



Speech by

PETER WELLINGTON

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Hansard 11 June 1999

PRIVILEGE

Comments of Member for Caloundra

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (9.31 a.m.): I raise a point of privilege concerning the question from the member for Caloundra to the Minister for Education in this House yesterday involving my wife. I wish to read the following letter from my wife to you, Mr Speaker—

"The Speaker Queensland Parliament

The Honourable Ray Hollis

10 June 1999

Dear Sir,

I take great offence at the comments by Mrs Sheldon yesterday regarding my nomination to the University of the Sunshine Coast.

Mrs Sheldon is saying that my appointment would be a payback because Peter gave Government to Labor—"

Dr WATSON: I rise to a point of order. I find it difficult to understand how this is a point of privilege.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will decide that when I have heard the member.

Mr WELLINGTON: The letter continues—

"I pose this question to Mrs Sheldon. 'As this is an honorary position with no salary or gratuity, where is the payback?'

I liken this position to that of a member of the executive of a P & C. You give of your time voluntarily for no reward other than knowing that you have done the very best you can to improve the school or in this case the university.

I want to stress that there is no payment involved. This is a non-paid voluntary position.

These are gutter tactics by Mrs Sheldon and the Liberals who are targeting the seat of Nicklin and will do anything to discredit my husband.

My connection to the university goes back long before Peter was an MLA.

Six years ago during the planning stages of the university I was the editor of two Sunshine Coast papers, the Sunshine Coast Citizen and the Nambour Chronicle. At that time, I had an excellent working relationship with the university's vice-chancellor Professor Paul Thomas and I truly believed"—

Dr WATSON: I rise to a point of order. There is a clear procedure in this House, as you know, Mr Speaker. If a citizen outside this House has a problem, the citizen writes to the Speaker and the matter goes through the Privileges Committee. This is not a matter of privilege. It does not affect the member.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I intend to listen to this point of privilege and I will rule on it afterwards.

Mr WELLINGTON: The letter continues—

"At that time, I had an excellent working relationship with the university's vice-chancellor Professor Paul Thomas and I truly believed that the establishment of the university was crucial to the future prosperity of the Sunshine Coast region.

Like most residents I believed that the university had a vital role to play in the education of thousands of our children who at that time had to leave the area in order to further their education.

During the planning of the university, I was invited by Professor Thomas to take part in a series of workshops and meetings which dealt with many aspects of the university's development.

As a former member of the Cooloola Sunshine Coast TAFE Council I am aware of what is expected of a council member.

If I had been elected to the University of the Sunshine Coast Council it would have been my most sincere desire to make a worthwhile contribution to it (the university).

Finally, I find Mrs Sheldon's comments personally insulting as I most certainly would never consider accepting the position if I believed it was a 'payback'.

I have been very distressed by Mrs Sheldon's attack and I have decided to withdraw my nomination to the council."

I hope that all Queenslanders will see the gutter tactics that the Liberal Party is using to discredit my family. Mr Speaker, I ask that you refer this matter to the Privileges Committee.

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order. I find the member's remarks offensive. I ask that they be withdrawn. It is my right in this House to ask a question of a Minister—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume her seat.

Mrs SHELDON: I asked the question in the interests of the Sunshine Coast University. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that no-one on that council wishes to see the university politicised in the manner that the Minister and the member for Nicklin were prepared to have it politicised.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nicklin, have you finished?

Mr WELLINGTON: Yes.

Dr WATSON: Mr Speaker, you said you would make a ruling on whether that was a point of privilege. Is that your ruling?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will decide afterwards whether it is a point of privilege. I do not have to give a ruling now.

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order. When you do make that ruling, Mr Speaker, will you make it public to the House, please?

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have all day.
