



Speech by

Lawrence Springborg

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Hansard Wednesday, 19 August 2009

MOTION: NUTTALL, MR G

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.41 pm): I rise to second the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. This parliament has a duty and an obligation to get to the bottom of this matter. This parliament has a duty and an obligation to ensure that the first law officer of this state, who is ultimately accountable to this parliament, actually is accountable to this parliament. This parliament has an obligation to ensure that all matters that should be in its province are properly brought to its province.

As we have heard from the Leader of the Opposition over the last few minutes, quite clearly this Attorney-General has sought to shirk his responsibility. This Attorney-General has gone out on behalf of the government of Queensland and thought, 'We have got a problem here. We are going to do everything that we possibly can to subvert the opportunity for this parliament to scrutinise that which should be scrutinised and to shut down appropriate debate in this parliament.'

We have heard an array of feeble excuses from the Attorney-General. As the opposition leader said, he has changed his story from breakfast time to lunchtime. Tuvalu's economy might be run like the Bligh government runs the economy of Queensland, but we do not want the Attorney-General to run the legal system like he ran it in Tuvalu. We want him to run the legal system as one would actually expect it to be run here in Queensland, not with the sort of dodgy interference that we saw the Attorney-General attempt earlier today.

We heard a lot of nonsense about the separation of powers from this bunch who sit opposite and who piously proclaim to understand the justice system. The separation of powers is not impugned in any way whatsoever by the motion that is before the parliament. It is not the parliament directing the CMC. It is not the parliament directing the Director of Public Prosecutions. It is not the parliament actually sitting in the courts and directing the judges what to do. In the event that the CMC and the DPP do not take this to the next stage, all the parliament would be saying to the Attorney-General is that there may be matters contained therein which enliven the jurisdiction of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee and should be dealt with as a contempt of parliament. That is all this motion is saying.

The Attorney-General did not learn that in Tuvalu or he forgot that in Tuvalu—one or the other. He does not fundamentally understand what this is about. Why are we actually moving this motion? If we cast our minds back to 2005, we do not want to see the miscarriage of justice that we saw then in this place where a coterie—a conga line—of Labor mates came in here and lined up one after the other to sing the praises of Gordon Nuttall: how they would love him to be godfather to their children, they would leave their pet with him on the weekend, he was the best guy they had ever known, all of those sorts of things. Now they are trying to run away.

Not only did those opposite subvert the process of justice outside of this place; they denied the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee the opportunity to properly investigate it as a contempt and simply let Gordon Nuttall apologise to the parliament. We do not want that miscarriage of justice to occur next time. What we are saying here is that there may be matters of contempt involving this particular member, Gordon Nuttall, in not actually properly complying with the pecuniary interests register—a failure to disclose or some other matter. The Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges

Committee is charged with the responsibility of looking after that. What is wrong with that? Is it the situation that the Labor mates sitting opposite have something to hide? What do the Labor mates have to hide? What are they trying to cover up? Are they really worried that something else is going to be exposed along the way? Is it that the Attorney-General is worried about his predecessor, the former member for Greenslopes, who just disappeared and then the Attorney-General popped up as the candidate on the ticket for the Labor Party in the seat of Greenslopes? Are they seriously worried about the involvement of certain members of the Labor Party in relation to the Bundaberg Hospital consultants' water report which is before the CMC and has gone to the DPP?

One would have to be very worried and concerned about why this government and in particular the Attorney-General has been so defensive today. What are they covering up? If members of this parliament have nothing to hide, if they actually believe in getting to the bottom of something, they will support a motion which simply instructs the Attorney-General to take that brief of evidence and send it to the MEPPC for consideration of contempt if it is not prosecuted in the criminal jurisdiction. That is the right and proper thing to do. That is why this motion should be supported.