



Speech by

Peter Lawlor

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Hansard Wednesday, 29 November 2006

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT ACT

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (6.22 pm): I strongly support the amended motion moved by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. The amendments to the Criminal Code have ensured that the Queensland parliament operates in the way that it does in every other parliament in this country. Our system of parliamentary democracy, the Westminster system, is based upon a history of long and sometimes violent struggles between the king and the parliament in England. Our democratic principles are based on the 1688 Bill of Rights, which was enacted a century before European settlement in Australia.

One of the most important principles is that parliamentary proceedings cannot be questioned in any court or other venue outside of parliament. In other words, all Westminster type parliaments are in control of their own destinies. This parliament is in control of all that occurs in this chamber.

Of course, all members are expected to act and speak honestly, but in the event that a member misleads the House, he or she should be dealt with by this House or a committee of the House. In this case it is the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. In other words, the old section 57 of the Criminal Code, which lay dormant for 100 years, was an anachronism. In effect, section 57 conflicted with the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001, which states—

The freedom of speech and debates or proceedings of the Assembly cannot be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of the Assembly.

It is that simple. In fact, it was so simple that the opposition supported that act without amendment.

If the opposition were honest or consistent—and those are two words that one will not hear used in the same sentence as 'the Queensland opposition'—it would be asking John Howard to introduce criminal sanctions for lying in the federal parliament. But is he? Of course he is not! Can members imagine the work that that would create for some poor prosecutor? Members will remember the children overboard and the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq stories. This demonstrates the dishonesty of the opposition's argument.

Another irony is that we are actually protecting the Leader of the Opposition from himself. He is the self-confessed tactical liar of the National Party. Yesterday he came in here and defamed present and past members of this parliament. He has not produced a shred of evidence to support his disgraceful allegations and insinuations. Yesterday he lied in this parliament. Today the Premier pointed out that the Leader of the Opposition claimed that he did not say that the leader of the coalition would be elected before the election when, in fact, we all know now that he did say that. Should he be charged criminally for lying? Unfortunately, but correctly, the answer must be no.

The opposition has worked itself into a lather and consistently misrepresented the situation. Opposition members have used expressions like 'licences to lie' and so on. My question to the Leader of the Opposition is: where is your licence? If Queensland had a lying team, the Leader of the Opposition

would be the captain and coach. The opposition's motive for bringing on this debate today reflects the parlous situation that the Leader of the Opposition now finds himself in.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order. That is obviously offensive. I find it so and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr LAWLOR: I withdraw. The Leader of the Opposition made a serious—

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Southport, I am asking you to respond. Are you withdrawing?

Mr LAWLOR: I did.

Mr SPEAKER: I did not hear you.

An opposition member: It's a long way back.

Mr LAWLOR: The member should not talk about sitting positions. What a joke. They got rid of the member pretty quickly.

Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition made a series of outrageous slurs against a number of former members of this parliament. The Leader of the Opposition cannot back up his outrageous claims, so he brings on a debate—most of which he was not even here for—about contempt of parliament as a distraction from his own abuse of parliamentary privilege yesterday. I support the amendment moved by the Attorney-General.