ELECTORAL STATEMENT BY THE HON. MALCOLM FRASER, M.P., MEMBER FOR WAGNON - SUNDAY, 18 NOVEMBER

Last Wednesday I was expelled from the Parliament for 24 hours for the first time in nearly 20 years membership. I would be happy to send a record of the Hansard to any person who is interested in looking at what happened.

Basically the Government is trying to push through much too much legislation in too little time. This means there is no room for adequate debate. The Government uses what is called the guillotine which is a vicious process which indicates the complete contempt for Parliament this Government has, and which puts an arbitrary and very short time limit on debate for important Bills. We have had innumerable examples of significant measures which have been only partly debated. They get forced through the House of Representatives through weight of numbers with most of the clauses of the Bills going quite undebated and unexamined.

The Government has tried to adopt this same technique with three Constitutional Bills which would result in a referendum being held at the same time as the Senate election next year.

One Bill will provide for the House of Representatives and the Senate to be elected at the same time. This basically means a shortening of the term of office of all Senators. It would also weaken the independence of the Senate. I am opposed to that. It is also quite unnecessary because the Government already has the power to have simultaneous elections.

The second Bill is designed to change the constitutional basis for electoral boundaries. The Government is seeking to do two things. It wants to count the number of people in an electorate and it claims that it wants the same number of people to be in each electorate. It wants these views
given constitutional force. There is a difference between the number of people in an electorate and the number of electors, because there are unenrolled New Australians or visitors from overseas and obviously there are unenrolled children. The proposal is basically designed to increase the representation in city areas and to reduce the representation in country areas. Electoral legislation was defeated earlier this year which would have taken something between 5 to 8 seats out of the country areas and placed them in the cities. The Government is now trying to achieve the same result by another method. It wants to reduce country representation and I won't have a bar of it.

The third measure is designed to give the Government power to raise loans on behalf of Local Government and to make grants direct to Local Government rather than through the States as the Commonwealth is now empowered to do. While I believe Local Government needs greater support, I also believe this is the wrong way to do it. Firstly, there is no guarantee that more loan money would be available as a result of this change - the loan market is pretty fully utilised at the moment. Secondly, we have seen the new regional proposals the Government is seeking to implement. It wants to take over Local Government and by-pass the States. Additional funds ought to be provided to Local Government, but it ought to be done in cooperation with and through the States.

This means that the Opposition is opposing all three measures. We are being given a minimum of time to express our view.

When the time came for the vote on the first measure the Speaker re-committed the question, and I was seeking to raise a point of order with the Speaker. I said that the question had been put and carried on the voices and the Clerk read the Bill for the third time. That should have ended that particular Bill, but in taking a point or order I said that the Opposition was trying to find out on what authority the Speaker put the question the second time. I suggested that there was no such authority and I also said that as the Bill was not carried by an absolute majority in the first instance, it had lapsed as far as the constitutional amendment was concerned. While I was putting this point of
order the Speaker had a conversation with one of the Clerks. There was some interchange between myself and the Speaker, and I believe that the point of order I was wanting to take had not been fully put and had not been answered. I stressed the point and as a result the Speaker started the process which resulted in my being expelled from the House for 24 hours.

I emphasise that I was seeking an explanation of a certain course of action through a point of order. The Speaker gave me an opportunity to withdraw my remarks and as Hansard records I said:

"Mr. Speaker, I would have been very pleased to withdraw if the Opposition had been given the reason for the second committal of the third reading of the Bill. It has not been given the reason for that; so, with the greatest respect, I regret that I cannot withdraw my remarks."

I want to emphasise that none of this would have occurred if the Government had allowed proper time for the debate of these very important measures and if the Leader of the House had not brought down a quite unnecessary guillotine.

The Minister for Labour, Mr. Cameron, has introduced some proposals concerning trade training which the Opposition would strongly support.

The Minister first made the announcement concerning trade training some time ago. Apparently when he did so he didn't have Government support for the measure. That has now been achieved.

I will continue to press Mr. Cameron to have these trade union training proposals widened so that industrial officers can get their training at least in part in the same place as trade union officials. We need to break down barriers which may exist between management and labour. If industrial officers and trade union officials are in part at least educated in the same place it will go some way to achieve this. I have written to Mr. Cameron on this matter.
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**Author/s:**
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**Title:**
Labor Government, expulsion from Parliament

**Date:**
18 November 1973

**Persistent Link:**
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/40606

**File Description:**
Labor Government, expulsion from Parliament

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