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19 September 2002

Government Avoids Iraq Vote By Closing Debate

Independent Member for Calare Peter Andren condemned the Government and Opposition for agreeing to adjourn the Iraq debate without considering his amendment that Australian forces be committed only with UN approval.

“Despite indicating on the House’s Daily Program that a vote would be offered on my amendment, the Government closed off the debate*,” Mr Andren said.

“This gave both the Government and Opposition the chance to weasel out of any vote on my amendment.

“Fellow Independent Tony Windsor joined me to oppose the Government tactic, and the Government and Opposition members were forced to sit on one side supporting adjournment of the debate while Tony and I opposed it.

“In effect I believe this was a vote on committing Australian forces to a war in Iraq with or without UN approval.

“The Labor Opposition is fence sitting on this issue, and while many of its members have spoken passionately against any involvement without UN approval, Labor yesterday said nothing of the sort in its Senate motion which left open support for a pre-emptive strike on Iraq without UN endorsement.

“Government Leader of Business Tony Abbott told me today the Prime Minister wanted a united House on this debate. The Government and Labor have manufactured one by voting together this morning, and they’ve endorsed support for unilateral US action.

“The House of Representatives should have been allowed to have a vote on my amendment which reflects the views of the majority of Australians.

“The British Parliament will get such a vote next week, and the Government’s tactics today should be condemned for the charade of democracy they are,” Mr Andren said.

***EDS: SEE Page 2 OF ATTACHED DAILY PROGRAM ORDERS OF THE DAY NO. 2**

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