



Speech by

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard 4 March 1999

HEINER DOCUMENTS

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (6.11 p.m.): I second the motion moved by the honourable member for Indooroopilly and make this observation: this particular issue is not going to go away. Just when people think it is going to go away, there is another revelation, there is another indication, which continues what is a massive question mark over public administration in the State of Queensland. I want to go through some of the matters raised by my colleague and answer some of the interjections that were made by members on the Government benches.

It is a statement of absolute fact that, as Premier, I wrote to the then Leader of the Opposition when Mr Morris and Mr Howard sought access to Cabinet documents of the Goss era to assist them in their deliberations. It is a matter of fact that the current Premier, the then Leader of the Opposition, refused Mr Morris and Mr Howard access to those Cabinet documents.

What we have is a chance to clear this up once and for all. I accept that there are many personalities in this. I accept that there are arguments in respect of various people who were involved at the time; that there are conflicting points of view. But if the Labor Party has nothing to hide, why not sort this out once and for all before it becomes the Queensland equivalent of the grassy knoll in Dallas? Why do we not sort this out once and for all? And if no-one has done anything wrong, including honourable members opposite, then let everyone know about it. What is wrong with clearing up this particular issue?

There are another couple of complications. We know that the Premier gave certain assurances in respect of Heiner in the vote of confidence that secured his commission and his Government's legitimacy in the Parliament. I suspect that he also gave certain assurances to the Independent member for Nicklin, Mr Wellington, in regard to the Heiner issue. I know that, in my discussions with Mr Wellington, Mr Wellington raised that particular issue because it was of concern to him.

However, I make the point that there is a very substantial development in all of this. There is a new whistleblower, and the new whistleblower was a Minister of the day. I will read again, word perfect, what he said, and I double-checked it so that I cannot be accused of misrepresenting former Minister Comben. He said—

"In broad terms we were all made aware there was material about child abuse. That there was material which was said to be highly defamatory and it was accepted on face value that if this matter was of such concern to have got to a level of Cabinet decision then those allegations must have had considerable merit and substance."

Those were the words of a former Minister who was there at the time. So if the members of Cabinet were aware, as Mr Comben stated, that the material related to child abuse, why did the then Cabinet not properly reconstitute the inquiry, as it could have done, to clear up the particular issue?

The other point I will make is that I believe that my Government, the previous coalition Government, made a serious error in judgment in not proceeding to a full commission of inquiry when we received the report from Mr Morris and Mr Howard. I believe that we made a mistake by referring that report—that incomplete report at the time, because they did not have access to Cabinet material because the current Premier would not permit it—to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

I think that Pat Comben should have the opportunity to restate, under oath, what he said on the Sunday program. I think that the other Ministers of the day—and the other players—should have the opportunity, under oath, to state their positions so that once and for all we can remove this question mark over public administration in the State of Queensland. It is really pretty simple at the end of the day: if they have nothing to hide, why vote against this motion?

Time expired.
