



Speech by
**Mrs NITA
CUNNINGHAM**

MEMBER FOR BUNDABERG

Hansard 9 November 2000

MR SPEAKER'S RULING

Motion of Dissent

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg— ALP) (11.06 p.m.): I have asked to speak in the debate on this dissent motion tonight to express my disgust at yet another cowardly attack—I believe the 11th—on the Speaker by the Opposition. I say this to the Opposition: your behaviour in moving this dissent motion and your behaviour over these past few weeks has been a disgrace from people elected to such high office in this great State. It brings this whole Parliament into disrepute and it reflects on every member of this House.

There are many good, honest, hardworking people in this Parliament who genuinely want to make a difference—men and women who work long hours, who give up most other aspects of their lives and forfeit valuable time with their families and friends to gain much-needed facilities in their electorates, to make Queensland a better State and to help build a better future for our children, our grandchildren and generations to come.

Yet with just two sitting weeks left before this House rises for Christmas and with some 25 Government Bills and seven private members' Bills waiting to be debated, here we are in the middle of the night wasting time on a senseless motion. It is just a part of the same old Opposition vendetta that we have been seeing in this House for weeks—day in, day out. Apart from the fact that most of us do not want to hear any more of this vindictive nonsense, it is costing the taxpayers of Queensland around \$750 for every hour that this Parliament sits after the dinner break. This senseless motion is not only costing our taxpayers in the vicinity of \$1,000; it is taking up valuable time that should be used for debating Bills before the House, and it is a disgraceful abuse of parliamentary privilege.

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: The members opposite have no manners, either. This motion tonight—

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: Mr Speaker, I would like to be heard.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Western Downs and the member for Crows Nest!

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: This motion tonight has nothing to do with the Speaker's ruling; it is just another cheap opportunistic attack on this Labor Government at the personal expense of the Speaker in the Opposition's obsessive and desperate quest to regain power in this State, not because it has the ability to govern Queensland but because it has never accepted the umpire's ruling. At the last election the people voted it out with the loss of 12 seats after just two years and four months in office. What an indictment! But the Opposition has not accepted that, and it will not accept the umpire's ruling in this House or show any respect for the Chair. If its behaviour in this House is any example of the calibre of the current Opposition, then it will be a sad day for Queensland if it ever regains Government in this State.

Mr Speaker, you can hold your head high for the dignified way in which you have sat through these vicious personal attacks. I do not believe that parliamentary privilege was ever intended for use in such cowardly attacks, and if it is going to continue to be used in this way then I believe it is time we looked at changes to that system as well. People inside and outside this House must be protected from such personal attacks.