



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Wednesday, 29 November 2006

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT ACT

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.55 pm): If I listened to the Labor member who just spoke, he would have us believe that Sir Samuel Griffith did not believe in democracy when he inserted into the Criminal Code provisions to make it illegal to lie to the parliament or its committees. So I think we could sum up the previous speaker's legal qualities against Sir Samuel Griffith and realise that they fall far short.

Lying to parliament was made legal under changes pushed through by the Beattie Labor government in December 2005, moves which were strenuously opposed by the state National-Liberal coalition. We objected to the abuse of the parliament by the Labor majority when, under Premier Beattie's leadership, parliament was recalled for a special sitting to wipe clean the sins of former health minister Gordon Nuttall, a Beattie government minister who received an adverse finding from the CMC. That extraordinary special sitting also passed legislation which repealed a provision which had existed on the state's criminal statutes since their drafting in the 1800s by Australian constitutional author Sir Samuel Griffith. This eminent legal mind believed provisions outlawing lying to parliament had a place in Queensland's legal system and no-one should strip those laws from the Criminal Code until Gordon Nuttall—that close mate of Peter Beattie's—was caught out and the Premier had to fix things up for his mate.

What I find so amazing is that Premier Beattie believes it is a greater crime to lie to him than it is to lie to the parliament. If one of Premier Beattie's ministers is found to have lied to the parliament or its committees, they can have a special sitting of parliament where other Labor ministers and friends line up to pat them on the back and say nice things. However, if a Labor mate lies to the Premier, then they potentially can be cast out of the Labor Party into the darkness, into a life without the gravy train of post-parliamentary political consultancies and board memberships, which retiring Labor politicians seem to have made an art form of. What we see is a Labor Party that has a parliamentary standard which is less than acceptable with regard to the highest standards which were set down initially under our Constitution. It was good enough for our founding fathers, and it has stood the test of time. It was only taken out of the Criminal Code when this Labor Party—this government—with its majority had a political problem.

Let us look at the glowing comments that some Labor members and ministers used when endorsing the former health minister, Gordon Nuttall, when trying to wring their hands and say why they believed it was necessary to do what they were doing in that sitting last year. Let us start with Anna Bligh, the Deputy Premier. She said—

For those of us who are colleagues of the member for Sandgate, for those of us who have worked with him, for those of us who have sat with him around a cabinet table and know him to be a decent man—a man of integrity—this will not be easy.

She thought he was a man of integrity. Warren Pitt also attested to the 'good character of the member for Sandgate, a character which those opposite have sought to tarnish'. Quite frankly, Minister Pitt, I think Gordon Nuttall did that for himself.

Let us look at other prominent Labor ministers who spoke out in favour of the member for Sandgate. Remember, this was after an adverse finding was made by the CMC, which was the reason behind the special sitting to change the Criminal Code and wipe Gordon Nuttall's slate clean. Paul Lucas said—

I know the member for Sandgate well and I believe that he is a good and honest man.

Let us look at what Tom Barton said. He said—

I want to express my beliefs on the honesty of a member, the member for Sandgate, whom I have known for almost 30 years.

He goes on in extraordinary detail about what he believes. The contribution of Gary Fenlon really takes the cake. He said—

... the member for Sandgate is one of the greatest members who has ever entered this parliament.

I do not think he could walk on water, but the government could certainly change the Criminal Code for him, and that is the problem. This legislation was changed unnecessarily. It stood the test of time and it should have continued to stand the test of time. That whiff of corruption that this government has had about it, which we see now with the turn of events, is showing that we cannot trust it when it takes these very important statutes out of legislation. All those new members who are going to vote in favour of the Labor Party tonight have their fingerprints on this unforgettable scene.