



Speech by

**Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE**

**MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE**

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Hansard 24 August 1999

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER'S RULING**

**Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE** (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.03 p.m.): I second the motion moved this afternoon by the honourable member for Indooroopilly. I would like to add to and endorse some of the comments made by my colleague. I believe we in this place all understand that very often Governments come under pressure. There is no doubt that this particular interjection which the Premier denied making was made during a week of some tension in this place in respect of debate on the Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Amendment Bill, which was the Premier's response to the net bet scandal.

Sometimes it does not hurt to admit that one is wrong. Sometimes it does not hurt to admit that one makes mistakes. Sometimes, for the sake of the dignity of Parliament and the standards in this place, it is important that the Chair insists when members falter. I have to say that the performance of the honourable member for Mansfield as Deputy Speaker on this occasion was absolutely lamentable. I would go so far as to say that had the current occupant of the chair, the member for Logan, been in the chair on that occasion we might well not be having this particular debate tonight. We have seen from some people who occupy the chair a more balanced performance than the thuggery of some others. The member for Mansfield is a new member. He does not understand the Standing Orders. He does not understand the conventions. He does not understand the traditions of the Parliament and he—

**Mr REEVES:** I rise to a point of order. I find those words offensive and ask that they be withdrawn.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** It is dissent from his ruling—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Mickel): Order! I think he is entitled to ask that the remarks be withdrawn.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** If he finds them offensive, I will withdraw, but I ask the House to note the sensitivity of the honourable member who has propelled the Government into the mess that it is in tonight.

When the member for Brisbane Central became Premier he promised new standards of parliamentary accountability and he promised new standards in terms of parliamentary debate. The fact is that in terms of parliamentary standards under this Premier this place is slipping day by day.

This is not only a debate about the ruling of the honourable member for Mansfield from which we are dissenting tonight; it is also a debate about the ethics, the standards, the integrity and the honesty of the Premier of Queensland, because when we refer to page 3076 of the Hansard record of 17 August 1999 we see that the Premier swore at the table. He made a derogatory comment about the Clerk's office. The Hansard reads as follows—

"Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. Is it acceptable to the Chair to have the Premier swearing at the Clerk across the Chamber in response to the issue?"

Then there was a bit of to-ing and fro-ing, and then the Premier said—

"I rise to a point of order. That is offensive and untrue. I did nothing of the kind, and the Leader of the Opposition knows it."

But, bad luck for the Premier! Hansard got it on the tape. It was in the parliamentary record. It was on the tape. It is in Hansard.

So we had the situation where the Premier denied something that the parliamentary record picked up. We saw him run out of the Chamber. It would be very interesting to see whether there was communication between the Premier and Hansard in regard to whether the tape picked up the remark or whether it was really Mr Beattie interjecting.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I rise to a point of order. Let me assure the House that there was absolutely no communication with Hansard.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** Again we see the sensitivity. We saw the Premier scurry out like a rabbit in the spotlight—like a white rabbit in the spotlight—in a sense of panic because he realised he said something that he should not have said.

There are two issues involved in this dissent motion. The first issue is the fact that the Premier was caught out. I cannot recall the table being referred to in such terms by way of interjection in my 19 years in this place. The second issue is that the Premier denied what he said. He demanded that I withdraw the allegation that he swore at the table. Out of respect for the Chair, I was obliged to do so. But then we checked the Hansard record and I had to withdraw my point of order as to what the Premier said. It is on the parliamentary record forever.

I want to say something about the member for Mansfield. I make the observation that there have been many times, during the heat of debate in this place, when members on both sides of this Parliament have said something under pressure. I have been called to order on numerous occasions and I have always respected the wishes of the Chair— sometimes under a little protest.

Mr Speaker, despite the fact that a number of members of the Opposition rose on points of order to draw the Deputy Speaker's attention to the foul language of the Premier in respect of the table, there was no such attempt by the honourable member for Mansfield. A number of members on this side heard the remark. A number of members drew this particular comment of the Premier's to the attention of the Deputy Speaker. I can only assume that the Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Mansfield, decided to be deaf to the Opposition side of the House to protect his Premier and, in doing so, allowed the comment to go into the parliamentary record—something that was quite unprecedented in this place. I suggest to the honourable member for Mansfield, who has disgraced himself over this particular episode, that if he had had the courtesy, the decency and the respect that he should have when he occupies the chair as Deputy Speaker in this place and had said to the Premier that it would be wise to withdraw that remark, then we would not be having this debate today.

I would like to think that the panel of Temporary Chairmen and the people who serve as Deputy Speaker in this place are fit and qualified to do so. However, after the performance of the member for Mansfield, I have to say that I will take some convincing in respect of his competence, his ability and his impartiality in the future. This episode was unprecedented. The parliamentary record shows that this Premier cannot tell the truth, and he had someone sitting in the chair who was out to protect him. I ask: if on something as simple as this the Premier of Queensland is prepared to be less than honest in respect of the situation, less than respectful for the truth in this Parliament, how can the people of Queensland believe him on anything else, particularly in relation to matters of substance, matters of propriety and matters of the conduct of his Government? I refer to the past two weeks during which the Premier has dodged every single question on the net bet affair. If we cannot believe him on something as simple as this issue, when the parliamentary record catches him out, how can the people of Queensland believe him on anything ever again on any issue whatsoever? This debate is not only about the competence of the honourable member for Mansfield but also now a question of the Premier's honesty and integrity.

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