



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MOTIONS

Speaker

SPEECH

Tuesday, 31 May 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Date Tuesday, 31 May 2011
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Questioner
Speaker Gillard, Julia, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (15:37): Mr Speaker, I rise to second the motion and of course the government has continuing confidence in you as the Speaker of this parliament. It is not an easy job. It is definitely not an easy job in contested political circumstances to deal with all of the things that come before you in this parliament. I understand that and the government understands that. The government understands that you make the best judgment calls you can at the time. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for moving this motion and I am very pleased to second it.

Mr Speaker, we understand that there is a continuing obligation on members of this House not just to support this motion but to support your rulings as they are delivered to this parliament. That is an obligation that we will acquit on the government side. I do believe you should take the combined view of me and the Leader of the Opposition on this occasion. I understand the precedents that have borne down on these things in the past but this is a different circumstance and I believe that in this different circumstance, having heard from me and the Leader of the Opposition, you should act differently to speakers in the past. You should acknowledge that the House has made a decision on this occasion, but that should be the end of it.

But I would say this to members of the House who are now presumably behind the Leader of the Opposition and, in the exercise of their own independent judgment, about to support this confidence motion in you: the reality is that we should avoid future occasions where we find ourselves in this position—when we are called on to back your judgment on a matter such as a naming, the obligation will fall on us to do so. Mr Speaker, that is not something that should be second-guessed if people are going to have confidence in the Speaker. The government, in its conduct today, has shown full confidence in you by backing your judgment on the naming and, of course, we back this motion now. My words now are not directed to you but they are directed to the opposition: to provide continuing confidence in the Speaker, you need to provide continuing confidence in the Speaker's rulings.

Mr Speaker, in terms of the vote that we have just had, as I think was very evident from my conduct at the dispatch box, I did not hear you even name someone as the noise was so great. I am not able to say, standing at this dispatch box, what you named them for. I could not hear that either because the level of noise was so great. But I exercised my vote and the government exercised its vote in the way that we did because to provide confidence to the Speaker requires providing confidence in individual rulings of the Speaker. Whether or not we were in a position to judge as individuals the circumstances of any individual ruling, we provided that confidence. That is the attitude that the government will continue to take to providing confidence in you and I would ask members of the opposition to reflect on that for the future.

As for today, Mr Speaker, we are where we are and the Leader of the Opposition has taken the appropriate action given the way in which the opposition has cast its votes. In those circumstances I think the Leader of the Opposition has done the right thing, which is why I am prepared to second the proposed resolution to confirm to you that the government has complete confidence in you continuing. I believe that you, having heard from both me and the Leader of the Opposition, should accept that display of confidence in the full exercise of your good judgment on this matter.