



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Abbott Government

SPEECH

Tuesday, 2 December 2014

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Questioner
Speaker Plibersek, Tanya, MP

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Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:36): Every now and again, I walk into the kitchen at home and I find a four-year-old there who was got melted ice cream all around his mouth, a few little chips of chocolate hanging out of the corners of his mouth and a little wooden stick in his hand. I say, 'Louis, have you helped yourself to a mini Magnum?' He stands there, with the stick in his hand and the chocolate falling out of the corners of his mouth, and says, 'No, mum. No.' I say, 'Louis, it is very bad to help yourself to a mini Magnum, but it is much, much worse to lie about it.' He says, 'No, mum, I didn't.' Then he waits a bit and he shifts from foot to foot. He then bursts into tears and he says, 'Yes, mum. I did it.'

Mr Ewen Jones: He is already in the party! He is already a member!

Government members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): The member for Herbert!

Ms PLIBERSEK: They are mini Magnums; they would not satisfy you at all! He says, 'Yes, mum, I did it.' And there is relief on his face when he tells me he did it and we have a little cuddle, and I say, 'It is all right, Louis. The most important thing is you told the truth when it mattered.' I can tell you that it is kind of endearing in a four year old—the struggle with the truth. 'Have I done the right thing? Have I been caught? What happens now?' It is not so endearing when you are talking about the Prime Minister of our nation. The lie is bad enough, but the lying about lying is phenomenal. There is not an Australian who does not remember that famous election-eve quote:

No cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST, and no cuts to the ABC or SBS.

There is no-one who does not now know that quote. And yet we still have this persistence from the Prime Minister and the government: 'No, no, nothing to see here.' We had it again today. After spending three-quarters of an hour yesterday telling journalists about the reboot—'We are going to reboot; it is all new and fresh from here on in.'—we had the same old question time today of denial and dissembling.

It actually reminded me that it is not so much a reboot as a complete rewind to opposition. Instead of a government prepared to stand up, argue its case, put a positive vision for the nation, talk about the things they are achieving or that they would like to achieve, what do we have? We had minister after minister talking about us and when we were in government. We just had the last speaker talk about us and when we were in government. Even more bizarrely, we had the health minister, who never asked a question as a shadow minister, now getting up and not answering any questions as the health minister. It is just this kind of generic rant about what the Labor Party has done. We have not seen a reset; we have seen a complete rewind to their time of opposition.

What is even worse than this? You would expect a prime minister not to lie—of course you would expect a prime minister not to lie. But this particular prime minister made so much of being purer than Caesar's wife when he was the opposition leader—when he said things like, 'It would be a government of no surprises and no excuses; a government that accepts it will be judged more by its deeds than its mere words; I want to be known as a prime minister who keeps his commitments.' He said, of course—there are so many quotes—that:

... Australians are sick of leaders who play politics ahead of governing the country and who blame everyone but themselves when things go wrong and the numbers do not add up.

We have had from this Prime Minister a series of broken promises and a wall of dissembling about those broken promises. And when that does not work and he presses the reset button, they do not reset but they rewind right back to the negativity of opposition—to the petty, complaining, whingeing, blaming of their period in opposition.

This government promised to make things better for Australians. All they have done is make things worse. They have cut health; they have cut education; they have cut pensions. They will be judged by their deeds. (*Time expired*)