



Speech by

Hon. Judy Spence

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard Thursday, 8 February 2007

MOTION: CENSURE OF MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (12.08 pm): I am very pleased to join in this censure debate against the member for Burnett. It has been a great privilege to be one of the longest serving members of this parliament and the longest serving woman ever in the Queensland parliament. One of the nice things about being around for over 17 years is that I have seen this parliament change. When I was elected over 17 years ago there were very few women in this chamber. One of the wonderful things that we have seen in the last decade is the election of so many women to the parliament and we should be very proud of that.

Along with the election of women, we have seen the standards of this parliament change. When I was elected all those years ago I found the standard of debate in this place at times intolerable, and I am on the public record as saying so. It was a pretty rough place to be. It was a very sexist place because there with so few women. Men often made inappropriate comments to women in those days and I, like other members of parliament, railed against it.

I railed against the fact that I was wolf whistled when I was walking across the chamber one day. That is what parliament used to be like. It has changed for the better. The election of women has helped that; the introduction of TV cameras has also helped. We are seeing a more civilised place these days. That is why I am very disappointed at the member for Burnett in relation to his comments.

Let us look at what he has done here with respect to his remarks. Whatever one feels about prostitution, whether one is very anti this industry or not, the women who work in this industry are real people and they do not deserve to be treated like the member for Burnett treated them last night and this morning. They certainly do not. That is why I am really incensed. There is no mock outrage from me. The Leader of the Opposition is condemning us and our mock outrage. This is not mock outrage; I am very, very sincere in my offence at his comments.

I am sure that all the women who work in that industry also find him very, very offensive. As a minister who represents that industry I find him offensive. The member has the shadow minister's role and should know better than to offend those women and their jobs in that fashion. I really object to his antics in this chamber on that ground as well.

I do not agree with the Leader of the Opposition that we are wasting our time in this debate. We are debating the standards of this parliament. The standards of this parliament are very important. The people who elect us expect members of parliament will have certain standards; they expect us to dress in a certain fashion; they expect us to behave in a certain fashion. The member for Burnett has a bit of a reputation for being a smart Alec. We all remember during the election campaign when he rudely interrupted the Premier's press conference in Bundaberg with his megaphone screaming out 'Hey, hey, ho, ho', like any larrikin on the streets. I do not think that the Queensland public expect that kind of behaviour from their members of parliament. I do not think that they expect that behaviour from their members of parliament in this chamber.

There is no mock outrage; there is genuine disgust at the way the member for Burnett conducts himself in this chamber. The fact that he is being supported here today by his leader, who thinks that this is

a trivial matter, makes it even more disappointing. I do feel sorry for his colleagues who are going to be forced to have to vote in support of him on this matter because I suspect most of them are also embarrassed and ashamed of him, as we all are.