

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The minister will cease interjecting.

Mrs Irwin—He knows you are right, Simon; he doesn't like it.

Mr CREAN—The minister asks the questions, but he does not like the answers because the minister knows he has been caught up in his own hypocrisy. The point is, if it is valid to excise the islands, why not excise the mainland? And you know, Minister, when you were skewered on this the day after your announcement, you admitted that it could include excising Tasmania. That was a nice little piece of information to all of the residents of Tasmania. You may not think it matters because Tasmania is represented by Labor in every federal seat in the state. You may not think it matters, but it matters to Tasmanians.

Mr Ruddock—You haven't read the legislation.

Mr CREAN—Minister, you say 'Read the legislation'—I have read your words. I have read your lips, Minister; those pursed lips. I read them, and they said, 'If necessary, we'll excise Tasmania.'

Mr Ruddock—I never said that—

Mr CREAN—You say, 'Read the legislation'—

Mr Ruddock—You find where I said that.

Mr CREAN—Oh, he's getting angry now! The pursed lips are getting angry now, are they, Minister?

Mr Ruddock—If you are going to misrepresent it—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The minister will cease interjecting and the Leader of the Opposition will direct his remarks through the chair.

Mr CREAN—The minister has misrepresented himself, but let me say this: if the minister's argument is that the legislation does not allow it at the moment, what is to say they will not bring new legislation in to do it in the future? That is what we are debating today. If in fact the argument is right, Minister, and, as the Prime Minister said, to excise the mainland is ludicrous, why isn't it also ludicrous to excise an island a kilometre off the mainland? That is a 20-minute swim

by an Australian gold medallist; I reckon I could do it in a 30-minute swim.

Mr Lindsay—Be serious!

Mr CREAN—I am being serious. The member for Herbert is the one that is not being serious. The member for Herbert is prepared to surrender islands off his electorate. The member for Herbert is prepared to give up parts of Australia and pretend it is for border protection. You have sold out. You are selling out Australia, and you are not protecting it. The government's idea of excision diminishes Australia. It purports to protect our borders, but it puts the real borders of Australia at risk. Excising islands from Australian sovereignty is just the start of it. It is appeasement of the worst sort—and we know what happens to the appeasers, Minister. We know that the people smugglers watch every move that we make. Ask yourself the question: how long do you think it will take for the people smugglers to realise that, if the islands are excised, the best way of getting to Australia is to head for the mainland?

Mr Ruddock—They know that already.

Mr CREAN—They know it already, the minister concedes. So how are you protecting our borders by surrendering our territory? That is the fundamental question that you will not address.

Mr Ruddock—The islands can be more easily reached than the mainland; that's the reason.

Mr CREAN—The government's approach merely plays the people smugglers' game. It does not stop the people smugglers; it encourages them. It gives them the ability to sell their tickets and to ply their grubby trade because they can say: 'We can get down to Australia. The government down there is saying, "Invitation to treat; we are excising islands a kilometre off the mainland"—so why not head for it? We can get you through.' That is what you are doing. The sensible solution is as I have outlined before: you have to stop the boats leaving countries like Indonesia and you can only do that if you have a framework in place. You are saying to the people smugglers through this legislation, 'The more you come, the

more we will give up.' This is what you are saying to the people smugglers: 'We have excised the islands today—what is next? A new piece of legislation, a new Brisbane Line? Rottneest Island, Tasmania, Phillip Island?' You name all of those islands around the mainland. This is what you are inviting next time round. This is the futility of your position.

We know that Minister Ruddock and Minister Downer have already been planning to do it because, when I raised the question of excising parts of the mainland, including Tasmania, they said yes. Minister, that is not pride in our country; it is defeatism in the name of politics. That is not standing up for Australia. You should be standing up for Australia, but you are surrendering Australia. I am for defending our borders and doing it through good policy. I say enough is enough, let us draw the line, let us stop appeasing the people smugglers, let us stop playing the political games and let us have a policy that stops the boats coming here in the first place.

We know that the government cannot be trusted on these issues. They lied about the children being thrown overboard. They lied about their full knowledge of the sunken vessel SIEVX. That is why I have insisted, on each occasion that they have come up with a new allegation, on a full briefing from the People Smuggling Task Force prior to our making up our minds about particular issues and circumstances. I have already made clear this week the questions that I posed when I was briefed upon it. The House will recall that I asked two specific questions of the People Smuggling Task Force. I asked them whether they could give an assurance that excising islands off the Australian coast would prevent or deter boat arrivals on the mainland. They could give no such assurance. I then asked how this specific measure of excising islands would prevent further boat departures from Indonesia and they said that it would not. I sought that assurance and they could not give it. So these are the real facts, Minister, from your People Smuggling Task Force—admitted by the membership of that task force. The minister for immigration agrees that I asked those questions and he

agrees that the assurances that I sought could not be given.

Mr Ruddock—Can you give a guarantee?

Mr CREAN—Minister, we have to make a judgment based on the information given. You may not like the answers, but why should you be making stupid decisions when no assurances can be given?

Mr Ruddock interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The minister will stop interjecting. The Leader of the Opposition will refer his remarks through the chair.

Mr CREAN—The minister knows full well what his advisers told me: the most effective option to stop people smugglers is to stop the boats departing. He therefore agrees that the legislation he is seeking will not achieve the goals he claims to be pursuing because, if those assurances cannot be given, the purpose of doing this exercise is not going to materialise. The government is concentrating on the wrong end of the spectrum. It should be concentrating on the source countries and stopping the boats leaving rather than inviting the boats out and then pretending you can stop them by this particular measure.

It is very simple: the government is not looking for a solution, it is just playing politics. If we had agreed to the government's regulation this week, it would not have stopped playing the politics. By now it would be bringing forward the legislation to cut out bits of Australia's mainland. Labor's holding firm has stopped the government starting on its plan to rub out bits of Australia's mainland, to take the white-out and start drawing around the borders of Australia. It is very interesting that the government has been all over the place on this issue this week. First it announces its regulations, but tells journalists that there are no boats. Then it says there was a boat on 18 May but it does nothing about it until 7 June. It says the boat could arrive any minute and then it tells us that it has no idea where this boat is. It may have sunk; we do not know.

Mr Tanner—It is like the *Mary Celeste*.

Mr CREAN—It is like the *Mary Celeste* out there, threatening this country. It threat-