



Speech by

**Hon. J. FOURAS**

**MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE**

---

Hansard 17 April 2002

**ELECTORAL [FRAUDULENT ACTIONS] AMENDMENT BILL**

**Hon. J. FOURAS** (Ashgrove—ALP) (9.45 p.m.): Government members have tonight totally demolished the fundamentals of this bill. As the member for Algester said, it is flawed. The Attorney-General, of course, argued that because lodgment of applications for enrolment is covered by Commonwealth law under section 109 of the Constitution, this legislation is therefore inconsistent with federal law and therefore it would be unconstitutional. The Labor Party, having noted this, actually wrote to the Commonwealth Attorney-General requesting that the particular clause about the year should be fixed up by Commonwealth law.

There is no doubt that there are good intentions behind this private member's bill. It tries to be all things to all people but, basically, as the Attorney-General said, the relevant matters are covered by existing provisions in the Electoral Act. I would not at any stage, as a member on this side of the parliament, support mandatory sentencing. Labor will always oppose mandatory sentencing.

I would like to refer to some of the statements made by members opposite. The member for Gregory said that we are talking about democracy. In his second reading speech the member for Southern Downs said that the bill is designed to address the fact that many people who commit acts with the intent to influence or cheat election outcomes are not punished for their actions.

Members opposite want to punish people who actually have the 'intent to influence or cheat election outcomes'. I have been a member of this House for a long time. In 1977, when I stood for the seat of South Brisbane, there was a redistribution. After the appeal process, the boundaries were changed. At City Hall one night one of the redistribution commissioners came up to me, patted me on the shoulder and said, 'We looked after you, Mr Fouras. We looked after you.' They wanted to get rid of Colin Lamont, who was a member of the ginger group. That was my first inkling that there was something rotten in the state of Queensland under Bjelke-Petersen and the gerrymander.

Of course, since then we have had the publication of a book by Don Lane—shady Don—titled *Trial & Error*. In that book he talks about the 1985 distribution. 'A decision was taken'—by Don Lane, of course—to recommend abolition of the seat of South Brisbane ... held by Labor's Jim Fouras'. 'A decision was taken', he says. He goes on: 'To amalgamate these seats'—that is, the seats of South Brisbane and Kurilpa—'would obviously bring about a bitter contest for endorsement.' That is what they were trying to do. In fact, Don Lane told someone—who reported it to me—that the whole idea was to 'get rid of Jim Fouras out of parliament'. In fact, in their application they took the boundaries of the seat of Brisbane Central across the river. It was the first time a seat had crossed the river. They did not take a slab across the river; they actually took a sliver, which included the part of the electorate where my branch members were located. Don Lane's book states further—

This was discussed with Sir Robert Sparkes, and it was decided we should go ahead ...

It mentions the fact that they had to decrease the quotas and states—

The approach was to isolate the Labor votes in seats where we had no hope of winning the seat ... that is we corralled the Labor Party vote into safe Labor seats.

Today Mr Quinn spoke about electoral fairness. They could not have done this without the Liberal Party giving them the numbers in this parliament. In 1978 in my maiden speech I said that the Liberal Party was hopeless and had no influence on the decisions made here. I said that they were so hopeless that they might as well have been sitting on the opposition benches. They agreed to that redistribution.

What happened after the 1985 redistribution? The book further states that Sir William Knox, the then leader of the party was asked about this on Channel 9's *Today* show, where he stated—

The propaganda by the Labor Party that this is the worst gerrymander in the world is just a lot of nonsense. That is ALP propaganda.

What was the result of the election? The National Party won a majority of seats—49 seats out of 89—with 30 per cent of the vote, such was the extent of the gerrymander. The member for Southern Downs stated that many people who do acts with intent to influence or cheat election outcomes are not punished for their actions. These people were not punished. Don Lane skites that, five years later, after the 1985 redistribution, the commission chairman congratulated the National Party and stated that he 'was surprised by the thoroughness of the National Party's submission which was by far the most thoroughly documented submission'. EARC wanted to see whether the maps submitted by the National Party were similar to the final outcome. Hour after hour, they sat in a room behind the red chamber at Parliament House putting this together. Don Lane said that he took his working copies of maps and stored them away at home—

later to be amused by the witch-hunt by EARC to locate a filing cabinet missing from the Premier's Department that was said to contain the originals. No one thought to ask for the rough copies.

There is no doubt that they drew the boundaries and corralled the Labor Party vote. And members opposite are saying that electoral fraud is unacceptable! I went before the Shepherdson inquiry. When asked what I thought about the 1986 plebiscite in South Brisbane, I said that it was set up to create mischief in the Labor Party, but that the issue we should be discussing was not that one, which was serious enough, but the more serious issue of the rorting of electoral boundaries. There were no independent commissioners. There was nothing independent at all about that process. Joh Bjelke-Petersen would have lunch with the commissioners. They got the boundaries they wanted. Don Lane called this a witch-hunt. EARC tried to match their maps with the maps issued by the electoral commissioners. Imagine if they had found the maps Don Lane had in his drawer.

I was told by a colleague, a friend of mine who was a member of the National Party, that the seat of Brisbane Central would come across the river in 1986. I could not believe it. That had never happened before.

**Mr Mickel:** Tell them about Wujal Wujal.

**Mr FOURAS:** We do not have time now. Don Lane stated in his book that the National Party enjoyed a significant advantage over many years from the five-zone system. Members opposite who talk about fraud should look at the fraud that led to the corruption of the fundamentals of the state. An electoral commissioner tapped me on the shoulder and said that they looked after me because they wanted to get rid of Colin Lamont because he was a member of the ginger group. I was the beneficiary of that. Because a member was getting underneath their skin in the parliament and also to create some mischief, they changed the boundaries. Had they not redrawn the boundaries and brought Brisbane Central across the river, there would have been two Labor Party seats there, and Anne Warner and I could have each had a seat. Don Lane said, 'We decided the seat of South Brisbane should be abolished. We thought it would be a great idea to amalgamate these seats and create a bitter contest. We knew it would advantage us.'

I have great regard for the member for Southern Downs, and he knows that. I do not think he would be a party to those sorts of things in government or in opposition. I do not want these comments to be taken personally by him. Although these catch-all phrases are well intentioned, I think he is missing the ball game totally. Secondly, members on this side of the chamber will never support mandatory sentencing. The member's best intentions are flawed. Unfortunately for his good intentions, we on this side of the chamber must reject his private member's bill.

---