

which has been totally fabricated by Senator Conroy—is one of the worst examples of abuse that I have witnessed in my 21 years in this place, and it is endorsed by Senator Faulkner and others of the leadership group of the Australian Labor Party. They did it in the House of Representatives as well. They knew that she had not witnessed it; they invented it and they implied it in this place. It breaches all the rules in relation to—

Senator Faulkner—Mr President, I rise on a point of order. I asked the minister a set of substantive questions. He has taken some questions on notice. In my supplementary question I asked the minister whether he would undertake to table the PM&C report. He should be directed to answer that question. If he cannot answer it now then perhaps he could take that on notice as well, but that is the question that was directed to him and I ask you, Mr President, to request the minister to answer the supplementary question.

The PRESIDENT—Senator Hill has 16 seconds to go, and I presume he is getting to an answer.

Senator HILL—I remind the Senate of an article in the *Weekend Australian* of 12 February 2000, which says:

Now, Faulkner is the type of fellow who can spot a misdeed where none exists.

He knows there has been no misdeed in relation to this matter. He knows there has been no abuse by Senator Coonan. He knows there certainly has been no abuse by her husband. (*Time expired*)

Immigration: People-Smuggling

Senator BARTLETT (2.22 p.m.)—My question is to the Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator Ellison. Minister, earlier this year the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police, Mr Keelty, informed the Senate Select Committee on a Certain Maritime Incident that the AFP was conducting ‘on-going investigations in relation to the criminal activities of those persons responsible for the organisation of the voyage of the SIEVX’, which resulted in the deaths of 353 people. Can the minister confirm that the AFP is preparing a homicide case against Abu Qussey, the people smuggler widely identified as being responsible for organising

the boat known as the SIEVX? The minister may be aware that Abu Qussey is currently in prison in Indonesia and is due to be released on 1 January. Have there been, or will there be, any attempts by the Australian government to ensure that charges are laid against Mr Qussey, or to request his extradition to Australia?

Senator ELLISON—I can confirm that Mr Abu Qussey is a person of interest to Australian law enforcement and that, from current information, we understand he is in custody in Indonesia. There is a matter pending with the Australian Federal Police in relation to investigations in this matter. I will see what I can provide to Senator Bartlett without prejudicing any potential investigation or moves that we have afoot. Suffice to say that the government regards this as a serious matter, that Mr Abu Qussey is a person of interest and that we are monitoring this situation closely.

Senator BARTLETT—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I thank the minister for his answer. Can the minister at least guarantee to the Australian people and to the Senate that those investigations will be concluded before Mr Qussey is released from jail and able to abscond from justice? In addition, given the positive cooperation that has occurred between the AFP and Indonesian authorities to bring those responsible for the mass killings in Bali to justice, can the minister outline what cooperation has been occurring to ensure that those responsible for the mass killings of those on board the SIEVX are also brought to justice?

Senator ELLISON—I do not think I can take this matter much further than I have indicated. I will take this matter up with the Australian Federal Police and see what I can provide to Senator Bartlett; in fact, it may be that we can give him a briefing on the matter, albeit a confidential one.

Insurance: Public Liability

Senator JACINTA COLLINS (2.25 p.m.)—My question is to Senator Coonan, the Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer, and it is an insurance related question. What steps has the minister taken to promote the implementation of recom-

power in 1996, we in this chamber have seen legislation consistently brought in aimed at trying to curtail, run over the top of or restrict the operations of the trade union movement—to reduce the capacity of the trade union movement to represent the interests of workers in wages and working conditions. But have we seen the same urgency displayed on corporate governance issues? Of course not. Have we seen this government show any concern about the rip-off that has been occurring at the big end of town with executive salaries? Of course not.

In fact, it is interesting to note the contrast. When those issues get raised, senators on the other side of the chamber immediately jump up to defend the big end of town. We have seen some shocking examples of exorbitant executive salaries being paid in this country in the past few years. They have all been in the public arena and people are aware of who the individuals have been—people like Peter Bartels at Coles Myer, George Trumble at AMP and a whole raft of others.

Senator Ian Campbell—You didn't mention Nick Whitlam, did you?

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—Nick Whitlam is one and David Murray at the Commonwealth Bank is another. If you want me to list them I will list them all, Senator Campbell—because they are all well known. The rip-off that is occurring at that level is well known. It is argued—you have argued it and your government has argued it—'We have to do that so we do, because we need creative executives in this country. We need to be able to attract the best.'

Senator Ian Campbell—What about the \$32 million you've got in your back pocket? Pay back the \$32 million!

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—I make the point—I put it on the public record, Senator Campbell—that there was a royal commission held into Centenary House.

Senator Ian Campbell—And it said it was a shonky lease.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—There was a royal commission held into Centenary House, and it cleared the Labor Party—

Senator Ian Campbell—It did not; it said it was a shonky lease!

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—Why don't you hold a royal commission into Greenfields? Why don't you pay your dues in respect of Greenfields? You won't do it, because you know that it is a shonky deal.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Senator George Campbell, resume your seat. Senator Ian Campbell, it is disorderly to shout across the chamber. If you want to participate in the debate, you are entitled to put yourself on the speakers list.

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Deputy President, I raise a point of order. The point of order is that Senator George Campbell is yelling across the table, pointing his finger at me and yelling at me. I am trying to get him to focus on the fact that the Labor Party has stolen \$32 million from the people of Australia in Centenary House, and he is reacting by yelling across at me. I would like Senator George Campbell to be called to order.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Senator Ian Campbell, you are now debating the issue. There is no point of order. If you had listened to what I said, you would have heard that I called both Senator Campbells to order. Senator George Campbell should continue his remarks.

Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL—I was trying to get to the point with executive salaries that we are seeing—and anyone who looks at this morning's newspapers will see—the networks that exist between these chief executives who are ripping off the system, the members of the boards of directors and the Liberal Party. There are charts in the newspaper this morning. (*Time expired*)

Question agreed to.

Immigration: People-Smuggling

Senator BARTLETT (3.37 p.m.)—I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Justice and Customs (Senator Ellison) to a question without notice asked by Senator Bartlett today relating to the sinking of a boat now identified as 'Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel X'.

The question related to what is being done by the Australian Federal Police in relation

to the people responsible for people-smuggling activities in the lead-up to the SIEVX vessel and the sinking of that vessel with the loss of 353 lives. It is important to the Democrats to ensure that better scrutiny is undertaken of those involved in forcing such a huge number of people onto that vessel. It was confirmed by the minister, as was indicated to the Senate committee earlier this year, that the Australian Federal Police were investigating potential charges against people involved in organising that. In the evidence given by those people who were on the boat and survived, which is a small number of people, there is a very common story not only of being misled about the vessel but of being forced onto the vessel at gunpoint and being prevented from getting off. There is also all of the talk about Indonesian officials being in the vicinity or onshore at the time of the boat being loaded up with the many hundreds of people who were soon to meet their fate.

It does seem particularly important to the Democrats, given some of the other allegations that have been made about the SIEVX, that we ensure those who were responsible are brought to justice. Given the large number of people who died and Australia's link with the vessel, and particularly given the expected location of where the vessel sank—which was in international waters—then it is appropriate that Australian authorities be involved in investigating the matter. The Australian Federal Police have admitted a number of times that they are involved in, or are aware of, so-called 'disruption activities' in Indonesia in relation to people who are contemplating getting on a vessel with the intent of coming to Australia. Given Australia's long-standing involvement in those activities, I think it is particularly important that as much as possible is done to ensure that all information is made available about who was involved, and in what way, in the SIEVX in particular.

The person who has been identified as being significantly involved, indeed as the organiser of the boat that sank, Mr Abu Qussey, who was identified on Australian television some time back as a key organiser of that vessel, has been in jail in Indonesia

for a short period on various offences but will be out of jail by the end of this year. Given the minister's statement that Mr Qussey is a person of interest, it is particularly important from the Democrats point of view that whatever interest there is from the Federal Police be exercised fully before Abu Qussey gets out of jail at the end of the year and is able to disappear back into the community—or indeed to leave Indonesia altogether, given that, as I understand it, he is not a national of Indonesia and possibly not even an authorised resident. He would obviously be a crucial person to be able to question further and for more information to be made public about all that was involved—how many people were involved, in what way and how—in the lead-up to the SIEVX tragedy.

Three hundred and fifty three people is a lot of people. From the Democrats point of view, this is a major tragedy that has not been adequately recognised. As is completely appropriate, in relation to the hundreds of people who died in the Bali bombings Australian authorities, including the Federal Police, have been working very hard and diligently in trying to ensure that those involved and those responsible are being brought to justice. From all reports, the co-operation between Australian authorities and the Indonesian authorities has been progressing relatively well in a short period. The SIEVX tragedy is now well over a year old, and there certainly does not appear to have been the same degree of urgency or the same degree of intensive investigation in a cooperative way between Australian and Indonesian officials. There is a real risk that a key person involved in that tragedy, which resulted in the deaths of so many people, may be able to walk free in a short period and that the information he holds may not be able to be confirmed or examined. (*Time expired*)

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Scrutiny of Bills Committee

Report

Senator MACKAY (Tasmania) (3.42 p.m.)—On behalf of Senator McLucas, I present the 15th report of 2002 of the Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of