



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

SPEECH

Thursday, 23 June 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Mr SIDEBOTTOM

Source House
Proof Yes
Responder
Question No.

(Braddon) (NaN.NaN pm)

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (17:01): The carping that we have heard today is, indeed, what we have heard for the last 12 months from an opposition who know nothing but opposition. I think that is the key to understanding their psyche: they are in opposition. They do not like being in opposition. They have not accepted the result from the Australian people at the last election. They do not like it. They cannot grow up and move on. And they have a leader who can offer little example except in negativity. There is no creativity in the Leader of the Opposition except in the creation of slogans, except in the creation of more negativity and except in the creation of stunts, and even those stunts do not work.

This week there was a classic example of a stunt, starting off with a great deal of fanfare. He could not even bring it into this House at the right time because he did not even know when the parliament was sitting. Of course, he had the flagship of the opposition, the *Australian* newspaper, beating this stuff up, and he could not even bring it into this House as legislation. Then it got shot down in flames in the other house, and we did not hear any more about the so-called plebiscite in this place. The week started off with the raging headlines about a plebiscite: 'Take the Australian people to a plebiscite so they can make their decision.' What happened to it? It died an undignified death in here—they could not even get it in the place—and in the Senate it got what it deserved; that is, a contemptuous response. That is the sum total of the opposition this week—that and the constant carping that we have heard from this mob for 12 months.

In fact, if you take the time to look at the facts and look at the record of this government over the last 12 months and before, it is a record of substance. It is a constructive, successful and progressive record. What has it achieved? Contrary to what those on the other side would have had—and contrary to their flagship, the *Australian* newspaper, and other News Ltd paraphernalia—what we have is a strong economy, a sustainable environment and an ongoing fair society. And, with all that, we are delivering our election commitments. As I said, we have been constructive, we have been progressive and we have been successful. Those on the other side are about slogans, negativity and stunts.

If you went out to the streets and asked, 'What are the major policies of the opposition?' the only policies you would ever hear about are no, no, no. There is no body of policy. There is no platform of policy except carping, negativity—no—and stunts, and when they do the stunts they do not work. So what do the opposition stand for? I think the Australian people would tell you, 'They might stand for bringing back Work Choices.' When you ask people out there, 'What is their policy for dealing with climate change?' they do not have a clue, except that some, who might have been doing some reading—you would not want to read the *Australian* newspaper to find this out because they do not even analyse it—might say, 'I think they want to subsidise polluters with taxpayers' money and let the taxpayer pay for those polluters.' They might say that, but apart from that they know nothing about this opposition except the negativity and the carping. I have had the pleasure of looking through our record over the last few years and what a terrific record it is. We have much to be proud of. First and foremost—and you would never believe it if you listen to those on the other side—this country, along with the rest of the world, went through a financial global crisis and this country came through relatively better—indeed, comparatively better—than just about every other economy. Is that recognised on the other side? No.

Government members interjecting—

Mr SIDEBOTTOM: Indeed, as my colleagues say, not only that, it was slept through by the Leader of the Opposition. I might not be the sharpest tool in the shed, and I might not have the most bouffant hair in the parliament, but I have more interest in economics than the Leader of the Opposition. I can tell you that much.

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop: He has a degree in it.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM: Oh, he has a degree in it.

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop: Have you?

Mr SIDEBOTTOM: No, no, I do not have a degree in economics. I have three others, thanks very much. I have enough on my plate. The Leader of the Opposition does not like economics and gets so bored by economics that he stays asleep while we are going through the legislation to do something about it. Then he gets his PR merchants opposite to carp away there.

I can see them standing up in a minute and doing their contribution. I do not think so.

Let us have a look at our record. First and foremost, we have had strong economic management by acting decisively to keep us out of the recession. They can laugh all they like on the other side. If we had followed their views, we would have been deep in recession. Without the government's decisive action to keep our economy strong, around 200,000 jobs would have been lost.

Some opposite are supposed to be responsible for the financial policies of the opposition with an \$11 billion or \$12 billion black hole in your figures. When you went to present the figures in front of the media, we had the advisers on the other side saying to those opposite, 'Slit, slit, cut.' We do not know what we are talking about here. You could not even account for your own budget figures. Can you believe that those opposite would have the gall to attack us on economic credibility? That is unbelievable stuff. One of them is in the House now and still confused.

We will return to surplus. When we presented the budget this year, did the Leader of the Opposition present a budget? No. Was there a budget reply? No. Was there an alternative to the budget? No. Because they do not know how to construct a constructive budget. The member opposite, the member for Goldstein, is one of those with a record of economic incompetence himself, but he does not want to know about it. Just go and read the papers about your debacle during the election and your figures—an \$11 billion black hole, cobber. Go and have a look. Do you know what it means? Of course you do not. You have no idea.

Not only that but we have supported jobs, with unemployment in Australia among the lowest in the world, with almost 750,000 more Australians in work since we came into office in November 2007, and real wage increases have occurred for that work. That is a good record in very difficult times. We have helped those that needed the help the most. We helped pensioners. We drove an increase of around \$115 a fortnight for single pensioners and around \$97 a fortnight for pensioner couples combined.

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop: Only after we shamed you into it.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM: You can get your pension a little bit later. You just wait. I think it was the first one in 100 years. You had 13 years to do something about pensioners except talk about yourself and pensioners. You did nothing. Well, we did something and it is indexed, so we have got the record. We did it, we constructively did it; you did nothing. What we did

do was get rid of your nasty, mean, miserable Work Choices.

A government member: Which they want to bring back.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM: And you want to bring it back because you are mean, you are nasty and miserable. *(Time expired)*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): I remind the member for Braddon in future to address his remarks through the chair, not at the chair.

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