



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Australian Public Service

SPEECH

Monday, 21 May 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Neumann, Shayne, MP

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Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (12:30): It is always interesting hearing the member for Mayo. He is one of the architects and apostles of Work Choices—so, there you go. They will use the public sector when they want to, to punish workers and to reduce wages, conditions that are so important to socially disadvantaged and working class areas around the country. But, when it is convenient, they will beat up on the public sector whenever they want to.

I commend the member for Fraser in relation to this motion because we do have an independent, honourable public sector in this country. It does promote democracy. I do not know what those opposite want, whether they want public servants like Sir Humphrey Appleby, or whether they want supine public servants that do not give them fearless and frank advice. We saw that with the children overboard provision many years ago when they mistreated the public sector in a way that made out the public sector to be something that it was not supposed to be. Their plans, once again, to sack public servants and make them redundant, as the member for Fraser has put it, are so typical of what a coalition government does.

We are seeing that now in my home state of Queensland. On the weekend I visited the Ipswich show; about 25,000 people were there. It was opened by the new Premier, Campbell Newman. One of the things that struck me was that six people came up to me at the show who were concerned about jobs in their area of the Public Service, ranging from communities to workplace health and safety and the like. Of course, coalition oppositions always take the view that they will sack public servants, but they are quite remiss in explaining to the public their full and secret plans. They will say things like, '12,000 public sector jobs will go in Canberra,' and they will make that point to the Australian public as if, somehow, beating up on Canberra public servants is what to do. The coalition always campaigns on fear and always campaigns in this way. They pick up a group of people, whether it is public servants or trade unions or other people, and then demonise that particular group and say that that particular group is not worthy to get support or should be punished in some way, shape or form. It does not matter whether they are led by Menzies, or Fraser, or Howard, or indeed by the current opposition leader.

They use figures and they claim that somehow, if we sack these public servants and get rid of them, this will solve their \$70 billion black hole, or is it the \$10.6 billion black hole that they took to the last election and kept from the public? It was only revealed during the negotiations in relation to the formation of government. They have identified a number of areas to be put on the chopping block—the Department of Health and Ageing, the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency and the like. Obviously they think that this is the way they should go. I cannot see that sacking people like this will do much in terms of carrying out their own policies, which they hope to implement after this election.

They have constantly misquoted figures. The Special Minister of State has pulled up the shadow Treasurer on many occasions about growth in the public sector. For example, Minister Gray has pointed out that the official figures show that between 30 June 2007 and 30 June 2011 the public sector grew by 11,072 jobs. But, of course, we see the shadow Treasurer, in a bid to justify his position to sack public servants, constantly claiming that it has grown by 20,000 jobs during that time. Public servants are mums and dads, they are people with children, they are people who actually spend money in local communities and contribute to those local communities. How putting those people out of work will benefit those local communities, their children and families and how that will benefit our country and communities is beyond me. It is typical of the rhetoric we see from coalition members. We see it in Queensland now. We will see it if these people actually get into power in the next 18 months, because that is exactly what they are like—constantly attacking those who serve the public, whether it is in Queensland or in the ACT or federally. (*Time expired*)