



1969

 PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

ON

A STATEMENT BY MR. K. W. SHUGG IN 'THE MERCURY' OF 1 DECEMBER, 1969

Brought up by Mr Neilson on Wednesday 10 December 1969, and ordered by the House of Assembly to be printed.

REPORT

Mr K. W. Shugg, in a statement made by him which appeared in 'The Mercury' dated 1 December 1969, spoke as follows of the Public Accounts Committee:—

'The Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee's so-called "responsible report", published on Friday had unjustly smeared the name and reputation of an architectural firm', Mr K. W. Shugg said in Hobart yesterday.

He said the report had been published on the flimsy basis of utterly inadequate and misconstrued information.

Professional ethics made it difficult for any single architect to defend himself against public criticism, no matter how unfair, misinformed, or technically inaccurate it was.

For this reason, comment at institute level was essential if such a situation arose.

The report was severely critical of many cost and procedural aspects relating to the construction of the new Government Offices.

'This report was compiled by a group of parliamentarians with extremely limited knowledge of complex details of building industry contracts, administration and procedures', Mr Shugg said.

'Because the committee restricted itself to highly selective evidence, it could not possibly make a positive and accurate assessment of the situation.

'Almost inconceivably, it sought no evidence whatever from the building contractors, and it limited its discussions with the consulting architects to two inquiries about a single specific item.

'On this flimsy basis the committee then compiled and issued to the Press a piece of misinformed and uninformed balderdash.'

With reference to consultant architects' fees and general administrative costs, Mr Shugg said, 'It is iniquitous for these extremely "inexpert experts" to put forward control recommendations based on hot air instead of cold, factual comparisons'.

'In the Chapter's view, the kind of unsubstantiated comments and recommendations put forward by this committee has clarified one point only—the complete uselessness of "technical reports" prepared by non-technical committees'.

We draw attention to May 16 Edition at page 117: 'Reflections upon Members, the particular individuals not being named or otherwise indicated, are equivalent to reflections on the House'. And page 125: 'Both Houses will punish not only contempts arising out of facts of which the ordinary courts will take cognizance, but those of which they cannot, such as *contemptuous insults*, *gross calumny* or foul epithets by word of mouth not within the category of actionable slander or threat of bodily injury'.

When we turn to the Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Construction costs of the Murray Street Public Building, the evidence taken before it having been tabled, it is submitted that the remarks made by Mr Shugg contain matters which should be considered by the House.

W. A. NEILSON, Chairman.

Ministerial Party Room,
House of Assembly,
Hobart, 10 December 1969.