



M
e
d
i
a

R
e
l
e
a
s
e

4 March 2003

Government Gags Andren – NO Iraq Vote for Parliament

The Government today showed its hypocrisy and contempt for the democratic process and the Australian peoples' right to have their elected representatives vote on whether Australia goes to war on Iraq, according to Peter Andren, Federal Member for Calare.

“Today I sought to immediately resume the Iraq debate so Parliament could consider my amendment that no Australia troops be involved in Iraq without the unanimous support of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council,” Mr Andren said.

“Rather than let me even explain the reasons for resuming this debate and vote on the amendment, the government moved to gag me. This resulted in a division on whether or not I should be gagged, which was won by the Government with its superior numbers.

“The Opposition, which has acted in concert with the government to remove the embarrassing Iraq debate and my amendment from this week’s parliamentary program, voted against the gag, but is also happy to avoid any substantive parliamentary vote on war with Iraq.

“The Iraq debate has been removed from the parliamentary agenda, hidden way down the list as the 49th most important issue before the House.

“The UK Parliament and US Congress have both allowed their representatives a conscience vote on Iraq, but here both Government and Opposition have agreed to quietly remove the issue from the parliamentary agenda.

“Labor today smugly supported me and my seconder Tony Windsor when both of us were gagged, to give the impression they oppose the Government’s Iraq position.

“However Simon Crean has always left open the option of supporting a coalition of the willing strike against Iraq in the event of a veto vote from any one of the Security Council members. The Opposition knew the two independents didn’t have the numbers to win today’s gag vote and is relieved tonight that the issue appears dead and buried.

“However I will continue to try and force a parliamentary vote on this issue.

“All members must be given the opportunity to properly represent the overwhelming wish of the electorate that Australian forces not be involved in any Iraq conflict without the unambiguous and unanimous support of all five permanent members of the UN Security Council,” Mr Andren said.

For more information: 02 6277 2341 or 0419 612 891.