



Speech by

Hon. RUSSELL COOPER

MEMBER FOR CROWS NEST

Hansard 5 October 2000

MR SPEAKER'S RULING

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (10.06 p.m.): Mr Speaker, I, too, will take just few moments in this debate to make a few points relating to your rulings. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the apology you made at 2.30 today relative to my removal from this place and Standing Order 123A(3). I acknowledge the apology you made at 2.30. It was directed to me in this Parliament. I also make mention of the fact that you did call into question the Hansard staff in respect of making corrections. It turns out that Hansard was right and you were wrong. I assume that the apology you directed to me will also be directed to them—not just because tomorrow is Alan Watson's last day but also because all of the Hansard reporters are head and shoulders above just about everyone in this place and, as far as I am concerned, their integrity is second to none. When their integrity is called into question it should be corrected. I sincerely hope it will be done on the record.

I also make a point about the support the Government is getting from its Ministers, which is next to none. It is very evident, very noticeable and very obvious. One would think that, when questions were asked of those Ministers and you ruled that those questions are sub judice, those people would have used the opportunity provided by the debate tonight to defend themselves. They were not even capable or even wanting—

Mr Borbidge: They might be consulting their legal advisers.

Mr COOPER: They could be consulting their legal advisers, but they could have used the Parliament to defend themselves and make the point. When I was in Government and questions were directed at me, I was only too happy to answer them. The last thing I would want is to have a question asked by the Opposition and to be sat down and not given the chance to answer it, because I like to defend myself and I am perfectly capable of doing so. It is quite obvious that people on the other side of the House are totally incapable of defending themselves and are quite happy not to have to show the necessary courage to do so. I think that very definitely reflects on them. As the member for Nicklin said, they will be judged in another place at another time.

I fully endorse the remarks made by the member for Nicklin tonight. It is not often that I do that. I think he is being honest and open, and he does have the integrity to realise when this Parliament has been abused. The Parliament has been abused, Mr Speaker, by the rulings you have made in relation to certain questions. They are legitimate questions and Ministers should be given the opportunity to answer those questions. As I said, I would be only too happy to be answering those questions.

The issues being raised in another place, at an inquiry elsewhere, have proven pretty well—they are proving every day—that this Government is rotten and that it is corrupt, that the smell of corruption is strong. There will be an accounting and that accounting, if it cannot be in this place because we are being stymied and stifled in our debate, will be made elsewhere by the people.

The people are very good judges. They are not stupid. They are not fools. As the member for Nicklin said, they are watching and they will be deciding what sort of Government they want. They do not want the corrupt and rotten Government that we have on the other side of this Chamber.

Your rulings epitomised the desperate need that we have for an independent Speaker. The political parties in this State will have to come to the realisation at some stage that we cannot continue to operate in this way. I do not want to reduce it to the situation of having a referee in a game of

football. People have sport on their minds as a result of the Olympic Games. We need a referee who will be fair to both sides. That is something we have not seen in this Parliament. That is why you are not getting respect from this side of the Parliament. You cannot, and you will not, be fair. You will not even try to be even-handed. All we ask is that we be given a fair run and a fair go. It is a pity that you are not able to be fair and decent in that regard. Everyone on this side of the Parliament knows that. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that there are a lot of people on the other side of the Parliament who know it. A lot of staff members, including the attendants, are aware of it because you have not given people a fair go. I suggest that you have a very good look at yourself and try to at least lift yourself to the standard that Parliament requires.
