



Speech by

JOHN MICKEL, ^{MLA}
STATE MEMBER FOR LOGAN

Hansard 11 December 2001

SENATOR J. HERRON; WESTHAVEN NURSING HOME

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (12.16 p.m.): The Queensland Liberal hierarchy may not realise it, but there was a general federal election, including a half-Senate election, in Australia on 10 November. The No. 2 on the Senate ticket for the Queensland Liberals was Senator John Herron. Within just 72 hours of election day and well before the Senate count had even been completed, there was speculation in the media that Senator Herron was lobbying for one of the plum ambassadorial posts, that of Australian Ambassador to Ireland and the Holy See. Senator Herron put his name forward for a six-year Senate term to which he was elected. This term does not commence until 1 July next year. If he gets out now, then he will be safely ensconced in the ambassador's residence in Dublin on the day he is supposed to be sworn in for his six-year term.

This is the second time Senator Herron has tried to take flight from the ruin that is the modern Queensland Liberal Party. Honourable members may recall that when John Moore resigned earlier this year Senator Herron was being openly touted for the post of ambassador to Canada. The trouble was that the story hit the media before the Prime Minister had even considered it. After the Ryan debacle, the appointment was cancelled, much to Senator Herron's annoyance. Now he has his bags packed again, his passport is up to date, the visas are organised, the travellers cheques are in the wallet and he is at the starting gate, but the Prime Minister should intervene again and pull the rug from under him. It is simply indecent to stand for a six-year term, be elected and quit before you have even been sworn in.

If Senator Herron wants to be a diplomat, that is fine. Former politicians from both sides of politics have acquitted themselves very well and served Australia well in that capacity. However, Senator Herron should have retired at the recent election and awaited the call for his appointment. He should now do the right thing and keep faith with the people of Queensland and serve the bulk of his term. He should not shirk from his responsibilities as he has done as Liberal Party President in Queensland. He has performed so poorly in cleaning up the party that the federal sections of the Liberal Party are again ready to intervene in the Queensland branch.

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order. This is another fabrication by the member for Logan.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McNamara): Order! There is no point of order.

Mrs SHELDON: There has been a litany of them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mrs SHELDON: There is a point of order, because he is misrepresenting Senator Herron, who has done a great job as president and in reforming the party. I ask him to withdraw his slanderous comments.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr MICKEL: Thank you for your protection from that violent attack against me, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Senator Herron has done nothing to address the outrageous branch stacking that gave Michael Johnson the leg up in Ryan. There is some good news in all of this for the Labor Party, however. Senator Herron's departure paves the way for the return of Bob Carroll. The honourable member for Caloundra would speak with some affection of Bob Carroll, because he was the party president who helped her depart as Treasurer in 1995 with his clever One Nation strategy. He was also the one who

helped the former honourable member for Clayfield depart this place at the last election. But I would be negligent if I did not draw members' attention to the ad that appeared in the *Courier-Mail* last Saturday for the position of horticulturist at the Carroll property at Mount Alford, which no doubt paves the way for his return to the Liberal Party presidency and for Senator Herron's disgraceful departure as ambassador to Ireland.

I also want to remind members about the Westhaven Nursing Home. I recently tabled a petition from the Friends of the Westhaven Nursing Home which called upon the government to have the home attached to the Roma Hospital. The staff at the home are concerned about their jobs, and previously gained and I understand received an assurance that the home would remain under the control of the state government. The union involved, the Australian Workers Union, has brought to my attention that its members believe Westhaven should be rebuilt within the Roma Hospital grounds so that the residents would remain within close proximity to all the services currently being provided by the Roma Hospital staff.

On their behalf and on behalf of the Friends of Westhaven, I hope that no final decision is reached by the state government until there has been widespread community consultation on the options that may be available for the future of this home. It is important to us. I know the Australian Workers Union asked the member for Toowoomba North to make representations on its behalf but, in his absence, I firmly want to put the case to the state government to listen to the concerns of those people so that they do not feel left out of the decision-making processes in Brisbane. I hope that the Minister for Health will listen to and take heed of their concerns.
