



Speech by

Mr DOUG SLACK

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard 25 August 1999

SES POSITIONS, MERIT SELECTION

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (6.35 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by my colleague the member for Clayfield. The plain fact is that this Government is rewriting the book on cronyism. It is no surprise that it is they alone who cannot see this. I will come to specific instances of Labor mates being given special favours—and plum local positions—in my own area, the Burnett, a little later. First, I wish to remind the House, and through it anyone in the Government who is actually bothering to listen, that it was the combination of mates' deals—"cronyism" in the vernacular—and bungled process that killed the Goss Government. The Beattie Government is going the same way.

There may well be a lot of people who are pleased about the fact that the Beattie Government seems determined to exit by the same route but sooner. There is never anything particularly edifying about a Government that is so focused on its own assumptions of excellence that it cannot conceive of any possible demerit—and even less about a leader who is so publicity hungry and so much the media junkie that he will go to the opening of an envelope, or even, it is alleged, the reopening of one, if it means a photo opportunity.

However, there is a difference between being a publicity hound and being someone who fixes things for party mates. A publicity hound is merely tiresome. A fixer is a public nuisance at the least and, if unchecked, a public danger. That is why, as honourable members will need no reminding, I have been pursuing the Deputy Premier over his mates' rates trip to South Africa. We do not know the detailed context of that trip. The member for Capalaba has been strangely reluctant to venture beyond the smokescreen of rhetoric on this subject beyond saying, like the neighbourhood larrikin, that he would do it all again if he fancied it. But we do know that he was doing favours. That is why others on this side of the House have been pursuing other members opposite who have begun the foolish trip down memory lane when it comes to looking after mates and doing special favours for people.

Mr Elder: I tabled my report.

Mr SLACK: It was a very skimpy report, was it not? What did it say? Did the Deputy Premier go to a football match? Was his mate Wayne Goss over there? Why did he not say anything about that? The Deputy Premier went to one meeting on the first day. Who went with him? He should tell us the full story. There is not much at all in his report. Did he do all of those things?

Our warning to the Government is that Governments cannot do special favours for a chosen few. Sooner or later the people will wake up—and they bite. They will wake up about the little trip of the Deputy Premier's. In reality, it was a trip for Deloitte for the benefit of Deloitte and the Deputy Premier's mate Wayne Goss. This morning he said that he did not care; that he would do the same thing again. What is he going to do for the big end of town? Is he going to put out a message to the big five and exclude all of the little fellows—the small businesses that his Government is supposed to represent—

Mr Borbidge: He started "Rent a Deputy Premier".

Mr SLACK: Exactly; hire a gun. The invitation is out: "Come to me. I'll take you over there. I'll give you access to business." That is what it is about.

In my own local area, the Burnett, it is regrettably also the case that the follies of favouritism have attracted the local Labor Party and its stalwart, the member for Bundaberg. In the 14 short

months that Labor has been in power in Queensland, the Government-appointed boards and committees in the Bundaberg region have become quite a familiar stamping ground for Labor mates. In particular, faces exceedingly friendly to the politics of the member for Bundaberg have appeared on boards, such as the Bundaberg Health Services Foundation and the Wide Bay/Burnett Electricity Board. Notably, two staunch supporters of the member for Bundaberg while she was on the city council, Councillor John Faircloth and Councillor Mike Edgar, make no bones about their Labor connections. Both stood for preselection in previous years as State and Federal candidates. I have nothing against them personally at all. They are quite good people. However, what is their expertise other than the fact that they are Labor mates—members of the Labor Party? What is their expertise for that position?

I am also advised that Pat Faircloth, the wife of John Faircloth, has been appointed to Keith De Lacy's Ergon board. For all I know, Pat Faircloth is a nice person. However, the question remains: what expertise does she have, apart from being a member of the Labor Party and the wife of John Faircloth the councillor, to be on the Ergon board? The most blatant politically motivated action—and this is the one that I really complain about—was the sacking of the Burnett Shire Council Mayor, Bill Neubecker, halfway through his term. What had poor old Bill done to deserve being sacked? I can assure the Government that that has upset a lot of people in the Burnett Shire in the context of their having a representative in their own area. We did not sack Nita Cunningham when she was the Mayor of Bundaberg, because we recognised—

Time expired.
