



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**MOTIONS**

**Standing and Sessional Orders**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 13 November 2013**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<b>Date</b>	Wednesday, 13 November 2013	<b>Source</b>	House
<b>Page</b>	115	<b>Proof</b>	No
<b>Questioner</b>		<b>Responder</b>	
<b>Speaker</b>	Katter, Bob, MP	<b>Question No.</b>	

**Mr KATTER** (Kennedy) (11:55): Mr Deputy Speaker, I second the amendments. In addressing this issue the Leader of the House says, 'I've given you a letter saying I'm going to do this.' Well, I am holding a letter with 20 items on it saying it is going to be the policy to do 'this, this, this and this'—and I think half of them have been spat upon. The ALP gave me a letter to the same effect, and half of those have not been treated with honesty and integrity, if I could put it that way. So what we have here is them saying, 'Trust me.' It is one of my standard jokes: whenever I say something to someone, I say, 'Trust me,' and they burst out laughing! The only place it is not a laughing matter, apparently, is here—it is taken seriously when someone says, 'Trust me.'

Australia is now delineated as the only country left on earth that has a two-party system. Some of you will say America has a two-party system. America has a constituency based system. It is an entirely different system from anywhere else in the world. A quick example is the ethanol debate in the United States. All 12 senators from the oil-producing states voted against it and of course senators from the other states—because ethanol is something that should be done everywhere in the world, for health and medical reasons—all voted for it. There was no voting along party lines. It is a constituency based system and entirely different.

So I defy anyone to point out to me a country left in the world that has a two-party system. It is a primitive system that dates back to 18th century England. It has been completely bypassed by every other country on earth. It doesn't matter whether it is Germany, Japan, France, Canada or Brazil—no other country on earth has this primitive system. But there is an absolute determination, not only by the Liberal Party but also by the Labor Party, that there will be no other players out there—'There will be no other point of view except our point of view and their point of view.' And since both points of view are free-market points of view then the non free-market point of view does not get aired, or even have the opportunity to be aired, by the people of Australia.

With the little power that the people have had in this place, they have exercised that power wisely. In this place Peter Andren and I moved against the sale of the Snowy Mountains scheme. Every single opinion poll that was taken in Australia said 80 per cent of the people in Australia tenaciously opposed the sale of the Snowy Mountains scheme—yet both sides of this parliament agreed unanimously, in this place and in the other place, to sell the Snowy Mountains scheme. But the rage of the people was able to assert itself and we were going to force you to vote on it in this place. So when you were going to vote on it the first time, and the rage and the wrath of people like John Laws and Alan Jones was unleashed upon you, and the power of your electorates was unleashed upon you, 11 of you went off wetting your pants, running to the Prime Minister John Howard—and, God bless John Howard: he showed the good sense and was a big enough man to reverse that decision. I use that as an example. There would not be a person in Australia, I would think, who would not have thanked Peter Andren and me for being in this place and being able to exercise that power to force you to vote on it.

What is happening here is that every effort is being made to extinguish, as far as humanly possible, every other voice except the executive voice. As the honourable speaker for the opposition side: the biggest losers here are you backbenchers! You have been reduced to nothing at all. You didn't start with much but you are going to have one hell of a lot less!

I was in a cabinet room for the best part of a decade and I can tell you what is said in the cabinet room: 'We've got to shut up some of these nutcases on the back bench. We can't have backbenchers shooting their mouths off and embarrassing the government.' So what is happening here is not so much a mugging of us; it is a mugging of you. The member for Perth, who has been on the front bench for an extended period of time, knows exactly what I am talking about.

The ethanol debate in this place was another classic example. Both sides of the parliament agreed to go in one direction. The competitive system, the adversarial system, has some advantages. The Liberals, in opposition, were pro-ethanol, as they were in Queensland; but when they get into government they take an entirely different

position. The Liberals switched their position on ethanol because the crossbenchers were very strongly for ethanol—every other country on earth has moved down that path. And once again the crossbenchers were able to side with the then opposition, the LNP, and preserve the little bit of an ethanol industry that we have got left in Australia. This is a very important issue in Australia. Some 1,400 people die every year in Sydney from motor vehicle emissions; they kill more people in Australia than motor vehicle accidents.

The mining tax on metals was another issue again. The Rudd government were quite comfortable, with their numbers, to be able to whack that mining tax through, including metals. I am the first to admit that there is a case for it—although I am not voting that way—with iron ore and coal. There is still a strong case and a strong argument on iron ore and coal. But there was never an argument on metals. To put a mining tax on metals was a diabolical occurrence. It has precipitated a course of events that in North Queensland has placed a copper mine in jeopardy. Of our two big copper miners, Kagara Zinc has hit the wall and ceased operations, and Mount Isa Mines are reviewing all of their operations as well. To throw a mining tax into that mix was a diabolical move.

But once again there is a little bit of a voice of the people here on the crossbench. We represent a very wide range of views in Australia. We have the honourable member for Melbourne, who is a representative of the Greens, and we have the honourable member for Kennedy, who is the representative of the anti-Greens. So we have a divergence of opinion on the crossbench. But it is a viewpoint of Australia that is not the viewpoint of executive government. Executive government, of its very nature, comes under enormous pressure from the corporates. That is part of the system. It is a very evil part of the system but it is an integral part of the system whichever government may be in power. Whether it is ALP, Liberal or some other government, they come under pressure from the corporates.

If you people on the back bench open your mouth, you can kiss goodbye to your endorsement. We all know that that is the reality—and it is even worse over on this side of the House on that front. But we crossbenchers need to open our mouths or else we will not get re-elected; we are forced by the people to open our mouths. When you are forced to vote in here on a motion moved by the crossbench it is not a lot of fun—when you have to face up to your electorate and vote for things like the sale of the Snowy Mountains hydro scheme or the sale of the electricity industry in Australia in the state houses.

There is not a lot of analysis throughout the world. I am a prolific reader, but there are not a lot of books in the world on the performance of democracies. Except for a few interesting books that are out on California at the moment, there is not much going around in that area. But when they were forming democracies throughout the world, Alexis de Tocqueville was obviously the greatest commentator. He spoke again and again and again about the tyranny of the majority. John Stuart Mill, on probably every 10th page of his book *On Liberty*, makes reference to the tyranny of the majority. He says democracy is not a fair form of government, not a just form of government; it is just a form of government that lives on the majority opinion. But if the minority has no right to speak at all then injustice reigns supreme: the majority get what they want—at the very great expense of minority groups.

And that is why every country in the world has smaller parties and a multiparty system. There is a particular group of people over here who represent manufacturing interests—which, of course, have been slaughtered in Australia. There is a particular group over there, the agriculturists, which is another group in Australia that is being slaughtered. They deserve to have a voice in this place. But they do not have a voice if they are in a majority party, because that is not the majority of opinion. The majority of opinion is free market—which means there is no government that will involve itself in preserving agriculture or manufacturing. So the efforts by the government here, clearly and simply, are primarily to muzzle their own backbenchers and, to a lesser extent, the opposition—but their performance has been so appalling I suspect they do not want to muzzle them; I think they want them to speak out. Most certainly, they want to muzzle the backbenchers.

I come out of the state of Queensland. I thought the Bjelke-Petersen government were pretty bad in the way we treated our opposition, but we were kindergarteners compared with the LNP's efforts now to muzzle all opposition in Queensland. I mean, really, one has to go to the fascist states to find out what is going on: Vietnam vets who ride motorbikes are being put in jail even though they have not broken any laws. The Ulysses Club, which is made up of professional people—very well off, up market, upper class if you like to use that word—that ride motorbikes and get together and have bit of fun. They have ended up in the clink because they were riding a motorbike!

This sort of regime can be addressed if there is a voice of the people. But if your efforts muzzle the voice of the people then you are sowing the whirlwind and you will reap it, as did these people on the right-hand side. They treated the Australian people with contempt, they flew in 125,000 workers from overseas to take our jobs, they sold off asset after asset, and they paid the price—as you people did before them. If I could give you a little word of advice in governing—and I was in a pretty successful government—the best thing you can do is listen to the opposition. When the National Party in Queensland ceased to listen to the Liberal Party and tried to destroy it, from that moment forward we were doomed as a political force in that state. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, proceed. But we will do our best to ensure that the people of Australia know what you are doing—you are trying to muzzle your backbench and you are trying to muzzle the people on this side of the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the amendments be agreed to. I just have a little bit of advice for the member for Kennedy: could he please desist from referring to the chair as 'you', as he did in his address a moment ago in a reflection on the chair.

**Mr Katter interjecting—**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Kennedy does not have the call. He has had the call. The question is that the amendments be agreed to. I call the Leader of the House.