



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**



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**THE SENATE**

**APPROPRIATION (NATION BUILDING  
AND JOBS) BILL (NO. 1) 2008-2009**

**APPROPRIATION (NATION BUILDING  
AND JOBS) BILL (NO. 2) 2008-2009**

**HOUSEHOLD STIMULUS  
PACKAGE BILL 2009**

**TAX BONUS FOR WORKING  
AUSTRALIANS BILL 2009**

**TAX BONUS FOR WORKING  
AUSTRALIANS (CONSEQUENTIAL  
AMENDMENTS) BILL 2009**

**COMMONWEALTH INSCRIBED  
STOCK AMENDMENT BILL 2009**

**In Committee**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 11 February 2009**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Polley, Sen Helen

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**Senator POLLEY** (Tasmania) (12.35 pm)—I would like to continue commenting on the Appropriation (Nation Building and Jobs) Bill (No. 1) 2008-2009 and related bills. On the contribution made by the opposition, I think I can summarise why they are opposed to these bills. I will quote from the *Canberra Times* of Monday, 9 February—which was a unique day for this country. ACT Senator Gary Humphries, when explaining his stance on ABC local radio, said, ‘We’—meaning the opposition—‘would never support in opposition anything we had not proposed in government.’ For the people of Australia listening today, that is a pretty succinct explanation of why they are opposing this. I cannot reiterate more strongly that these are unprecedented times. We have heard from the opposition during this debate how \$42 billion is an unprecedented amount of expenditure. Yes, it is. That is because the Rudd Labor government has made the decision to act decisively and to act now in the interests of the Australian economy, Australian workers and our families.

I would like to pick up from where I left off in my earlier contribution. The Howard government, which for 1½ years held the reins of the Treasury offices, did not invest in infrastructure or training. That helped lead to the situation whereby the mining industry—which they lived off for a long period of time—is already having an impact. I would have thought the former speaker, Senator Cormann, would know very well what is happening within the mining industry in Western Australia, where people are already losing their jobs.

My son-in-law manages a laboratory which is beholden for its business to a large company in the mining industry which operates not only in this country but globally, in other countries. They are already having to lay people off. The global financial crisis has already impacted and will continue to have an impact on this country. We are not saying that this is going to save all those jobs but we are saying that this will underpin up to 90,000 jobs, to keep them here.

As a Tasmanian senator, I know that you, Temporary Chairman Carol Brown, would share my concerns for what is ahead for our local industries—the Atlantic salmon, abalone and crayfish industries, the tourism and forestry industries. Because of the global financial crisis, the proposed pulp mill to be developed in

Northern Tasmania is obviously not finding it easy to attract finance.

Those few comments help to underpin the essential nature of these bills and the fact that we have to act now. We are showing leadership and we have to be decisive. There are two important choices facing the leadership of Australia: either to take a steadfast and determined approach to seek to reduce the impact of this global recession on Australians or to sit on the sidelines and do nothing while we get sucked down with the rest of the global economies.

There was mention in the debate this morning on numerous occasions, which astounded me, that the shadow Treasurer and the opposition would be suggesting—as they have in the past—that we should sit back, close our eyes and hope it all goes away. Senator Sherry outlined the concerns that the Australian people would have with the sort of attitude that was clearly outlined by the shadow Treasurer. Once again, the opposition is sceptical not only about climate change but also about the global recession and its impact on the Australian community.

From the contributions made this morning, it is very clear that those opposite have buried their heads in the sand. They want to sit on the fence. They want to whinge. They want to oppose the job-saving measures because they believe that in the short term that would suit their political best interests. The Australian people should never be underestimated. While we are debating these issues and the opposition are taking the stance of opposing these bills, they are showing the Australian people once again their true colours.

I take offence at the comment that Labor senators have not made a contribution. During the committee hearings last Thursday, Friday and Monday, we were there listening to what the Treasury and Finance and Deregulation experts were telling us. I took great interest in the questions from the Independents and the Greens. At times some good questions were coming from the opposition, which is their job, but the political stance of grabbing headlines about pink batts and boom gates astounds me. A senator from Queensland condemned the government for investing in boom gates in his state of Queensland, in outback Australia. For somebody who espouses that he is a regional person who understands the people on the land, I

would have thought he would support those safety measures. I found that quite offensive during the committee. Everyone is entitled to their own views and Australian families will make their decision about what is important to them. My position is very clearly that I am here supporting the Rudd government because I believe in these measures. We have to act now.

During the debate today it has been enlightening to hear about things in relation to insulation of our homes. Some of the contribution by Senator Milne this morning was very valuable and pertinent to Tasmania. The opposition attacked her claims about pelmets and where the timber was coming from. Very seldom on issues to do with forestry would I concur with Senator Milne but on this occasion I can see real benefits in providing opportunities to train people. When she was talking about community groups being involved in small projects or in raising money, I thought immediately of the Scottsdale men's shed in north-east Tasmania and the beneficial things they do within the community. There is a fantastic opportunity not only to help their local communities but also to inject some badly needed funds into that organisation.

This set of bills has demonstrated once again not only to those in the chamber but also to those in the community and those who are listening to the debate that the opposition are clearly out of touch. They have learnt nothing over the last 14 months. Many families in the Australian community are struggling. So the injection of funds from the \$950 that so many families and individuals are going to receive is going to be a welcome contribution. In contributions in this debate and also in the committee hearings, an assertion was made that Australian families—families in rural Australia, in regional Australia and in cities—will put the money they get through poker machines and takeaway stores. I think that is just amazing. Then they tried to bring in the festive season, saying that there was more money spent on alcohol. There are some families where the only little bit of luxury they have available to them is to have a drink and celebrate the festive season. Some of them may visit poker machines but that does not mean they all have gambling problems and to assert—which is the same attitude the opposition had when they were in government—that Australian families do not know how best to utilise their income is a very sad reflection.

As chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration, I recommend very strongly that people read the report on these bills. We need to act decisively and as quickly as possible to pass these bills and have them enacted, to make sure that we spring back to a strong economy.

Progress reported.