



Speech by

Hon. Kevin Lingard

MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT

Hansard Wednesday, 22 August 2007

MOTION: SESSIONAL ORDERS

Hon. KR LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (12.00 pm): This type of action shows exactly what happens when a group gets a majority in a House. When there is a majority of 59 in an 89-member House, then quite obviously it is hard to be humble. But, as I have said before, it is easy to be arrogant and this is an obvious example of arrogance. The Premier was trying to say that the government is giving, but this is not giving, this is taking. This is taking the first hour of parliament and making sure that the opposition has no input into it at all, including by way of interjections, and then taking the next hour for question time and then the ministers walking out of the House as a group and paying absolutely no attention whatsoever to backbenchers and members of the opposition. This does not apply only to opposition members; it applies to backbenchers. Backbenchers are not entitled to make their two-minute contributions at the start of the day and talk to ministers and tell the government the problems that are occurring in their particular electorates.

The history of this is that in 1997 the legislation was changed so that the first hour of the day was divided into half an hour for government members and then half an hour for the opposition side. Clearly, when we look at the first six months of that when Neil Turner was the Speaker and Tony Fitzgerald was the government leader, we did not go past five minutes past 10. We had 35 minutes at the most, and therefore the opposition and the backbenchers were given the next 25 minutes in that period. What the government is doing now is trying to take that 25 minutes. I have continually fought against it and I have continually asked the Speaker about it. As members know, I took a point of order recently when we did not have any time in that first hour, and the Speaker said, 'Yes, I am embarrassed by it too. I will approach the Premier and the Leader of the House.' This is the end result of the Speaker approaching the Premier and the Leader of the House. This end result does not give this side any input in the first hour of parliament.

In the future, when someone gets hold of what is happening now and looks back at the history of this parliament, they will say, 'What happened to democracy in that period?' People will see that opposition members and backbench members were forced to come in here at half past nine, they were forced to bow to the Speaker, they were forced to put their name on a sheet of paper which went out to the public, they were forced to listen to the Premier, they were then forced to listen to the ministers and they were not allowed any input at all in the first hour. They were then told to sit there in question time and ask five or six questions. They were controlled very, very strongly by the Speaker at that time, and I have no great opposition as far as that is concerned. Then, at the end of two hours, the ministers walked out and left the backbenchers and the opposition people to themselves to have a bit of a chat until 4.30 am, with no input whatsoever to the ministers and no input at all to the government. That is what the government is doing to us.

This is not about what government members are giving; it is about what they are taking, and they know they are taking. They are taking that first hour of the parliament, they are taking that second hour of the parliament and then they, as a group of ministers, are walking out and saying, 'Have a chat by yourselves. Have a talk to yourselves. Talk through until 4.30 am, but we are not going to take any notice of you.' So do not talk about giving; this is taking.

The last thing I want to point out is that the Leader of the House and the Premier have not gone through the Standing Orders Committee at all. They have not even had a meeting of the Standing Orders Committee. This is all decision making by the executive government. There has been absolutely nothing in this parliament about the standing orders. At the last Standing Orders Committee we went to, the Premier himself promised, promised, promised—and I remind him of this—that he would fix it up.

Mr Springborg: Hear, hear!

Mr LINGARD: Mr Springborg has said, 'Hear, hear!' because he was the leader at that time. We left the last Standing Orders Committee meeting with a promise that this would be fixed up. How have they fixed it up? They have taken the whole first hour of the parliament and the whole second hour of the parliament and then they nick off and do not do anything for the rest of the day and leave the backbenchers and the opposition members here by themselves. This is obviously taking, not giving.