



Speech by

Rachel Nolan

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Hansard Wednesday, 19 May 2004

STANDING ORDER 70(II)

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (5.47 p.m.): I, too, rise to oppose the silly motion put to us by the Leader of the Opposition. So far in the argument from the member for Callide we have heard that this notion of relevance is a fundamental tenement of democracy. I used to live in a tenement. I lived in Scotland.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. If the member is going to quote what I said, I ask that she do so accurately. I said 'accountability in this parliament'.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Ms NOLAN: I accept that point of order. The member for Callide acknowledges he said that accountability is an absolutely fundamental tenement of democracy. Is that right? I lived in a lovely tenement in a beautiful cobbled street. In Europe 'tenement' is the word for a block of flats. In fact, I was a tenant of the tenement. Indeed, it is a fundamental tenet that tenants live in tenements. I think what the member was trying to say—and if we could put the words in his mouth—was that accountability is a fundamental tenet of democracy. Having clarified that issue, perhaps we could move on.

The other problem with the opposition's motion is that it has moved to change standing order 72. Standing order 72, if I might just share it with the House, says—

If a Motion or Amendment is irregular, or out of order, no Question shall be proposed thereupon by Mr Speaker.

That is what the Leader of the Opposition said this morning. I imagine that we are talking about standing order 72 about irregular or out of order questions.

Mr Springborg: No.

Ms NOLAN: Standing order 72 was how I heard it this morning. Standing order 72 was how the Hansard reporter heard it and wrote it down, and they do not tend to make these kinds of mistakes. Given that I am a warm, generous, compassionate soul, perhaps we could apply what they call in academic circles the rule of charitable interpretation and we could charitably assume that the Leader of the Opposition meant standing order 70 (ii), which states—

An Answer shall be relevant to the Question.

Just to clarify these points, we are not talking about a fundamental 'tenement' of democracy being about an irregular motion or amendment; we are talking about a fundamental tenet of democracy—that is, that an answer shall be relevant to the question. Isn't it good to have cleared that up?

The amendment is, at best, redundant. Among other things, though, it is also dreadfully tautological. Listen to this, Mr Speaker. The motion says that the standing order be amended to say—

... Members must directly relate to and be directly relevant to ...

Furthermore, as well as directly relating to, we are going to be directly relevant. I think the opposition could benefit from some lines about the definition of 'tautology', because it has just said the same thing twice in the same sentence. If what it is getting at is that it wants a succinct answer in a short space of time,

then I do not imagine that it wants to say the same thing over and over and over again. How silly would that be! So let us just charitably interpret what it is saying and then let us deal with it.

This is an embarrassing effort at a media stunt coming from an opposition who knows nothing about relevance—who cannot even write a relevant sentence—and from a party who knows nothing about accountability. Labor governments introduced freedom of information. We introduced questions on notice. We introduced e-petitions, and we introduced a three-minute time limit for answers to questions. Members opposite were so relevant and so accountable that when they were in government we had the Connolly-Ryan inquiry into the Carruthers inquiry. This motion tonight is bizarre in that it is the opposition talking about relevance and accountability.