



Speech by

**Dr DAVID WATSON**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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Hansard 9 November 2000

### COOKE INQUIRY

**Dr WATSON** (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (6.24 p.m.): Queensland is being run by a Premier who has presided over rampant electoral corruption within the ALP for the best part of 20 years. At best, he has turned a blind eye; at worst, he has actively facilitated that corruption by winding back the statutory reforms recommended by Marshall Cooke, QC, and passed by the former coalition Government.

The people of Queensland are entitled to wonder why any Government would turn back the clock to the bad old days of routine rotting and ballot rigging in the trade union movement. Marshall Cooke's inquiry uncovered hundreds of cases of blatant fraud in at least four unions, including the Australian Workers Union. But, as I am sure the member for Cairns knows, it was certainly not alone.

One of the most brazen examples of the systematic rotting involved the Transport Workers Union election in 1980. It is worth revisiting the supplement to Mr Cooke's fourth report of June 1991 in which he detailed some of the evidence provided by Mr George Allan Goold. I will quote it. It is interesting to go back and read this stuff to see how long rotting has been endemic in the ALP and in the union movement. That is why we have to look at some of this history, to find out exactly how bad it has been and why the current revelations should not come as a surprise. Mr Cooke's report states—

"Mr Goold was standing as an organiser in Brisbane on the Williams/McPaul ticket in the 1980 election. He alleged that completed ballot papers were collected, reopened and, if they voted for the opposition, the markings on the ballot paper were 'whited out' and the ballot paper was completed for the Williams/McPaul team.

Even more shocking was Mr Goold's allegation that he collected returned, unclaimed ballot papers from the post office."

That sounds familiar, doesn't it?

"He described how the returned envelopes were easily obtained."

Mr Cooke then went on to quote from Mr Goold's sworn statement and said this—

"A few minutes later, he came back with the bag full of envelopes, the returned unclaimed envelopes, I took this bag."

**Mr Nelson:** Was it a brown paper bag?

**Dr WATSON:** I will come to that. The statement continued—

"The bag itself was a green bag which was used for carrying money to and from the Reserve Bank. It was not a standard Reserve Bank bag but was used by another bank to send in money and was then redundant to use by the Reserve Bank and it came into my possession whilst working for Brambles Brinks. It stood about 18 inches in diameter and nearly 3 feet high when full, which it then was. I took it in a type of 'bear hug' to carry it out of the Post Office and there were loose envelopes on the top of the open bag. It was full to the brim and I had to be careful with the top ones lest they fall out of the bag."

You would not want to lose some unfilled in ballot papers, would you? Mr Cooke noted that Messrs Goold, McGarth, Williams and McPaul reportedly opened these envelopes and completed the unused ballot papers therein for their favoured candidates.

He then returned to Mr Goold's statement which said—

"Our system was to open all the envelopes, sort the ballot papers into piles for each colour for each position. We couldn't open a window or door or have the overhead fan on, because it blew the pile of ballot papers about, so we encountered considerable heat inside the closed up house with no ventilation as we continued our activities. The ballot papers were stacked on the dining room table, which was then a new pine circular table. Some envelopes we opened which contained cheques and some union matters not related to the ballot were placed aside to be dealt with later. We then proceeded to fill in the ballot papers, marking with a cross the ballot papers according to 'our ticket', as opposed to the official ticket supported by Bevis.

The exercise was carried out on a table, the top of which was marked with the imprint of many 'Xs'."

Mr Cooke went on to observe that the incident was notorious within the Industrial Elections Branch of the Australian Electoral Commission and presented "a strong prima facie case of ballot-rigging on a grand scale".

That example of systematic rorting occurred more than 20 years ago—in 1980—but the more things change the more they stay the same. As Mr Cooke said in the Courier-Mail just last week—

"Why would you stop? If you think it's alright to get power in a union by those sorts of means, why not when the prize is bigger?"

That is why I commend this motion to the House. By winding back the statutory reforms proposed by Marshall Cooke and implemented by the coalition, this Premier and this Government have paved the way for a whole new era of ballot rigging within the Queensland union movement.

Once electoral fraud takes off in the industrial wing of the Australian Labor Party, it is only a matter of time before it graduates to the political wing of the Australian Labor Party and the systematic rorting of local, State and general elections. That is not acceptable.

Time expired.

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