



Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Wednesday, 23 November 2005

MR SPEAKER'S RULING: MOTION OF DISSENT

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (3.16 pm): The standing orders as amended were put in place in this House on 26 May 2005. These are not some dated directives. The paint has only just dried on them. It is the job of the Speaker to enforce these rules, each and every one of them. That much I think we all understand. It is not the job of the Speaker to selectively apply rules, particularly ones that are black and white. Standing order 118(b) under 'General rules for answers' clearly states 'an answer shall be relevant to the question'. I understand that different Speakers may interpret parts of standing orders in different ways, but there are no two ways of interpreting that standing order. It clearly states that an answer should be relevant to a question.

When the member for Warrego asked a question of the health minister in this place on 10 November, the health minister rose and started to carry on with the piffle that he generally does. When the member for Warrego sought a point of order on relevance, the Speaker said this—

My ruling is that the minister is entitled to answer the question in the way he sees fit.

The first thing we need to establish is that this was not some sort of brain fade; this was not a one-off ruling. The Speaker has ruled in this manner on other occasions. Another example would be a ruling made on a point of order by the member for Beaudesert in the regional parliament. The point of order was taken on an answer being given by the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. The Speaker again dismissed the point of order and informed the parliament that ministers could answer the question in whatever manner they desired. So that means that ministers can come and read excerpts from the Bible or the *Women's Weekly* as answers to questions.

I recall in the no-confidence motion the member for Robina commenting that we on this side of the House had a boot on our throat, whereas the other side of the House has been given a free reign. More apt words have not been spoken on the issue. There are double standards that the member for Warrego, in moving this motion, outlined. Let us look at it historically. In his time as Speaker, the member for Ashgrove had 11 dissent motions moved against him. None were about his rulings on relevance. The former member for Redcliffe, Mr Hollis, had 11 dissent motions moved against him. None were in relation to rulings on relevance. So it is clear that we have a precedent being set by this Speaker—a Speaker who is allowing ministers to get away with answers that even predecessors from his own party have been tougher on. It is clear that the Speaker needs to make his rulings more relevant or risk losing even the confidence of his own party. The Speaker has been in this House for 16 years. He has had ample time to understand the rules of this House. I think that since the no-confidence motion in the last sitting week he has been much more calm, and credit should be given where it is due, but the issue of relevance has remained.

The final example that I need to mention is question time this morning when ministers were asked up to seven questions on the nature of Liberal and National preselections and they were given a broad range to target members on this side of the House and make comments that were not relevant to the questions.

I refer members to question time in today's *Hansard*. The Minister for Energy, when asked a dorothy dixer, said—

... in other matters that I also look at ...

Then for the duration of his answer he railed about our Liberal preselection. The Speaker did not pull him up on relevance. The member for Logan, the Minister for Energy, cannot decide if he wants to be a cabinet minister or if he wants to dish out dirt on the coalition. He gave the role to the members for Thuringowa and Southport, but they were not up to it. So he has taken it back on himself to be the purveyor of political tripe.

We have set the standing orders in this House and made them as a group of adults, a group of representatives. The rules are clear. We on this side of the House are happy to work with the current Speaker, but we ask for the rules of this House to be applied as they are outlined.