



Speech by

## Hon. Robert Swarten

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Hansard Thursday, 19 April 2007

---

### VACANCY IN SENATE OF COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA: NOMINATION OF SK BOYCE

**Hon. RE SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (12.01 pm): May I congratulate Ms Sue Boyce on achieving this very high honour. It is great to see here so many of her friends and relatives to celebrate a very historic moment. As a student of history, I know that this has not happened very many times in this parliament. It is a unique event. I congratulate Ms Boyce on what appears, from what Dr Flegg said, to be a very well-earned result.

I agree with the member for Callide in that the preselection process is an initiation by fire—there is no doubt about that—and Ms Boyce has come through that with flying colours. I noted her comment after she had received the victorious result, which was most humble. Ms Boyce paid great tribute to the contestants who ran against her. When one turns out to be a winner, it is always a temptation to be less than magnanimous. I think that said a lot about Ms Boyce's character.

Sue Boyce is clearly a person of great compassion. I have heard what the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Leader of the Liberal Party have had to say about her commitment to people with disabilities. Obviously she is a very compassionate person who has risen through the ranks. As a person who has been a member of the Labor Party for nearly 40 years, I believe in people being loyal to their parties and being rewarded accordingly. I do not like the idea of blow-ins being rewarded. Ms Boyce has risen through the ranks of the Liberal Party and has made a long commitment to it. I do not agree with it, but that is democracy. I think that the recognition of people of Ms Boyce's stature in the Liberal Party is a measure of some maturity in the Liberal Party. That is not to detract from my old mate Bob Quinn, because I am sure, as Ms Boyce said, he was a worthy candidate as well.

Ms Boyce has also been successful outside of politics. Many people come into this game straight out of a minister's office, or whatever the case may be. I do not want to deride that, either. Ms Boyce has a very broad experience and obviously that will hold her in good stead. I was interested to hear Ms Boyce's comments about interjections. I am sure she will not require much teaching in order to learn how to do that.

There was mention of the temptation to ignore the past. I do not intend to give in to that temptation. If we look at the history of the election of Patrick Field to the Senate, we see that 14 Liberals crossed the floor. Those 14 Liberals had the conscience to accept that what Bjelke-Petersen was doing was wrong. I notice that one of those members who crossed the floor was my old mate Bill Hewitt. There were also a number of abstentions. One was Bill Knox—and Joh said that he was hiding in the lavatory and chided him as a result. There were 14 Liberals who, in my view, did not endorse what was a very significant misuse of the power of this parliament. I think that needs to be recorded because I think that has been forgotten in history. Shame upon those others who did not do it, but I say good on those 14 Liberals who stood strong in what was a pretty difficult time. Joh was in full flight. What he said went, but those 14 Liberals had the intestinal fortitude, decency and fairness to abide by what the people of Queensland had decided. That is why we are doing what we are doing today.

I said to Sue outside that this is only the second time I have voted for a tory in my life. The last time was not a very happy experience at all. In terms of all of those features that I just referred to about Ms Boyce, members could turn them on their back in relation to the person who was elected to the Senate in here the last time because, on any assessment of Mr Santoro, compassion was not something that came to mind. I was in this parliament with him. I do not think he did the Liberal Party any favours. If he had been a bit more inclusive and had some of the characteristics of this candidate, the Liberal Party would not have the problems that it has today. Also, it is interesting to note that, in terms of interjections, Santoro was very good at giving them out but when he was on his feet he never took one himself. So I ask Ms Boyce to remember that, when she interjects on other people, they will interject on her. But I am sure that she will be very confident and capable of doing that.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Is this coming from the expert?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Mr Speaker, as you can see, I am very, very timid. As I say, I wish Ms Boyce well. I am not going to be as generous as all the others and wish her a long career in the Senate, because my job in the Labor Party—and for all the people I represent—is to get her out of there, and I am honest enough to say so. I say to Sue: good on you. Well done. It is a very proud day for you and an historic moment for your family. I certainly wish you a good career, if not a long one, and, as I say, congratulations.