



Speech by

Hon. K. LINGARD

MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT

Hansard 9 December 1999

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
Backflow Prevention Programs

MR LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (10.15 a.m.): This inquiry into backflow shows how a Government can abuse the committee system. It shows how a Government can try to use the committee system for political expediency. In this case, the Minister for Public Works referred a matter to a parliamentary committee in a deliberate attempt to have the committee return a report which vindicates what the Government has done.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The comments made by the former Minister for rorting expenses in dining with Charlie Doyle are offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn. They are untrue and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr LINGARD: I withdraw, Mr Speaker. The terms of reference limited the inquiry to the effectiveness, adequacy and administration of programs of backflow, but clearly this inquiry was always a political football. In the Minister's opening address to the inquiry he stated—

"The adverse publicity has been created by statements made by members of the Opposition."

All the way through the inquiry it was obvious that there was a personal conflict between the Minister and people who represented companies involved in the backflow program. These people believed they had been removed from the backflow program. It was not the role of the inquiry to delve into this personal argument and it is noted that there will be a legal case over the matter.

However, the Government and, more importantly, the Parliament, have been left with two very embarrassing incidents involving this inquiry. In March of this year the Minister for Public Works made a statement to the Parliament about an altercation in the Strangers Bar on the night of 11 March. The inquiry heard that things said that night during the altercation probably—

Mr MUSGROVE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The motion before the House bears absolutely no resemblance to aspersions in relation to alleged incidents in a bar in this place.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order, but I am listening carefully. Does this have something to do with the motion?

Mr LINGARD: Yes, it relates to the dissenting report. There is no doubt that most of the people involved in the altercation were involved in the backflow program.

Mr MUSGROVE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I would like a ruling on relevance. The motion before the House relates to the adoption of the report of the Public Works Committee. I cannot see any relevance whatsoever. I request a ruling on that matter.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Springwood, I have just adjudicated on that. The member should leave me to do the adjudicating.

Mr LINGARD: The inquiry then heard evidence which disagreed with the Minister's statements to the Parliament. Clearly, someone has been dishonest to either the Parliament or the inquiry.

The second incident is much more serious. The very important aspect of the inquiry was the date the Minister was advised about an audit into a company involved in the backflow program. A

motion to the Public Works Committee to ask for further consideration of this correspondence was defeated, and the non-Government members refer to this in the dissenting report. There is no doubt that these matters will come out in subsequent legal action about this matter.

Time expired.
