



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Malaysia

SPEECH

Monday, 14 September 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Husic, Ed, MP

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Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (12:18): I did not think I would ever hear a resolution like this being debated by the coalition. I am quite surprised, to be honest, because in the last term of parliament we heard terrible things being said about a neighbour, an ally and an economic partner like Malaysia—and it was said by the current Prime Minister. We heard senior frontbenchers criticising Malaysia, all in the context of grubby point scoring in the domestic political scene. It was about trashing the reputation of Malaysia during the course of debate on a domestic political issue and they were quite happy to do it. In fact, I never once heard the member for Cowan defend Malaysia—not once. None of these people defended Malaysia when their own leader, the current Prime Minister, was out there saying, for example, as he said to my colleague the member for McMahon:

He can talk to Malaysian justice officials and find out about the kind of caning and other corporal punishment that boat people might be sent to if they are part of this Malaysian people swap that the Prime Minister wants to put in place.

That is our current Prime Minister making out that everyone gets caned and subjected to corporal punishment if they are seeking asylum in Malaysia. The current Minister for Social Services, then the opposition immigration shadow minister, likened the treatment of refugees in Malaysia to that of mistreated cattle in Indonesia. 'I am equally shocked,' he said. 'If we are going to be consistent about these matters then I think the conditions these people will be held and treated in Malaysia is a relevant question.' He was making out that this is the way in which people are treated by a country so valued by our nation that it is a clear and more important figure within ASEAN and within the East Asia summit. None of these people were making these types of references that we are hearing today. It is good that they are, but they did not say it at the time.

What happened? The Prime Minister on election, when he had to meet the Malaysian heads of government, then came out and apologised and said, 'Oh, well, we were probably too robust and probably over the top in what we said and it was wrong that it happened.' It is the classic Tony Abbott play book. The Tony Abbott play book is to make the play and apologise for it later—to seek confession later but then to do this.

This is an outrageous treatment of Malaysia and it was an outrageous way to behave, and it should not be forgotten by our friends in Malaysia. Australia and Malaysia are key trading partners.

Government members interjecting—

Mr HUSIC: They do not want to hear this. They do not want to hear this, because it is inconvenient and it burns now. But you cannot and should not treat—

Government members interjecting—

Mr HUSIC: The hypocrisy of the mover of this resolution! I did not hear you once defend Malaysia. Where were you when your own leader was trashing Malaysia? Nowhere. You were not anywhere. You were nowhere to be heard. It was an outrageous way—

Mr Simpkins interjecting—

Mr HUSIC: Member for Cowan, I am on the record. When I have a disagreement with my leader over the way in which they might behave or contain themselves or say things that I believe are against the public spirit, you go and look at my record. I am happy to compare my record any day to yours, particularly in relation to this, and you know as well as anyone else in this place right now how close Western Australia is to Malaysia and how important those links are. But the fact of the matter is you all sat there mute, because you were all happy—all of you were happy—to sit there and see Malaysia trashed in that way and not stand up for it at all. It was an outrage.

Do you know what else happened as a result of this grubby political play? As a result of our inability to secure that agreement with Malaysia, 689 people died—689. And so what you did was that you trashed the relationship with Malaysia and, on top of that, you were happy to see that agreement go down, and as a result people paid for it. It was an outrage. So do not come into this place now. Do not come in here trying to say that you are all the friends of Malaysia now, because we remember and, importantly, our Malaysian friends remember exactly what you did.

Debate adjourned.