



Speech by

Hon. J. ELDER

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

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HEINER DOCUMENTS

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (6.30 p.m.): I agree with the member for Surfers Paradise: this affair has the potential to turn into the grassy knoll melodrama that has gone on since the assassination of JFK in 1963. However, he neglects to mention that he is one of the chief conspiracy theorists. At every turn, he encourages and aids every crackpot theory just as do all other members opposite and One Nation members. Yet can all of these conspiracy theorists answer one simple question that was asked by the member for South Brisbane: what did the incoming Cabinet in 1990, members of which had just come into office after 23 years of what could at best be called unaccountable rule by the National and Liberal Parties, have to gain by covering up allegations of child abuse? What did the Goss Government have to gain by covering up events that happened under its predecessors?

Tonight, I have heard the usual conspiracy theories from the Opposition and its new-found allies, its colleagues up the back. Tell me, what would the members of that Cabinet have to gain? Could one of those members who alleged that the documents were shredded to cover up please explain to me why a Cabinet would cover up the mistakes of its predecessors? That is the crunch question. It is the question that many casual observers find hard to answer. The simple answer is that that Cabinet acted on legal advice that the inquiry was not set up correctly.

The matter of substance is that in the material shredded there were allegations of child abuse. If there were, it is being addressed now by the Forde inquiry, which was set up by this Government under the former Governor. It is looking at all of those issues. If members opposite were so keen to get to the bottom of the allegations then as they were when they voted against the provision that I put to this Parliament, why did they oppose the establishment of the Forde inquiry? The Opposition said that it supported it, but it opposed the establishment of the Forde inquiry. We are addressing the substance of all of those complaints and we are not going to get bogged down in wading through events that happened 10 years ago.

However, for those who want to do that, let me say to them that there is a lot of selective indignation on this matter. While pursuing the matter, why have they not gone back to the basics? Why have they not examined closely the actions and the motives of those who set up what was indisputably a flawed inquiry? Which Government set up the Heiner inquiry? Who was the Premier at the time? Who was in Cabinet at the time that the decision was made to establish the Heiner inquiry? Which of those members are still in Parliament today? Why was the inquiry not set up properly? Why was the necessary protection not extended to the witnesses?

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr ELDER: While I am at it, I will take the interjection from the member for South Brisbane: where are the documents of the Cabinet that made the decision to set up the Heiner inquiry? If the Opposition feels so passionate about this matter, it should table the documents in the Parliament tomorrow so that we can see why that Government actually set up a flawed inquiry at the time. I challenge the Opposition to do so. I say to the member for Surfers Paradise to finally put his money where his mouth is. The Premier has tabled his documents and the Government's documents. The member for Surfers Paradise should table his.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. In reply to the honourable member, there was a request from Commissioner Forde and those documents have been provided to the commissioner on the basis that she requested them.

Mr SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Mr ELDER: On that basis, the member for Surfers Paradise should have no trouble tabling the documents in the House as the Premier did, and I challenge him to do so.

Were the actions of that particular Cabinet a mistake? Was the inquiry set up to fail? There is another theory for members opposite. Most importantly, why is this motion aimed exclusively at those who were part of the move to clean up a flawed inquiry?

The simple fact is that at least some of the people who made the original mistake in setting up the Heiner inquiry, those who did not have the technical competence to do so with the necessary protection provided to those witnesses, are still in Parliament today. At the time, the member for Crows Nest was the Premier. My understanding is that the member for Beaudesert, the member for Keppel and, of course, the member for Surfers Paradise, the up and coming member, were actually part of setting up this flawed inquiry.

The previous Government set up an inquiry into this matter and, surprise and surprise, as was outlined by the Premier, after referring it to the Director of Public Prosecutions, he concluded that there were no charges to be laid. Even the man who led that particular inquiry, who just happens to be Christopher Skase's lawyer, could not find enough evidence to justify the charges.

For the member for Indooroopilly, of all people, to be invoking Parliament to sit in judgment is the height of hypocrisy. This is the same member who sat as a Minister in this House for seven months after this House censured him and found no confidence in him. So much for his respect for the Westminster system and for Parliament! This motion is a lamentable exercise designed to get the member for Indooroopilly into the Courier-Mail.

The first part of the motion alleges a cover-up in terms of child abuse and paedophilia. This Government has done something about that through the Forde commission of inquiry. The second and third parts of the motion are based on allegations by Pat Comben. He has since clarified these comments. So the second and the third parts of the motion lapse. However, I expect that those conspiracy theorists will say that his clarification itself was all part of this great conspiracy. I expect to hear that. We have tabled the advice and only those who believe that Elvis is still alive could have any reason to believe it.

Time expired.
