



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH

Hansard 17 September 1998

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL
APPROPRIATION BILL**

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—ONP) (Deputy Leader of the One Nation Party) (2.47 p.m.): The Budget papers hold very little for the people of Barambah. The Labor Government has shown its contempt for those in the rural sector. Mr Speaker, as you are aware, I am here to represent the electorate of Barambah. The word "Barambah" is Aboriginal for wind, or place where the water ripples. Barambah when spoken sounds like music and the place it brings to my mind is my kind of heaven.

The people of Barambah are ordinary, honest, hardworking people. I feel their joys; I share their pain; I feel their frustration. My presence in this House is the culmination of their frustration. The people of Barambah are aware that I am not a polished politician. That is perhaps another reason I am here. They do not expect miracles. Being fair people, they expect me to take a little time to learn. I am their messenger. The message they send to this House is, "We, the people, have had enough."

The people of Barambah are a fair people, as are most Australians. We are known for giving people a fair go. But the people of Barambah ask the question: how long is a fair go? At every election we are asked to believe the promises that shower us with money, only to find that we hold peanuts afterwards. Time after time we are asked to give the established parties another go, and time after time we ask the same question: they could not possibly do the dirty on us again, could they? History shows us that, yes, they could and, yes, they would. For years we have been told by both State and Federal Governments that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Quite frankly, almost a quarter of Queensland's population cannot see the tunnel, let alone the light. That is why 11 One Nation members are sitting in this Chamber.

It was my desire not to speak in this House until I had opened up communications with all the people and communities of the Barambah electorate. We have a community consisting of Australians of all backgrounds. We endeavour to live together in an egalitarian way. There are exceptions, but the majority care, respect and are willing to work in their community's best interest. I continually hear the words "multicultural communities". I prefer the word "egalitarian". Barambah, I am proud to say, is working towards being an egalitarian community. To be an egalitarian community, it is necessary to communicate, for communication brings understanding. Understanding breeds tolerance. Without tolerance there is segregation. With segregation comes racism.

I find it abhorrent that people are judged on their colour, race, religious or political beliefs. Time and time again, history has shown that persecution has taken place based on these things. It is only right that each and every one of us condemn those who would seek to persecute minority groups because of race, colour, religious or political beliefs.

One Nation falls into the category of a minority group. Thousands of members had their names published and were opened up for and subjected to persecution for their beliefs by, of all people, some misguided members of a community who should have understood and respected the rights of others. I do not rate a man by his birth, his social position or his income. Quite often, the greater the income, the higher the position, the more arrogance displayed and the less I find to respect. A man's heart is his measure.

Ten years ago, the people of Kingaroy took me to their hearts and, more recently, so did the people in the other areas of Barambah. I would like to introduce to this House all the wonderful people of Barambah. However, as that is not possible at this time I will introduce only three. Marg Chapple is a courageous lady whom I have known but a short time. At this very minute, death is tightening its grip on her and I can only pray that she can know that her name will be recorded forever in Hansard. Her loyalty, her patriotism, her courage and her belief in her convictions is an example to all who know her. I first met Marg when I received a call from her daughter who asked if I could spare five minutes to visit her dying mother. On arriving at Marg's home, I found a woman wasted by the insidious cancer that pervades her body, but she was refusing to succumb to its final demand. Her motivation for living was her belief that her vote was too important not to be cast. Marg believed that she was fighting not for her own future but for that of her grandchildren who would have to survive in this country when she no longer has concerns.

The egalitarian spirit that exists in Barambah is in the mother who came to me, speaking in faltering English of the years she endured and the scars she bears on her back, which were inflicted upon her under a foreign dictatorship. She came to Australia and embraced our way of life because she recognises the true value of freedom—a freedom that she lost once and is terrified that she may lose again.

The third person I would like to mention is a gentleman by the name of Tom. Tom is an Aboriginal, and he has been by my side since the day of preselection. He came to me and offered to protect me and my family from those who would try to take away my rights and freedoms. Tom's motivation is his belief that, despite the media barrage to the contrary, One Nation has only the sincere desire to help his people stand on their own two feet and regain their pride and dignity.

These are three of the people in Barambah. They are not exceptional; they are the norm. They have courage and they are an inspiration. These people have varying backgrounds and origins. These people are Australians and they are prouder to be Australian than many other Australians who were born here. These are the people whom I am here to represent. These are the people to whom I have a responsibility. These are people with heart.

Barambah itself has a big heart but its life is slowly being squeezed from it. Whilst meeting and talking with the people of Barambah, three phrases continually come to the fore: "They don't see", "They don't hear", and "They don't care". The people who spoke those words were reflecting the feeling of frustration that rural Queenslanders have when referring to politicians. Politicians do not see the death of communities when services are gutted, they do not hear the final closing of the door on another small business, they do not hear the fall of the auctioneer's hammer on yet another forced sale, and they do not hear the shot that kills unsaleable stock.

I have heard the shots that kill unsaleable stock—stock that cannot be given away. I have seen the devastated families when banks foreclose on not only one lifetime's work but on two, three or more generations of effort. I have seen the consequences borne by the people of decisions made in Parliaments, and I have helped pick up the pieces. I have heard other members speak of unemployment rates in their electorates of 10% and 12%. I agree that those figures are horrific. However, the unemployment rate of the Wide Bay/Burnett area, where Barambah is situated, is up around 21.2%. That is a statistic of which any Government should be truly ashamed and a situation that a concerned Government would be addressing. We have abattoirs in Murgon, Kilcoy and Kingaroy. In excess of 1,600 workers live day to day with uncertainty as to whether or not, at the end of the day, they will be another statistic. Workers in the pork industry, the logging industry, the dairy industry and the tourism industry all bear the brunt of the decisions made by both State and Federal Governments. The lack of visible concern for rural Queensland by this Government is a frightening prospect for all who live beyond the coastal fringe. It horrified me to hear so little in the Governor's Speech in relation to small business and the rural sector when we all know, and the Government admits, that these are two of the biggest job-creation areas.

My husband Tony and I are familiar with the trials of operating small businesses. The success of business in Barambah is directly related to the viability of the rural sector. The Premier has continually stated a target of 5% unemployment. With that in mind, I ask the Premier to support and push the Tarong Power Station expansion and the SUDAW consortium project. The Surat Basin resource runs to 2.65 billion tonnes in 35 deposits with only one currently being mined. It is prime coking coal. The coal export potential is estimated at 20 million tonnes. What is more, the coal is ours: a guaranteed supply, on Australian soil, in Australian hands. I have heard other members speak in favour of this project. We are all talking jobs, job security and the provision of infrastructure and water. That really boils down to giving life to areas and towns that are in desperate need. Job creation in the electorates that would benefit from these projects would go a long way towards helping the Premier meet his pre-election promise. The promises given prior to the election are the Government's responsibility.

I would like to speak about responsibility. Where does it start and where does it end? I believe responsibility starts with oneself and it never ends. With regard to oneself, responsibility starts at birth,

albeit responsibility born of instinct. Nonetheless, it is still our responsibility to make sure that our demands for food, warmth and care are met by those responsible for our existence. As our lives unfold, we are confronted with difficult situations and at times we will make mistakes. Mistakes are a part of learning and it is necessary to take responsibility for our mistakes.

As the member for Barambah, I realise that my responsibility is to represent all the people of my electorate—not only those who voted for me or the party, but every man, woman and child who resides within the boundaries of the Barambah electorate. I also believe that I have a responsibility to everyone who resides in the State of Queensland. To do that, I feel I must now be apolitical in this place—not only in the electorate but also in this House.

I have a major difficulty accepting the view espoused by the party system that it is necessary for all members to vote as a bloc. The 89 members of this House come from varied electorates. All members were elected to come together, to work collectively, for the betterment of Queensland. I find it difficult to believe that the members of the Labor Party agree unanimously on all things and that their 44 electorates always agree. I also find it difficult to believe the same of the coalition. I have to be honest and say that I do not agree with anyone, and not even my husband, more than 50% of the time. Therefore, I wonder how the other members of this House justify their actions with their consciences and the views of their electorates.

My responsibilities are to the people of Barambah, to the people of Queensland and to One Nation. I will represent the people of Barambah and endeavour to obtain for them the basic desires of any community. The people of Barambah want jobs, safe streets to walk down, security in their homes and the right to protect themselves and their families. The gun issue is and will always remain a major thorn in the sides of many. How long is it since people could walk down the street at night, or leave their cars unlocked, or leave their doors open on hot sticky nights? When did we pass a law that says that it is all right to take something because it is not under lock and key? Why are decent people locked away in their homes? Why is everyone else responsible for other people's actions? When did passing the buck become mandatory? When crimes are committed, we hear constantly the excuses, "It's not their fault; they had a terrible childhood", "His parents are divorced", and many others. These excuses are pretty poor reasons for people to go out and steal, destroy or maim.

Excuses are not reason enough for someone to put a child through a lifetime of trauma just because something did not go his or her own way. It is not reason enough to divest a man of his lifetime's earnings or to destroy a man's life through aggression and unreason. What a selfish attitude. How self-centred and sickening. We all know right from wrong and we must start to take responsibility for the terrible things that are done. We must start protecting the innocent.

Too many times we see the inequities of the law. Government and Corrective Services personnel suffer triple jeopardy in performing their duties. It is time to allow them to have the power to do the job that we employ them to do. The law must be applied, justice must be done and the victims of crime must be defended.

Recently I attended the inaugural graduation of the Proactive Support Group. I was impressed by the dedication and precision of the training that the professional personnel displayed. Knowing this expertise is available to attend to disturbances and riots in our prisons should be a comfort for residents of areas with established prisons and those where prisons are proposed. Privatisation and corporatisation have caused understaffing in our prisons. Profit has been put before security—profits that often go to foreign-owned corporations.

One of the greatest responsibilities of all is the seeking of the truth. As a child I was told to question all that I hear and half of what I see. Those who print the spoken word and those who broadcast the news have the greatest responsibility of all: to convey the truth, not their interpretation of the truth. It must be remembered that it takes more than saying it is so to make it so. The media has been judged and found wanting by the Barambah community. Truth has become the sacrificial lamb to the headline.

When we speak of responsibility I think of the saying, "A penny earned is a penny saved", which shows how old I am. The Government handout has taken away people's responsibilities to each other and to their communities. Nowadays, it is not even necessary to get out of bed to obtain money. It is too easy. Nothing in life should be so easily attainable that it lacks value. Work for the dole has recently been brought into play, but in the Barambah electorate one community has insisted that those who receive the dole work for it. The Aboriginal community of Cherbourg has been operating work for the dole since 1993. Until 12 years ago, Cherbourg was still an Aboriginal reserve. Twelve years ago, the boom gate was lifted and the town became self-governing. Like all people, they have made mistakes, but they have also achieved. It is through recognition of achievements that individuals and communities learn to take responsibility.

What of the children—the generations to come? What are our responsibilities to them? Are they the provision of food, shelter, education, a secure future in the work force? That is not a lot to ask, is it?

What do we give our children? We give them a diet of drugs that leads to death and a recycled clothing bin for a bed. We protect the paedophiles who prey upon their innocence and teach them to fill in dole forms before they leave school. How shameful that that has become so accepted that life on the dole queue is an acceptable career option. Does the proposed establishment of boutique brothels represent another acceptable career option for our children?

I would like our schools to teach the meaning of the Constitution and the rights that we have as Australians and Queenslanders. I would like our youth to be taught responsibility. When I hear a young person say, "I'm bored, what can I do?", my answer is, "Go home, wash the windows, mow the lawn, learn to cook, read a book, assist the poor, do something for someone else. Take charge of your own life and become responsible." Our communities owe us absolutely nothing. Our country owes us nothing. The world does not owe us a living. We owe our communities, our country and the world our time, our energy and our talents to ensure that no-one will have to experience war, poverty, sickness or loneliness. All people must learn once again to take responsibility for their own lives and actions. We must all pay the piper.

I take my responsibilities seriously. I will not make decisions to change the status quo if I am not fully cognisant of the full ramifications of that change. I stand here today to take my share of the burden of responsibility for the state of the economy, the state of lawlessness and the perversions that are allowed to exist in our communities. No Governments seem prepared to say, "I bear some responsibility for the mess and despair that pervades the very core of society." I stand here today to take responsibility because, until now, I did not care enough to say "enough is enough".

The people of Barambah did not elect me to denigrate, humiliate, scorn or condemn fellow members of this House. They did not elect me to dismiss out of hand the ideas of other members simply because they belong to a different party. They elected me to work for the betterment of themselves and Queensland. When all is said and done, perhaps there is too much said and not enough done for the people we are here to represent. I have heard many good words spoken in this place, but they have been lost amongst the waffle. My words are for those with the will to listen, the ears to hear, and the desire and commitment to answer the call of the people to work for all Queenslanders.

I rose today to claim this seat for Barambah. "Barambah" is Aboriginal for wind. The word "Barambah" sounds like music and the country that comes to mind is my idea of heaven.
