



Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Hansard 28 May 2003

SELECT COMMITTEE ON PARLIAMENTARY ENTITLEMENTS

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (6.31 p.m.): I rise to oppose the motion moved in the parliament by the member for Nicklin, Mr Wellington, and I do so after a considerable degree of consideration. I have been in this parliament now for a fair period of time and all sides have talked about the primacy and respect of the parliamentary committee system. We talk about it. We are involved in it. Members of the government, members of the opposition, Independent members and members of One Nation are on those committees. By and large, the committees which I have been a part of function in an extremely bipartisan way. They have done good work. They have been practical. They have made good recommendations. Unfortunately, some of those recommendations are not necessarily implemented, and I say that about both sides of government in the time that I have been here. I do not think that that makes it right, because I do not think that we should have the option of being able to pick and choose as a government what it suits us to implement.

When there is a bipartisan approach to running certain aspects of the parliament through the committee system, we should respect that bipartisan approach. If the bipartisan approach does not work, then there is an option for members of parliament to dissent. There is an option for members of parliament to dissent from a majority decision of a committee, and that is what members exercise from time to time. In the committees I have served on I have only seen it on one occasion. There is the deliberative process that goes on in the committee process that does not always happen in the hotbed of this place because it is a different atmosphere—that is, it happens with a spirit of cooperation that is not always present in this place—notwithstanding the fact that on 70 per cent of occasions we agree on all legislation that comes through this place, and no doubt it is the role of the opposition and government to differ on things from time to time.

It is not good enough for a member to come in here a couple of years down the track and say that they now do not agree with something which they agreed with two or three years ago. A member may have reconsidered certain matters, but I ask the member for Nicklin to keep in mind the fact that when he made his decision he was given information in order to consider this in a deliberative way, in a way which was bipartisan. In that regard members are able to see the reasons this proposal and other recommendations were made by that particular committee to do things or not do things. That is what happened when all of those members on that committee—that is, the eight or nine of them, including members of the then Labor Party government, members of the then coalition opposition, the One Nation Leader and the Independent member for Nicklin—made that decision. They made a decision with certain parameters and they should be prepared to stick to that.

I am not so sure that the Premier was terribly happy when I reminded him of that commitment, and there has been a certain element of politicisation which has gone on since then. It is his right to do so. For me, this was simply a matter of a recommendation made by a committee to redress something which it did not necessarily consider was appropriate—that is, the standing of a political party in this state that received more than 10 per cent of the vote which was not necessarily reflected in proportion to the members in this House. That is why it was recommended. There was no other reason. It was not recommended to favour the now Leader of the Liberal Party, Mr Quinn. It was recommended to redress what was considered to be a wrong situation by that committee. That is what it was there for—not to favour Mr Quinn but to redress a situation.

It is anomalous that a party can get 15 per cent of the vote and three per cent of the seats and not be recognised for the status that it actually holds. That is what it is about. At the last election we lost a couple of thousand votes each, but the electoral system caused us to lose half of our seats, or two-thirds in one case. It is not about favouring; it is about properly considering the way things are done. If the honourable member wants to have a situation of consideration of resources and equity of resources for Independents in the future, fair enough, but let us look at that from here on in. Let us not look at going back and revisiting something which has already been decided quite properly and unanimously by a committee of this parliament. It was not political and it is wrong to politicise this now, because it is politicisation. Quite frankly, is it any wonder that the community holds us in such disregard because we are always squabbling over our entitlements? This motion deserves to be defeated.