



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Media Release

28 October 2008

Nats still don't get it!

Time of opportunity not irrelevance

Media reports that some in the Nationals argue that “the voice of farmers and regional people was becoming irrelevant at the ballot box” is just an excuse to go down the merger path with the Liberals rather than stand and fight for country people according to the Independent Member for New England Tony Windsor.

Mr Windsor is not surprised by the comment attributed to the former Nationals Leader John Anderson who was given the task of reviewing the Nationals performance at the last election and looking at options for the Party's future.

He points to comments of a Party spokesman (not even someone prepared to be directly quoted) saying that it was realised by those senior figures at the meeting that the party “can't go on” as it is – losing seats federally despite a long and proud history.

“With comments like these, it appears that the Nationals have finally run the white flag up. It is an admission of defeat but no one wants to actually say the words.

“It's a sign that there is no life left in the old dog and that the Nationals aren't capable of or even prepared to try to run the ball up on behalf of country people.

“Rather than throwing in the towel, the Nationals should realise that there has not been an Australian Parliament elected in which country representatives have not held the balance of power but country people have not had the vehicle to unite behind to drive their needs because the Nationals have been rusted onto the Liberals and not been able to deal with the other side to deliver real outcomes for country people.

“This is a unique time in our political history where both city based parties – the Libs and Labor – are essentially identical so there is a great opportunity for country people to use their vote to advantage.

“With the current attitude of the Nationals however, is it any wonder that country people have sought other representatives to argue their case,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor believes that the Nationals could return to their “hay-day” if instead of officially marrying the Liberals, they divorced them completely.

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“The Nationals have become totally Liberalised and in doing so have become the victims of a city based party that determines country policy.

“The Nationals have become the Liberals ‘yes men’ and lost their ability to wield the big stick they once did for fear of being cut off from the Ministerial trough.

“The trappings of office have usurped the needs of the people who put them there – country people – and quite frankly, country people have become jack of them not just in failing to deliver but for not even being prepared to go into bat for them – to die in the trenches over issues that are important to them,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor believes that the internal review undertaken by John Anderson will simply recommend a rollover and that the Nationals should merge with the Libs.

“I’ll bet there was no canvassing of people who didn’t vote Nationals to ask them why they didn’t, or if they were canvassed, their views will have been discarded as irrelevant.

“Perhaps someone should just have given John Anderson a mirror to identify the Nationals problem as he and his fellow former leaders from Charles Blunt on have overseen the capitulation of the Nationals to being purely a country branch of the Liberals.

“The Nationals can look for the truth of their current situation and blame everyone else from the Independents to the Liberals to the Labor Party and the Greens but they really only have themselves to blame.

“There are none so blind as those who will not see,” Mr Windsor said.