



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Wednesday, 28 October 2009

CRIMINAL CODE (HONESTY AND INTEGRITY IN PARLIAMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—LNP) (8.09 pm): I rise on this occasion to speak in support of the Criminal Code (Honesty and Integrity in Parliament) Amendment Bill 2009, which is part of the LNP's dedicated campaign to return to this parliament the integrity so richly befitting our legislature. In one of the most blatant acts of nepotism ever undertaken, I dare say, in December 2005 this Labor government moved to protect the former member for Sandgate from criminal penalty. The Leader of the Opposition, the honourable member for Surfers Paradise, has taken up the crusade from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the honourable member for Southern Downs, who first moved to return voracity, honesty and truthfulness to our parliamentary system in August last year.

I find it difficult to believe that the Labor government has the temerity to find itself above the drafter of our Criminal Code, Sir Samuel Griffith, whose vision and foresight established some 100 years of integrity of this parliament. It seems that with just one rushed motion and a subsequent bill this government has snatched away the probity and the dignity of the parliament. Swiftly, Labor used this place to put an individual, one of its own, on trial and passed judgement, which was a broadly unconstitutional move for the parliament. Interventions such as that interfere in the normal process of justice and smack of double standards: one for politicians and another for the general public.

The arrogance of this Labor government knows no bounds. As I look about this House, I note that a number of Labor members who voted for this disgraceful legislation are still here: the Gold Coast members for Broadwater, Burleigh, Albert, who was a minister, and Southport, who is now a minister, all voted for this appalling determination.

Mr Lawlor: Excuse me, I was not here. You are misleading the parliament.

Mrs STUCKEY: I withdraw the mention of the member for Southport.

Mr Lawlor: I wasn't here; you told a lie.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! The honourable member will resume her seat. Will the minister please withdraw that inference?

Mr Lawlor: I withdraw.

Mrs STUCKEY: As I said, I withdraw any mention of the member for Southport. Every other Labor clone did vote, and last time, when I tried to name and shame them all, one objected. Can members believe it? They objected to being named for voting for something that they supposedly believed in. Cowards indeed! They can dish it out but they cannot take it back.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I find the tone of the language is intemperate and unparliamentary. I ask you withdraw the word 'coward'.

Mrs STUCKEY: I withdraw the word 'coward'. May I continue?

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will wait for the House to come to order.

Mrs STUCKEY: I wish to reiterate some comments I made on 9 December 2005 when sections 56, 57 and 58 were stripped from our Criminal Code, along with the measure of accountability and integrity this parliament enjoyed. I stated—

I place on record how truly uncomfortable I feel about what is happening here ... I do not want to be seen as one of the politicians who besmirched the reputation of the parliamentary system of Queensland by supporting this cossetted manner of dealing with this situation under parliamentary privilege.

Of course, this was not simply a protection but a sanction for Gordon Nuttall.

Hearing the following glowing references from prominent members of this House, one could be forgiven for thinking that the dishonourable former member for Sandgate was the Messiah. *Hansard* of 9 December 2005 reads like a grand retirement speech for one of their own. For the benefit of the House I tender the following examples of lustrous comments of support for those who told untruths in parliament. The honourable member for Lytton and the current Deputy Premier, the then Minister for Transport and Main Roads, despite the CMC's finding, despite the questionable purpose of wiping Nuttall's slate clean and despite all sense and reason, chose to inform this House of the following—

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

The former member for Mulgrave, Warren Pitt, provided a glowing personal testimony. He stated—

I stand here today and attest to the good character of the member for Sandgate, a character which those opposite have sought to tarnish for their own crude political ends over a period of months in this chamber.

I have always respected the integrity of the member for Sandgate, Gordon Nuttall. I hold that view now, and I will continue to hold that view into the future.

Perhaps we can ask the current member for Mulgrave if his dad still holds that view and respects the integrity of a man now found guilty of telling untruths and then taking corrupt payments. The present Leader of the House and former Minister for Police and Corrective Services, who is known to leap to the defence of her Labor mates regardless of their sins, stated—

I have read the CMC report and I say with the greatest respect to the CMC that I believe it is a flawed document.

It has turned out that the real flaw was in her own judgement. The public works minister further gilded the lily, saying of Nuttall that 'he was noble enough, gracious enough and humble enough to stand in this parliament and apologise'. I have to say that I have not heard such delicate words spill from the lips of the minister since, although we have all heard plenty of colourful language from him. Tonight we heard him attack the character of the honourable member for Kawana. The Premier really pushed the envelope, stating—

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.

The then Deputy Premier and now current Premier believed him to be a man of integrity and jumped at the chance to protect him, just as her government will undoubtedly vote down this bill and the principles for which it stands.

The Labor government has purged from our parliamentary system all dignity and integrity and it has no intention of restoring it. Only five or six government speakers have bothered to put their names on the speaking list. We in the LNP are determined to bring that dignity and integrity back. In August last year the opposition introduced a similar bill into the House and in December last year the government voted to trample into the carpet on the floor of the House all principles of candour, forthrightness and probity in seeking to protect one of its own.

Other examples of the lack of integrity rooted deeply in this government are ministers' inability to manage their own departments and the unwillingness to communicate all of the facts. I use the recent incident with regard to asbestos handling at the Caningeraba State School to highlight my case in regard to this bill. A Workplace Health and Safety Queensland investigation that reported on the incident at Caningeraba on 3 June was completed on 22 July 2009. It revealed that a meeting between QBuild and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland took place on 12 June 2009. At the meeting QBuild advised that it conducted an investigation into this matter and identified noncompliance with its own policies and procedures. Procedural failures documented in this investigation report included terms of notification, access to the school's asbestos register, access permits generally and work method statements. That is all pretty serious stuff indeed.

On 16 June this year I asked the Minister for Public Works about asbestos mishandling and he informed the parliament that he had not seen any evidence at that time. On 17 June 2009, during the adjournment debate, I tabled documents proving the mishandling of asbestos at the school. The saga continued and almost three months later, on 2 September, I asked the minister how he could 'continue to claim that he treats asbestos seriously when he has failed to report back to this House the result of the full and proper inquiry he requested'. The minister replied—

The fact is that the allegations—and they are allegations—are being tested by another department, not by me.

Surely the minister knew the findings? Considering that QBuild identified noncompliances on 12 June and the report was completed on 22 July 2009, either the minister did not take this issue of asbestos at our schools seriously, because if he had he would have read the report, or perhaps he did not tell the whole truth. Miraculously, on 17 September the minister announced in a solemn manner, as he should, that incorrect procedures took place at Caningeraba and he tabled the QBuild report, a letter from the Attorney-General and the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland investigation report.

Curiously, an undated letter from the Attorney-General, which staff have confirmed was posted on 3 September—one day after I asked a question without notice on this issue—reveals the admission of failures. This letter was accompanied by a Workplace Health and Safety Queensland investigation report dated 4 September.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! Honourable member, I have given you a good go here this evening, but I do ask you now to return to the provisions of the bill currently before the House.

Mrs STUCKEY: When we are discussing honesty and integrity in this place, I have to say that the whole sorry saga I have just related does leave a cloud of uncertainty as to what the minister did know. I support the Leader of the Opposition's bill to restore a glow of honour and integrity to this place. After all, we owe it to the good people of Queensland. They have seen enough from this government.