



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

19th September 2002

Government and Opposition stifle vote on Iraq motion – Why?

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor questioned the sincerity of the Government and the Opposition after they joined to stifle a vote on an amendment to a motion on the Iraq crisis.

Mr Windsor supported his fellow country Independent, Peter Andren's (Calare NSW) amendment which read "while the House commends the Government for its strong condemnation of terrorists and their activities and its encouragement of Iraq's compliance with United Nations resolutions, the House believes that Australian Defence Forces should not be involved in any action in Iraq that is not carried out under a United Nations' Resolution"

"I seconded the amendment made by the member for Calare, Mr Andren. There are some very important aspects of this debate that were inherent in his amendment.

I think the Australian people are looking for an indication from the parliament as to the processes that will be used in relation to any involvement in the Iraqi war, if in fact that does take place.

One of the disappointing parts of this debate has been that we have all been allowed to voice our opinions but the Australian public are not going to get an indication as to how the parliament is going to deal with this situation if we do not establish some sort of process.

I encourage other members in the parliament to look seriously at what the member for Calare is attempting to do in his amendment. It does display or give the parliament the opportunity—it may be one of the few opportunities we have—to say to the general public that these are the sorts of processes that we as a parliament—not just the government—believe should be adhered to in this process," Mr Windsor told the Parliament.

Mr Windsor was critical of both the Government and the Opposition in the use of this tactic.

"Both the Government and the Opposition had Members expressing concerns encapsulated in Mr Andren's Amendment.

This tactic to adjourn the debate only hinders the expression of the Parliament's view to the people of Australia who are very concerned about the possible outcomes of the Iraqi situation.

It is interesting that only in the last session the Government and Opposition Members were allowed a 'conscience vote' on a moral issue and now despite many Members making statements akin to Mr Andren's Amendment we see the 'NO conscience vote' sign go up and no expression by the Parliament as to its position on the possibility of being involved in a war," Mr Windsor said.

Further information from Tony Windsor - Mob 0427 66 8868 or 02 6761 3080

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS: Foreign Affairs: Iraq

[Mr WINDSOR](#)—Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will speak briefly to the debate in relation to the Iraqi situation. At the outset, I would say that I seconded the amendment made by the member for Calare, Mr Andren. There are some very important aspects of this debate that are inherent in his amendment. I think the Australian people are looking for an indication from the parliament as to the processes that will be used in relation to any involvement in the Iraqi war, if in fact that does take place. One of the disappointing parts of this debate has been that we have all been allowed to voice our opinions but the Australian public are not going to get an indication as to how the parliament is going to deal with this situation if we do not establish some sort of process. I encourage other members in the parliament to look seriously at what the member for Calare is attempting to do in his amendment. It does display or give the parliament the opportunity—it may be one of the few opportunities we have—to say to the general public that these are the sorts of processes that we as a parliament—not just the government—believe should be adhered to in this process.

Like most of us, our electorates are very concerned about the possibility of war. Any war is something that should be avoided at all cost. Most people would rather see a diplomatic end to this incident. Hopefully, as a result of the events of the last few days in relation to the communications with the United Nations from Iraq, there may be some movement there. I take on board some of the cautionary remarks that the Prime Minister in particular has made, and the foreign minister. Saddam Hussein is a fairly evil creature that has grovelled his way up from under a rock before in relation to diplomatic efforts to come to grips with some of the problems within his country. Having said that, I think we have to bide our time, for a short time at least, to try to ascertain whether he is serious about letting the weapons inspectors go in and establish the appropriate protocols. We at least have to allow those processes to take place.

I have a range of letters here from my electorate. In my rush, I have not prepared them to present properly to the parliament. The view being expressed is that, if there is to be any engagement by Australia in another Middle Eastern war, it should be done only under the auspices of the United Nations. There is very real concern that Australia might just rush off with America in some form of pre-emptive strike. That view is expressed by the polls right across Australia. The inference I am getting from the parliamentary debate is that diplomatic processes through the United Nations will hopefully—this definitely will be a test for the United Nations in terms of their resolve and whether people are serious about reining in some of the renegade nations. If the United Nations gets serious and applies the appropriate pressures, we may see a diplomatic ending to this rather than a military ending.

One of the other issues I would raise is in relation to this madman in Iraq. As a humble backbencher and someone who has not been engaged in international law, it always puzzles me how, if the United States, in this case, or other nations really wanted to remove one person from the face of the earth, with the technology we now have—we saw a great display of that recently when there was an arrest in Pakistan of one of the terrorists—it should not require an invasion force from any nation to take out one particular individual. I am not suggesting that that does take place, but I happen to have a 20-year-old son. I have heard a number of members of parliament say that they would not like to send their children to the Middle East. I noted that one member of parliament's oldest child is 13. I was very pleased to hear that 13-year-old children are not going to be sent to some sort of combative effort.

I know we have voluntary forces but a war at this particular time could move into a much larger field of engagement and there could be processes where we call upon others to volunteer. We have in the past required our young people to fight for this nation. So we have to make sure that all other

avenues are investigated first, that we go through the appropriate channels with the United Nations, that we look at the absolute downside of some sort of pre-emptive strike and what that could do in relation to the other Arab nations and in relation to various religions across the world, and the impact that that could have on our way of life in Australia.

In conclusion, I make a plea to other members in the House that they look seriously at the amendment being presented by the member for Calare. I think the Australian public are looking for some indication from this parliament as to the way in which the parliament would prefer the government to conduct the processes of negotiation concerning this particular conflict, rather than just having a report coming out of this parliament—that we have all stood up at some time or other and had a little bit of a gabfest—that has given very little direction to the Prime Minister or the government of the day.