



Speech by

## Dr DAVID WATSON

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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Hansard 14 November 2000

### DR S. BLACKWOOD

**Dr WATSON** (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (11.30 a.m.): I found it interesting today that the Premier failed on a couple of occasions to refute the newspaper article in the Sydney Morning Herald of last Saturday in which it was indicated that the ALP's national executive had secretly dumped the anti-branch stacking measures announced in July when the party declared war on the practice. Of course, that was just a few days before the Parliament began an inquiry into electoral fraud. The interesting thing about it is that the report reminded us that the ALP national conference in August passed a resolution calling on the national secretary, Mr Geoff Walsh, to report on the possible establishment of a national ALP membership database no later than 30 November this year. That, of course, has been the basis for the Federal Leader of the ALP, Mr Beazley, and for the Premier to suggest that the ALP has taken care of branch stacking and fraudulent activity within the ALP with respect to vote rigging.

It is interesting because the Sydney Morning Herald states—

"A factional deal before the Friday meeting"—

that means that there was a deal done between the various factions across the ALP and across the State—

"meant Mr Walsh put up the resolution recommending the database not proceed."

The motion was passed only after some spirited intervention by the New South Wales party secretary, who of course attacked the proposal by saying that it was a grab for power by the national office. It was interesting that the Premier failed to refute that. We can probably now take it as being read.

Today I want to draw to the attention of the House the nest of Labor mates and nepotism that exists within the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and the links that this nest has to Labor's electoral fraud. To do that we have only to turn our attention to the well-known Labor operative in DETIR, Dr Simon Blackwood. One particularly interesting fact that members may find of interest is that Dr Blackwood shares a house in the electorate of Yeronga with his partner as well as a very good mate, the now infamous Labor identity Mr Lee Bermingham. However, let me further educate members about Dr Blackwood, a man whose name is well known throughout the Queensland Public Service as a political appointee.

Not only did he once work as the industrial relations adviser to the then Premier, Wayne Goss; he also worked as a senior policy adviser to Minister Foley when he was the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations—and what a disaster that was. Interestingly enough, in the period since his service in Minister Foley's office, Dr Blackwood has apparently had a falling-out with his factional mates in the AWU and has been expelled from that faction, as he was perceived by himself and a few others as a possible successor to Bill Ludwig upon his yet to be announced departure. Wayne Swan, another hopeful to rise to the lofty heights of Mr Ludwig and others, made sure that Dr Blackwood was run out of the AWU never to return. I notice that the AWU members are nodding in agreement.

**Mr Reeves:** You didn't even look.

**Dr WATSON:** I looked. I glanced up. I can see it all happening up there. I do not want to actually name the honourable members who are in agreement.

Dr Blackwood is now known to be courting elements of the Left, in particular the Queensland Left, or the old Socialist Left. Blackwood still controls the Chardon's branch, which is in Annerley, a member branch of the Yeronga EEC, a chair of which is the other now infamous Labor identity Mr Warwick Powell. Honourable members can see the interest that people have in Mr Powell and Mr Bermingham.

I am informed that loud voices were recently heard when Dr Blackwood had a discussion with his former boss Minister Foley. Dr Blackwood vehemently opposed Mr Foley's suggestion that Mr Powell stand down from the position of President of the Yeronga Electoral Executive Committee while the Shepherdson inquiry was in operation so that no linkage could be adversely drawn. Minister Foley is adopting the Premier's attitude of see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil and is hoping to sneak through unscathed. However, Blackwood is standing by his former AWU mates because, like them, he too is out in the factional cold. Blackwood has, to this point, been unsuccessful in wooing the Queensland Left to embrace the unaligned Minister Foley, who realises that in a Cabinet reshuffle the factional knives will be out for his position within the Cabinet.

Let me return to the career of Dr Simon Blackwood. To his credit, he saw the writing on the wall for the Goss Government and was quick to use his influences in Minister Foley's office to abandon the political staff ship for the safety of a Public Service job at an SES level. Dr Blackwood then languished in DETIR, trading on the coalition's commitment to job security for public servants to entrench himself. Dr Blackwood has again been promoted under the Labor Government to the head of the Division of Private Sector, Industrial Relations at the SES2 level.

In order for the department to ensure a full field of quality applicants is achieved, the advertisement for the position appeared in the Government Gazette on 27 November 1998. Although Dr Blackwood had been acting in the position for a number of months already, it was considered imperative that the position be advertised at that time of the year. Who here really believes that the end of November is the best time to attract the attention of high quality applicants? How many people concentrate on job hunting in December rather than the forthcoming Christmas and school holidays? It appears that Dr Blackwood was only biding his time until he could once again extend his influence throughout the department.

Unfortunately for the people of Queensland, he is at it once again in that position. Dr Blackwood has surrounded himself with other ALP Left Wing union types to ingratiate himself with the Left faction; for example, the appointment of Rebecca Keys to the position of Senior Policy Adviser within Private Sector, Industrial Relations. Ms Keys is the former partner of Mr Ken McPherson, the former chief of staff in the Deputy Premier's, Jim Elder's, office. Then we have the product of an extremely cordial and personal relationship between Dr Blackwood and Minister Braddy's IR policy adviser, Jacqueline King, from the Labor Left and a former ACTU staffer, which has seen Ms King's close personal friend and former flatmate, Ms Fiona Bucknall, resign from her position as the equity officer at ALP headquarters to take up her AO6 position within DETIR.

Dr Blackwood has been heavily involved in the Queensland industrial relations system through his IR task force role, which looked after the Labor Unity and Left factions to the detriment of the AWU, and of course the AWU knows that. But the ledger was evened up when Blackwood's partner, Ms Catherine McGuckin, was appointed to a senior position in the Premier's Department early in 1999 even though she had previously received a redundancy from a similar position some years prior. It does not stop there.

What about the recent appointment of DETIR's other Deputy Director-General, Mr Peter Noonan? Apparently there is no need to advertise such a position when a mate needs a job. Never let it be said that the largesse is available only through Public Service Labor mateship at DETIR. Mr Noonan's wife is none other than Dr Simon Blackwood's co-conspirator on the IR talks force, Marion Van Rooden.

**A Government member** interjected.

**Dr WATSON:** Co-conspirator. Advising Minister Braddy on WorkCover is also a coven of Labor hacks. The appointment to acting director of the WorkCover unit is Ms Madonna Jarrett, the failed Labor candidate for the State seat of Aspley in the 1995 State election. Ms Jarrett and Madonna Camp are one and the same person. She is the daughter of the president of Labor Unity. Jack Camp is one of three State vice-presidents of the ALP Queensland branch. He has utilised his friendship with Minister Braddy to find a place for his daughter. Who knows what happened to the former director of the WorkCover unit, who was obviously shifted sideways to create a place for the daughter of a Labor mate. Ms Jarrett's offsider and minder is Mr Paul Goldsborough of the Labor Unity faction.

Mr Camp, Ms Jarrett and Mr Goldsborough are eagerly awaiting Minister Edmond's Cabinet and parliamentary demise. In recent times the Jarrett family has moved from the failed campaign

headquarters for the seat of Aspley to more hospitable surrounds within the State electorate of Mount Coot-tha. I am sure Minister Edmond welcomes this attention in her own backyard. She is in good company with the Attorney-General.

The way in which the ALP is stacking the Public Service with ALP hacks is an absolute disgrace. However, because this comes from a political party that has a longstanding practice of stacking electorates and rigging elections, one should not be surprised by the behaviour of the Labor Party in Government. One can only hope that the knives that are out for the Health Minister, the Attorney General and the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations are used wisely to prune these dead branches from the withering shrub called the ALP.

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