



Speech by
Jeff Seeney

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Hansard Thursday, 8 February 2007

MOTION: CENSURE OF MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.58 am): What a waste of time the government is indulging in at the end of the first week of the parliament. It is worth noting that this parliament, almost five months after we were elected, still has not had a chance to reply to the address that the Governor gave at the opening of the parliament. Yet the government seeks to come in here and waste the time of the parliament with this sort of nonsense—and nonsense it is; nonsense and hypocrisy.

I will take some time to detail the extent of the nonsense and the hypocrisy that is being demonstrated here. First of all, let us look at the great hypocrisy when members on that side stand up and talk about misusing the parliament and setting standards in the parliament. For two days this week this parliament has not been able to serve its function. This parliament has not been able to debate and discuss the issues that the people of Queensland are debating and discussing. Nobody on that side of the House has even expressed any concern about that, let alone expressed any support for doing anything about it.

Those opposite have absolutely no commitment to this parliament, no commitment to the purpose of this parliament and no commitment to democracy. It is only when that impinges on their political ambitions that they stand up and wax lyrical. When it is a little politically uncomfortable, where are all the great parliamentary supporters? Where are all the great civil libertarians? They sit up the back and hang their heads in shame, as my honourable friend sitting up there knows all too well.

This parliament has been misused and abused this week like it never has before by the government for its own political purposes. I would like to say a lot more about that but I do respect the concern that is starting to show on the Deputy Speaker's face, so I will not transgress out of respect to you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): I thank the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SEENEY: That is the overall hypocrisy. But that pales into insignificance compared to the hypocrisy that has been displayed by the member for Rockhampton here this morning. Of all the members who have ever served in this place—and members should go and look on the board at the names of all of the Queenslanders who have served in this place—the member for Rockhampton would be the worst choice for the protector of parliamentary standards. My staff have been collecting some examples, and there are lots of them. I could read them all.

If one thinks of every offensive word in the English language, it has been thrown across this chamber at one time or other by the member for Rockhampton. Every offensive name that one can think of he has thrown across this chamber at one time or another. Yet he stands up here this morning as some defender of parliamentary standards. He stands up with some mock outrage and gives us a moralistic tirade about how somebody else should behave in this place, and he wants to waste two hours of parliamentary time doing it. What a load of hypocrisy!

When I first came into this place about 8½ ago, the old hands used to talk with some respect about the honourable member for Rockhampton—that he was a hard man and a parliamentary performer that

they had some respect for. Now he is just a joke. He used to be somebody who had some respect in this parliament, even though we did not agree with him.

Mr Hobbs: Where is he now?

Mr SEENEY: Where is he now? He does not even have the courage and backbone to sit here and listen. You used to have some respect, my honourable friend. In fact, you used to be even a little amusing at times. Now you are just a joke. For you to stand up here this morning and make the comments you did, given the comments you made yesterday when you called people crooks, apes and baboons—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I ask you to speak through the chair.

Mr SEENEY: I apologise. For the member for Rockhampton to come in here and make those sorts of comments, given that in the last couple of days he has called other members baboons and apes and has used the protection of this parliament to call other people crooks when they do not have the opportunity to reply, that is hypocrisy in the raw and hypocrisy that knows no bounds.

This so-called censure motion has been levelled against the member for Burnett because he did not apologise. The most blatant example that I have ever seen in this House of when a member should have apologised also involved the member for Rockhampton. I well remember the outrage that every one of us on this side of the House felt when under privilege he accused the member for Warrego of somehow running up betting debts and not paying betting debts.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I ask the honourable member to withdraw that remark on the basis that that is untrue and offensive, and I urge him to check the *Hansard* record of the day.

Mr SEENEY: Under the rules of the House, of course I withdraw. The honourable member for Rockhampton does not even have the courage of his convictions to stand and defend his actions. Instead, he comes in here with a display of hypocrisy that has never before been seen in this parliament and never again will be emulated. The member for Rockhampton will always be known as the member who took hypocrisy to a new level.

This censure motion is an absolute nonsense. It is all about wasting the time of the House and it is all about trying to recover from the damage that the government did to itself earlier in the week. The people of Queensland know that this parliament has been misused and abused this week. They know that without me outlining it here and getting myself into further trouble with the Speaker. This censure motion this morning is about trying to recover from that.

The strategy began when the Premier came in here and rose on a matter of privilege at the very beginning this morning and tried to suggest that somehow the member for Burnett was making comments about the way he was dressed. It was an absolute nonsense to suggest that that was the thrust of the comments of the member for Burnett. The Premier should have been sat down at that point, I would suggest, if there were any seriousness in maintaining standards when raising matters of privilege because it was a nonsense matter of privilege. It completely misrepresented what happened last night and, in itself, was an affront to the House.

If we are going to be asked to believe that what the member for Burnett did was anything like what the member for Rockhampton and the Deputy Premier suggested it was, then the Premier stands condemned with them. If the member for Rockhampton is going to condemn the member for Burnett then the Premier stands condemned with him because, according to the logic of the member for Rockhampton, the Premier misused the opportunity to raise a matter of privilege in exactly the same way. It was a frivolous matter of privilege. It was a nonsense matter of privilege that bore no resemblance to any real interpretation of what the member for Burnett said the night before. So the member for Burnett was entitled to respond in kind.

I do not think any member of this House believes for one moment that the mock outrage that we have heard from the other side of the House is anything else but hypocrisy. This motion of censure should be rejected and rejected quickly, and we should get on with debate in this House that will further illustrate the extent to which the Beattie government has failed the people of Queensland.