



Speech by

HOWARD HOBBS

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Hansard 11 November 2003

Ms P. HANSON; Mr D. ETTRIDGE

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (4.46 p.m.): That is very good. I am very pleased about that. I am very pleased to rise to speak to the motion. In fact, in my contribution I will be moving an amendment to the amendment proposed by the member for Lockyer. I move—

In (1) omit "consideration and advice" and insert "inquiry and report"

After (1), insert (1A)

(1A) In conducting its inquiry and preparing its report into (1) above the Crime and Misconduct Commission should take into account:

- (a) All matters surrounding the investigation, prosecution, conviction and subsequent acquittal of Pauline Hanson and David Ettridge.
- (b) The comments of Chief Justice de Jersey that the lack of senior prosecutors overseeing the case may have contributed to the failure to properly consider the merits of the case against Hansen and Ettridge.
- (c) The systemic historical funding issues for the DPP and the appropriateness of the State Government's response to these issues and their impact on the proper functioning of that office and the Queensland Justice System.
- (d) Other systemic issues relevant to the effective, efficient and fair operations of Queensland's Justice System including the operation of the courts.
- (e) Enhancements to approve the effective operation of the Queensland Justice System.

Omit (2) and (3)

I move that amendment simply because the opposition's amendment has been amended by the member for Lockyer's amendment. That means that this motion will in fact be debated first up. Most importantly, the omission of (2) and (3) leaves out the bit about the federal parliament. We have no jurisdiction over the federal parliament at all. Can members imagine the federal parliament wanting to conduct an inquiry into Queensland matters? It would not do it. We would not wear it. That is quite simply the case.

There has been a lot of misinformation put around by the Premier, who wishes to cover his tracks and blame somebody else for the collapsing judicial system. One Nation is not sure where it is going, coming from or wants to go. Suddenly, they are embracing Pauline Hanson and blaming all of the major parties for one of their own turning on them. The motion from the opposition requests a CMC inquiry into all matters surrounding the investigation, prosecution, conviction and subsequent acquittal of Pauline Hanson and David Ettridge. The motion is about the serious problems Queensland has with the judicial system. It is not about Hanson and Ettridge per se; it is to investigate how the case became a fiasco. It is not the name that counts, it is the case that counts. It is the case that brought this issue to a head.

Labor and One Nation are trying to talk up a conspiracy with reference to Tony Abbott and others. People raise money for all sorts of purposes. There are laws about electoral disclosure and so on, but this fundraising has been known about for several years and was reported in all of the southern newspapers. It is not new. That is not an issue concerning the Queensland judicial system. This inquiry is about Queensland's system, which allowed two people to be convicted of fraud, with aggravation, against the people of Queensland and sentenced to three years jail. They lost two appeals and then one Court of Appeal threw out those charges and made serious comments about the DPP and the calibre of legal counsel. The Premier's motion is not strong enough. It talks about consideration and advice from the CMC. We do not want consideration and advice; we are requesting them to do a full inquiry. We want the real thing, not some half-baked thing the government can hide behind. That is what is going to happen under this—

Mr Terry Sullivan: Don't you trust the CMC?

Mr HOBBS: It is government members whom I do not trust.

Mr Terry Sullivan: Do you trust the CMC?

Mr HOBBS: I am sure the CMC will do a good job if we give them the right reference.

Mr Terry Sullivan: Go on record. Do you trust the CMC?

Mr HOBBS: The member should not say silly things. I support the CMC, but it has to be given the correct reference to be able to do the job, and it has not got that. It is only a heart-hearted reference.

In relation to the One Nation amendments predominantly aimed at the Commonwealth parliamentarians and others, as I mentioned before, we have no jurisdiction in that judicial system. Interestingly, 49 cases have been overturned in Queensland on appeal in the last two years. Justice de Jersey's recent comments about the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions indicated there are serious problems with the DPP and some judicial appointments of successive Labor governments.

Mr Terry Sullivan: He didn't say that; you said that.

Mr HOBBS: He did not say that, no. I said that. That was not what I was trying to say. The CMC investigation, for instance, into the handling of the Scott Volk's case concluded that the DPP could be justly criticised for the way in which it went about its task. And there are other cases as well. Paul de Jersey's criticism of the resourcing, talent and staffing of the office of the DPP in the Hanson-Ettridge case also lends weight to the need for further investigation of this office. We all know that they have been juniorised down. It is as simple as that. We have to try to get some expertise in there. They want the funding that this government has been denying them.

A further complication for the justice system has been the social engineering by the Goss and Beattie governments through their judicial appointments that have diverted from the principle of appointment on merit. The problems with the DPP and the judicial appointments lead to innocent people being jailed and guilty people not being convicted. How can we have a farcical situation such as the one at present? Members should ask themselves how this occurred and why it is happening.

The Premier, Peter Beattie, should recognise the community's outrage at his and the previous Labor government's actions and support the coalition's effort to have a CMC inquiry into these circumstances. I believe this amendment I have moved is sufficient to do that. It will ensure that a proper inquiry is conducted. It will allow people to call Tony Abbott or whoever they want. They can do whatever they want under the amendment that I am moving today. But the thing is that we cannot tell the Commonwealth government what to do, just as they cannot tell us who to inquire into. This is totally farcical.

People are just trying to draw smokescreens around various issues. It seems to be going on and on. I do not believe members opposite are being sincere in a lot of their comments. I commend this amendment to the House.