



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Tuesday, 10 October 2006

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.34 am): Mr Speaker, on behalf of all members, I congratulate you on your election and wish you well in the deliberations that you will have to undertake over the next three years. As I indicated earlier in my address on your nomination, being Speaker is a tough job. I have no doubt that you will carry out that role in a very impartial way.

I do want to take this opportunity to say two quick things. Firstly, the performance of the Speaker carried out in an impartial way is not just an important role for the Speaker and the conduct of this parliament; it is also a very important signal to the community itself. I think we all have a responsibility to do everything we can to lift the standing of this parliament in the community. The second point I want to make, however, is this: the Speaker cannot do it alone. It requires every member of this parliament to behave appropriately.

I notice there has been some comment in recent times about the number of questions that are asked and the way this parliament is conducted. This morning I asked my staff to do some research in relation to questions and about how this parliament has conducted itself over a period of time, and I table that for the information of members. I will not go through it. It highlights to me that we have undertaken, in the last 20 years in particular, significant reforms in this place. But it highlights—and I underline this—that it does not matter how good the reforms are; the individual conduct of members still determines how this parliament runs. It reminds me of a comment that Sir Max Bingham made to me—and Robert Schwarten will recall this—when we were on the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee. Sir Max Bingham was the first chair. He said that you can have the best institutions in the world, but if they are run by bad or incompetent people they will not work. You can have institutions that are not perfect, but if you have good people in charge with goodwill, they will work.

Tabled papers: Bundle of documents relating to procedures for questions in the Legislative Assembly of Queensland.

I want to make this point to all of us. I do not disagree with too much of what the Leader of the Opposition said earlier about a robust place. I think we need that. If we are going to have the necessary argy-bargy and accountability, we should get the tough questions and the opposition should be judged on how tough and how effective they are. However, we should also have the ability for ministers to answer them. We will argue about that. However, I want to make this point—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Do not start too badly, guys.

Mr Seeney: Don't lay it on too thick.

Mr BEATTIE: The Speaker has only just been elected. Give him a go.

I want to make this point—and I say this with all sincerity to the Leader of the Opposition, whom I congratulate on his election—you do need to allow ministers to be able to answer. Of course there needs to be fair interjection. We are not sensitive about that, but ministers do need to be able to answer the question so they can explain and give that information to the community. Having said that, I come back to where I started. I congratulate you, Mr Speaker. I am sure you will not mind if I do take this opportunity to congratulate those opposite on being elected to their positions. I look forward to working in partnership with them and you in lifting the standards of this place and having greater respect for this parliament in the community