



Speech by

CHRIS FOLEY

Member for MARYBOROUGH

Hansard 28 May 2003

SELECT COMMITTEE ON PARLIAMENTARY ENTITLEMENTS

Mr CHRIS FOLEY (Maryborough—Ind) (6.27 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Nicklin, which in substance requests the selection of an all-party parliamentary committee to debate the Premier's Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill (No. 2) and report back to the House by 21 August 2003. I believe the motion is fair and reasonable and allows 14 parliamentary sitting days for the proposed members of the committee to consider the matters referred to them.

I also noted that in the House this morning the member for Nicklin asked a question to the Leader of Government Business, the Hon. Anna Bligh, as to why the bill about the Leader of the Liberal Party's salary increase had jumped the queue. The minister advised—

There have been, as the member is aware, discussions with the opposition parties and with Independents, as I understand it, by the minister responsible for the bill—that is, the Premier in this case.

Tonight, for the public record, I as an Independent certainly have had no discussions with the Premier about this matter—unless, of course, I was having an out-of-body experience at the time. I would urge members to support the motion being debated tonight to allow members of all political persuasions to sit down around the table and discuss this matter further as a bipartisan committee.

In the short term that I have been a member of the 50th parliament of Queensland I have noted the following. There seems to be a gross inequality in the way members of this House are treated. For instance, there are six Independents who receive no additional support in terms of staff or additional income but who provide a very credible and reasoned voice of democratic debate in this House. The Independents outnumber the Liberal representatives by a factor of two. The Independents also outnumber One Nation by a factor of three. However, I have noted that there is no additional support or services for any of the Independents in the House.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr CHRIS FOLEY: I am not asking of the Premier for any additional resources at this juncture, but it would be fair to note that the member for Gladstone, who acts as an unofficial whip—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The interjections are neither witty nor relevant.

Mr CHRIS FOLEY: The member for Gladstone, who acts as an unofficial whip in organising the Independents, does a tremendous amount of work for no extra reward in terms of resources or finances. This is a situation which could be addressed in the future and in particular after the next general election.

I have also noted that a 1999 bipartisan select committee on parliamentary entitlements reviewed all of the current entitlements and decided on their appropriateness at that point in time. I would ask the House to support a motion tonight that the same process be revisited again rather than distributing money and resources on an ad hoc basis.

If this motion is successful I believe it would be appropriate for parliament to limit the matters for consideration by the committee to the matter which remained outstanding from the previous committee—that is, the definition of a recognised political party. I certainly do not believe that it is appropriate for all the matters canvassed by the previous committee to be revisited in light of a likely state election some time between now and June next year. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. This is no personal slur or attack on the member for Robina, who is a very hardworking parliamentarian, and I believe he is very deserving of whatever extra resources may come his way. However, these decisions should be made as a result of a reasoned and bipartisan committee recommendation to parliament, not simply just getting out the chequebook.