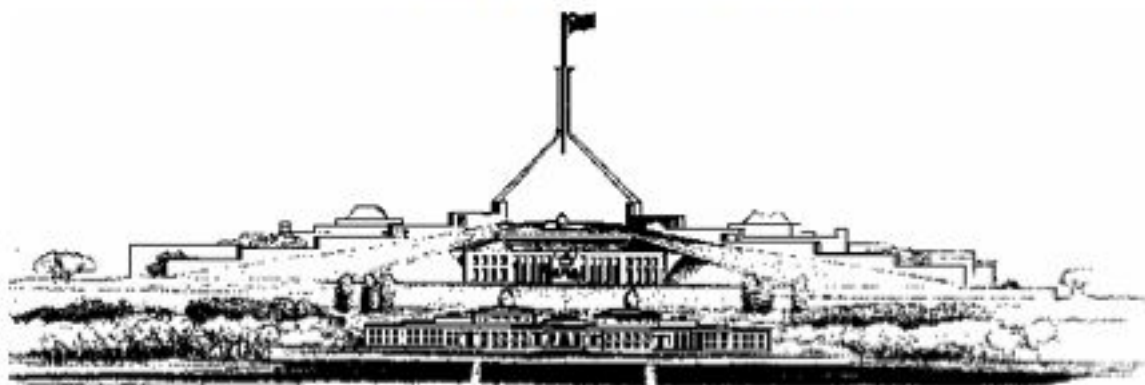




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Economy

SPEECH

Tuesday, 18 June 2013

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Date Tuesday, 18 June 2013
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Questioner
Speaker Perrett, Graham, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Government Whip) (15:57): I rise to speak on this MPI, having listened to the member for Wide Bay's contribution—and, unfortunately, it is a bit of my life that I will never get back—but I was looking for him to be a bit fair dinkum. As he is a Queenslander, I thought he might have touched on a couple of the significant things about stable government. I thought that, rather than talk about his dream of two million jobs, he would have spoken about the 960,000 jobs that have actually been created since he has been sitting on that side of the chamber. I thought he would have spoken about that. I thought that perhaps he, as a world-travelling man—and I have travelled overseas with the member for Wide Bay—might have touched on what conditions were like around Europe. We have 5.5 per cent unemployment—and it went down last month—but you can look at places in Europe where it is 11.9 per cent. There are places in Spain where one in two young people are unemployed. I thought he might have mentioned that because he does come from a part of Queensland that has higher unemployment. I thought as a Queenslander he might have mentioned that.

I thought he might have mentioned how proud he was to be in a nation that has a AAA credit rating from all three ratings agencies. I thought he would have been bipartisan enough to say that that is a good thing, but he forgot to mention it. Only eight countries of 200 countries around the world have this status. That is an empirical fact. That is not a press release; that is an empirical fact from the ratings agencies. Since he moved to that side of the chamber, how have we performed in terms of the size of our economy? He talks about doom and gloom and the need for stability. We have changed from being the 15th biggest economy in the world and moved up to being the 12th biggest economy in the world. I thought he would have said, from pure pride as an Australian, that he is proud—but no mention of that. And we have performed six times faster than those powerhouse countries like Germany and the United States.

He did not mention the global financial crisis. That two years has been taken out of the LNP history books. It is almost a Goebbels-type experiment in removing things from history: 'This did not occur.' The reality is we did have a global financial crisis. You look around the world and see the results of that and how they are still flowing through—how homes have been destroyed, how jobs have been destroyed, how whole communities have been destroyed by the impact of the global financial crisis. Under the Labor government, under Prime Minister Rudd and Prime Minister Gillard, we have steered through with a focus on jobs. That is the reality that I thought the member for Wide Bay would have touched on. That is the reality I thought the Leader of the Opposition would have touched on. The Leader of the Opposition understands these facts. I think he has a degree in economics. I thought he would have been aware of this.

The reality is the world has changed for those on that side of the chamber on two significant dates. Obviously, 24 November 2007 was a tough day for many of them when they got thrown out of government by the people of Australia. That was tough and some of them have never recovered. They churned through a couple of leaders—not deputy leaders, we still have a deputy leader who has loyally served three different leaders. We went through Brendan Nelson and the member for Wentworth and then moved on to the member for Warringah.

Then there was 1 December 2009—and didn't the world change for that side of parliament from that day onwards? I have only been a member of parliament since 24 November 2007, so I can only see it through that prism. I have had two parliaments to see it through—the 42nd Parliament and the 43rd Parliament. That is what my observations are based on. Remember 1 December 2009, when the Leader of the Opposition was wholeheartedly endorsed by his party room by one vote, with one spoiled ballot and one absent vote? But for that moment in history, the history of Australia could have been changed perhaps.

Then we go through to the election day and those 17 days of desperate negotiations from the Leader of the Opposition, where he was prepared to do anything. He made that clear. He made the call to the member for New England, saying, 'I will do anything.' I think he made it very clear as to what he would do to grab power. He was happy to have power without glory. That has been the journey ever since.

Let us look at what has gone on in the 43rd Parliament in particular. As I said, I am comparing the 42nd and 43rd parliaments. Let us look at some of the little things that have happened around this place under the Leader of the Opposition. First a simple little thing. Apparently the Leader of the Opposition when he was in government used to play touch football every morning. The member for Rankin used to play—

Dr Emerson interjecting—

Mr PERRETT: I think the member for Rankin might be misleading the parliament there!

Dr Emerson: But not deliberately!

Mr PERRETT: But not deliberately. It was a very harmonious place, where people, irrespective of the party they came from, would go down and play touch football together. From 24 November 2007 the member for Warringah said he would not play touch football anymore. Then in the 43rd Parliament it changed again. He has actually frowned upon people even playing touch football together. So that has ceased.

What are the other things? I notice a member from the Labor Party on the Speakers' panel. The member for Warringah said, 'No member of the Liberal and National parties will be a member of the Speaker's panel, apart from the member for Maranoa.' He ordered that they would not contribute to the democratic process, thus on one level saying, 'We support the democratic process,' but on the very other giving specific direction that undermines the political process.

Let us look at some of those other white-anting processes—not just removing people from the Speaker's panel and not just removing people from participating in sports but saying no to everything in the legislative program. If you look at the percentage of votes in the 42nd Parliament where we had unanimous support from the parliament compared to the 43rd Parliament, it has decreased about 15 per cent. All those common-sense pieces of legislation that parliament just grinds out, irrespective of who is in power—which parties are on which side of the chamber—the member for Warringah has made it specific, has made it clear, has given directions to the Liberal and National parties that 'No!' is the starting point for any piece of legislation and then negotiations occur from there. What are the ramifications of that? That means that someone who has a sick child cannot even get a pair to go and see their kid. He has been white-anting democracy throughout—ever since 1 December but particularly since that election in 2010.

Why is that so? Maybe he has to examine his own soul in terms of the trap that he has laid for Australian democracy. Because he has such a naked desire to grab power at any cost, he has betrayed Australian democracy. Maybe that is something that happens. We are not dissimilar in age. Maybe as the member for Warringah is getting on in years he thinks: 'This is my chance. This is the time for me to make a mark on the world stage or the Australian stage'—or whatever stage he thinks he is strutting on. The reality is that he is prepared to do anything and bring down Australian democracy in that process—and to do so in a way which is so hypocritical. On the one hand he says, 'Oh, no, we are very bipartisan,' but at the very same time he is putting dog whistles out there in the community, sending out his spear throwers to attack great Australian institutions like the Public Service. Things that are normally supported in a bipartisan approach, this member for Warringah has undermined. He has undermined those democratic processes.

We all know that saying about power corrupting and absolute power corrupting absolutely. That is what we are staring at—the fact that we might be contemplating on 14 September. Imagine a leader of the government, a leader of this nation, who is prepared to do anything to gain power. If you do not have the moral compass, if you do not have a soul that dictates what you do, then you are a rudderless person. You are unable to make the correct decision, the moral decision, the right decision—the decision in the nation's interest. This 'hate song of J Alfred Prufrock' that we have been hearing since election day from the member for Warringah has, I think, created a festering in Australian democracy, and it will come home to roost if on 14 September the Leader of the Opposition is made the leader of the government—and heaven help us if that does take place. (*Time expired*)