



Speech by

**Hon. M. FOLEY**

**MEMBER FOR YERONGA**

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Hansard 27 August 1998

**FORDE INQUIRY; MR H. HEILPERN**

**Hon. M. J. FOLEY** (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (6.45 p.m.): This motion argues that the House should express a lack of confidence in this appointment. It urges the Minister to make a recommendation to the Governor in Council to revoke the appointment. What is the case brought by the proponents of this motion? It originally rested on four allegations, but the ground has shifted.

Initially, it was alleged that the appointee was criticised by the Wood royal commission for failing to investigate a complaint adequately. This morning, the Minister took the Parliament to the relevant passage and rebutted that allegation. Strangely enough, it was not repeated here tonight. Even the Opposition Leader or the member for Indooroopilly could not purport to argue that black was white, having been confronted with the evidence.

The second allegation was that this man was publicly sacked. This allegation was comprehensively refuted by the Minister in her ministerial statement, because he in fact accepted appointment as chair of the New South Wales Commercial Tribunal. Again, that has been slid away from in the debate tonight.

Thirdly, it was suggested—it was asserted originally—that this man presided over a department encouraging family break-up. When the relevant copy of the New South Wales Hansard was produced, how did that allegation slide away? Members opposite shifted their ground.

The other allegation was that this man was an alleged Labor Party hack, yet when confronted with the evidence of the Liberal Minister expressing confidence—the current Liberal Leader of the Opposition—members opposite find the argument totally unsustainable. So they move to two new arguments—firstly, the cowardly tactic adopted by the Leader of the Opposition of quoting the man out of context and refusing to give the source. Under repeated questioning and repeated interjection, the Leader of the Opposition did not have the courage to put the facts before the Parliament. It was left to the Minister to give the facts. Members opposite are shifting their ground.

Now yet another vile, baseless allegation has been raised by the member for Toowoomba South. In his contribution, he asserted that this gentleman would be a "tunnel of information" for the Labor Party to manage the commission. What a baseless, groundless allegation. It was raised at the last minute because members opposite have to shift their ground; they know that they cannot sustain this spray of mustard gas which is choking and blistering this Chamber.

I turn to the contribution of One Nation. They say two things. They say the fact that this person was appointed on the recommendation of the Minister amounts to a lack of independence. I inform the member for Caboolture that this is an appointment under the Commissions of Inquiry Act. Assistant commissioners are appointed by the Governor in Council under the Act; they are not staff. The honourable member asks: why New South Wales and not Queensland? The obvious reason is that people who work for the Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care would be subject to complaints of bias.

I invite honourable members to consider one proposition. Just imagine that we had a responsible Opposition. Just imagine that they had raised their concerns properly, out of concern for the propriety of this inquiry. Just imagine that they had done the decent thing and taken the allegations to the responsible Minister. Then they would have shown some decency.

Time expired.