than it would otherwise be. No other situation would arise such as this where Mr Speaker would have to clearly indicate his conflicts of interest and step aside. However, because the Speaker participates in the voting, if it is a tied vote his vote will be counted this evening. That does not get away from the importance of Mr Speaker's role this evening. The basic, primary role of the Speaker is to uphold members' right to debate, the most basic right of all parliamentarians in this place.

I call on members of the Labor Party to vote down this motion. I am sure many of them are ashamed to think that this evening they will see these 10 motions of dissent rolled into one debate which will take one hour.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr BEANLAND: In relation to Mr Foley, the Attorney-General, the great civil libertarian, we have seen his performance in the past in relation to a number of these matters when the gag has been moved. He will vote like a good Labor man—with the Labor Party—

Mr Springborg: With gusto.

Mr BEANLAND: Yes, with gusto, with the Labor Party, the Government in this place, regardless. I appeal to all members to vote down this motion from the Leader of the House.
