

...personal interviews. Deponent further states that he is aware of statements attributed to him to the effect that Senator Harvey Peeler had advised him not to take the test. Deponent states that such statements are false and that he has never made a statement of this nature to any party. That deponent had never discussed this matter with Senator Peeler, but believes his wife had and she was advised that deponent should take the test, put forth his best efforts to qualify for the job. That deponent's initial delay in taking the second phase of the test was of his own decision and not influenced by any other party.'

That's Mr. Jimmy R. Cash. Here's Mr. Dana Allen:

'Personally appeared before me, Dana L. Allen, who first being duly sworn, deposes and says: that he is a citizen and resident of Cherokee County, State of South Carolina. Deponent further states that he became aware of a position for South Carolina Wildlife Officer for Cherokee County, South Carolina, and took the written examination. He further states that he did not take the required agility test the first time it was offered because he was concerned that he was not in physical condition to pass. Deponent further states that he did not talk to Senator Harvey S. Peeler before any test and has never been advised or discouraged by Senator Peeler from applying for, and seeking, the position. Dana L. Allen.'

Now, the proper way to have done this, and if you are not gonna buck up and say, 'We messed up, boys. There's a possibility here that we hurt Roger Harris. Let's open the thing back up. Open it up and make sure that nobody is on the interview process that knew of anything or knows of anything.' What would be wrong with that? I certainly feel ....

Chuck  
Compton:

...(inaudible) wouldn't already know about the whole, I mean, we even have the newspaper here.



Bill Chastain:

Senator, you'd have to isolate five people for months to keep them from hearing anything. We hear all kind of things as Linda said. Well, there's no way that you could find five people interviewing any number of people, that people wouldn't have said things about 'em.

Senator  
Peeler:

Well, Bill, then if the process is above reproach, what's wrong with getting five different people and I'll state to you right now for the record, let 'em go through it, and I won't say another word, whoever that panel chooses. They may choose Cunningham again. If he is that good and if there's a correct answer and a wrong answer, or maybe somebody else may want to apply.

G.B. Stokes:

Senator, that same principle would apply in a court of law where a judge makes a decision. Where you going to find a judge that has led about a notorious incident that happened? Where you going to find a judge, so you, that would, you going if the judge didn't make the decision you wanted, you'd want him to reverse it and find a judge that did? Or get some layman off the street?

Senator  
Peeler:

I'm not an attorney but I think they transfer trials, ...

G.B. Stokes:

I'm not either.

Senator  
Peeler:

... they transfer trials to get ...

Chuck  
Compton:

Harvey, do you know Cunningham?

Senator  
Peeler:

I know of him. I know of him.

Chuck  
Compton:

I wish you knew him. I could possibly resolve a lot of this because in your own mind,

G.B. Stokes:

It doesn't make any difference if he knew him.

Bill Chastain:

I tell you what would have made me feel real bad. And like I say, I don't have any idea what the other panel members scored, but if Sarah had come back and told me, 'Bill, you and Linda, your scores did not jive with the other three panel members, then I would have felt bad.' I'd have said, 'Yea. I was influenced.' But she was telling me that three people who didn't even know about these



things and my score and Linda's score somehow tied together fairly closely. Is that right? That tells me ...

Senator  
Peeler:

Why don't they just show 'em to me? Why ...

Bill Chastain:

I can't answer that.

Senator  
Peeler:

If it's wrong for me to know those scores, why is it not wrong to know the written scores?

Linda Campbell  
Female:

I shouldn't have given you the written scores.

Bill Chastain:

I don't know, Senator, about that. I can't tell you. It wouldn't make any difference to me.

Linda Campbell  
(female):

I shouldn't have given them.

Senator  
Peeler:

I fully believe that my integrity has been questioned here by a member, if not the entire Commission, reading this letter.

Chuck  
Compton:

I didn't read this before.

Chuck  
Compton:

I didn't read this letter. When you were with me that day, that's the first time I ever saw that letter, remember.

G. B. Stokes  
Bennett:

This is the first time I've ever seen it. This morning. I got a copy of it. I didn't know anything about it.

Senator  
Peeler:

Well, Mr. Thomason, can you speak to the letter?

James O.  
Thomason:

I can speak to the letter. It's exactly the way I saw it, exactly the way I wrote it, and to me, all you are doing, Senator, is very aggressively pursuing a man you want for a job. You didn't get it. I'm sorry. That's the only thing I can see out of this. I don't see where anyone in this Department has done anything wrong. Our Commission is certainly not involved in the selection process. The man was not the highest scoring man. And nothing in this letter or anywhere else, and all you've done like I say in this letter, is do what anybody who would do, would want the job, want the man to get the job.



Senator  
Peeler:

Sir, this letter is a lie. I just read you this. Somebody is lying. I mean, I hate to call it just like it is, but this letter is a lie. These Commissioners here just said that they knew nothing about this, yet, in the ...

James O.  
Thomason:  
Senator  
Peeler:

(inaudible) about the letter.

Yet in the letter you said that the Commission, 'all Commissioners present.' You even said that the Commissioners expressed concern.

James O.  
Thomason:

We talked about this down in King Georges (inaudible), where was we in on it, Kingstree? Edisto?

(?)  
Senator  
Peeler:

(Inaudible) County.

Somebody's lying. Now, you can say that taints the process or however you want to call it, but a lie is a lie, sir. And that's a lie. It's just been brought out here in this Commission it's a lie. That they didn't, they didn't know anything about this, but this letter says that they did. This letter states that Senator Harvey Peeler said something. These say that he didn't.

James O.  
Thomason:  
Senator  
Peeler:  
James O.  
Thomason:

Well, whether you ...

I am at the mercy at the Commission.

Where you came out on the newspaper out there and stated that you were for this man or not, I don't know, but it certainly commonly known who you were supporting in Cherokee County.

Senator  
Peeler:

There's absolutely nothing wrong with that and you tell me if it is. What is wrong with supporting ...

James O.  
Thomason:

Nothing. I didn't say that anything was wrong with it and you didn't let me finish.

Senator  
Peeler:

...someone that we feel like is a qualified candidate.

Larry Owen:

Senator, I don't think, you made a reference a minute ago to the 'hurry-up-and-hire'. There actually wasn't any hurry-up-and-hire.





The action was on the material that was sent out to the Commission members for a vote that particular day. The Commission, the majority of the Commission members that were present at that meeting simply chose not to delay the hiring. There was no hurry-up-and-hire. We hired as of the date that it was proposed to be hired. So there was no effort to hurry-up-and-hire. We just simply didn't delay it.

*Senator*  
Peeler:

I can count to five. There were three for hiring and evidently, two for postponing. That, while, when I'm whipped, I'm whipped, Commissioner Thomason.

*James O.*  
Thomason:  
*Senator*  
Peeler:

Well, it's like I told you ....

When I'm whipped, I'm whipped, but it don't mean I have to be happy about it. And I don't, we got to play by the rules and when somebody writes a letter, why, I don't know, dated October 9th, that still hasn't been answered to me, and as you say, I'll never be satisfied, evidently, you can't satisfy that, why this letter was written.

*James O.*  
Thomason:  
*Senator*  
Peeler:

Like I told you ....

But now I see it was a 3-2 vote, but I want you to look back in the annals of time and tell me when a Director of a Department recommends that you postpone a hiring one meeting because there'd been some controversy, and the local Commissioner recommended you postpone it because he's not there and he has concerns, and when the Chairman wants to postpone it, something's wrong, Gentlemen. Something's wrong here.

*Chuck*  
*Compton* :  
*Senator*  
Peeler:

Harvey,...

*Chuck*  
*Compton* :  
*Senator*  
Peeler:

Convince me that it's not.

*G.B. Stokes* ;  
*Bonnett* :

What difference does that have to do with ...

It has all the difference in the world, John.

*Chuck*  
*Compton* :  
*Senator*  
Peeler:

'Cause he hasn't got his man hired, that's what the whole difference is.

Harvey, with all due respect to you...

(inaudible) process next time.



Chuck  
Compton :  
G. B. Stokes;  
~~Bennett~~

Harvey, I can't see how...

I've not even been to 'em. I'm not going to 'em cause I don't have any, I don't need to be there. I don't influence anybody as to who to hire. But I am certainly not going to sit here and question these people's integrity that they did something that may have not been proper on your say-so and you want me to sit here and tell that these people, these five people, that who I have the utmost respect for ...

Senator  
Peeler:  
G. B. Stokes;  
~~Bennett~~

And so do I.

...not that they did something wrong, we going to do it over again, we going to get five Joe Blows off the street and do it? No, sir. I'm not going to do that. I be right honest with you.

Senator  
Peeler:

You asked me, Mr. Stokes, at the beginning of this meeting, would this meeting be necessary if "my man" was hired?

G. B.  
Stokes:  
Senator  
Peeler:

Yes.

If "my man" was hired, I assume we wouldn't have had that original meeting.

G. B. Stokes;  
~~Bennett~~

Would you have been worried about your integrity then?

Senator  
Peeler:  
G. B. Stokes;  
~~Bennett~~

I certainly would, sir.

You would?

Senator  
Peeler:  
G. B. Stokes;  
~~Bennett~~

I certainly would.

You'd been worried ...

Senator  
Peeler:  
G. B. Stokes;  
~~Bennett~~

Yes, sir.

...about it then?

Senator  
Peeler:  
G. B. Stokes;  
~~Bennett~~

Yes, sir. I certainly would, sir.

I almost was betting we wouldn't have heard a word out of you.

Senator  
Peeler:  
Chuck  
Compton :

Well, I'll take that bet, sir.

Mr. Chairman, I have ...



G. B. Stokes:  
~~Bennett:~~  
Chuck  
Compton:

(inaudible) Forget it.

This meeting today I thought was necessary and I was one of the Commissioners that requested this to show the respect that I think Senator Harvey Peeler deserves and give the opportunity for everything to be heard and hopefully some questions to be answered, but I am of the firm opinion that we are going to sit here possibly all day and go around in circles because that he's not going to be satisfied and I regret that, Senator, I really do, but I was afraid that was going to happen. I have to, I changed some plane reservations so I could attend this meeting, seems like I haven't missed but one Commission meeting in eight years and, two Commission meetings, that was my second one, and then today, I almost missed it, but I was able to change, but I have got to leave promptly at 12:00. I'm already running a little late, but I hope the Highway Patrolman will understand.

J. P.

Harrelson:

Mr. Chairman, I want to ...

Chuck  
Compton :

I don't see that this issue is going to be resolved and I just want to state that and I will have to excuse myself in fifteen minutes.

J. P.

Harrelson:

Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Webster:

Yes, sir.

J. P.

Harrelson:

Unfortunately, we've had an incident that probably in some people's minds will never be fully resolved. I feel that, of course, that this Commission is not going to reverse any action that was taken on the hiring of a certain personnel. But I do feel that the fact that we've had this meeting, that may some good go out of it. You know, if no one ever raises a question about something, it may not get any improvement. If people never ask questions, maybe not many answers are developed. And, the fact that sometimes people are dissatisfied helps to make progress because they are not satisfied with horse and buggy, they made an automobile. And, of course, a long time some people still thought the horse and buggy was better than an automobile. The English people still do. But, I feel that some good may have been accomplished by this hearing in



that if, in the future, there is any type of an allegation or rumor that could in any way possibly could enter into anyone's consideration by getting into their mind, whether they consciously or subconsciously may influence them, that either that person excuse himself from a meeting, or have the thing thoroughly investigated to see whether or not there's substance or lack of substance to the matter, and then that be documented and made a part of the record. So that when a question comes up that we did investigate and if we found substance or we failed to find substance, therefore, it was not a consideration. I think that we would consider that in our process of hiring. That may be beneficial and maybe would keep such a question from arising in the future. I think Senator Peeler's integrity, there's no question that he is interested in a certain applicant and when I was in politics, I could be interested in certain people and I would vigorously pursue the situation. I've helped a lot of people probably get jobs, but I'd always tell 'em, I can help you get it, I never tried to help a person get a job I didn't think he was competent for the job, but I'd always tell 'em that I can help you get the position, but it's up to you to keep it. You've got to keep the job yourself because you've got to produce and if you can't produce then I can't help you anything further. I think that personally, I'm not sure that Senator Peeler feels that way, but I personally feel that if there's any question of his integrity, that he tried to close the, enter the hiring process by some people saying that he made such a statement, I think that has cleared the air here today. I'm satisfied that Senator Peeler made no such allegations. That I can't deny, as he doesn't deny, that certainly he was interested in an applicant, but I do not believe that he tried to close the hiring process by discouraging anyone else from applying. Another way that I hope that the air can be cleared is that letters of recommendation or letters of reference should either be forbidden or either they should not be used against an applicant because a, the elected officials from his area may write a letter of recommendation for him. We say that that does not affect





but I would certainly think we should, we'll adopt a policy that put on the application that no letters of recommendation should be submitted, or that we would certainly take the position that they can send all the letters they want to, but those letters within themselves do not affect the other scoring processes. I think that if letters come in that are detrimental to a candidate and are part of our background investigation, certainly we'd investigate to be sure that these allegations if a fellow is, if a fellow that would take a pistol and beat somebody over the head with it, or if he is a fellow that is dishonest, or he has a record that hasn't come to attention, that ought to be part of the background investigation. Certainly. But I don't think that we should ever allow any letter coming from elected representative of the people to be used against him, nor do I think it's necessarily ...

Chuck Compton :

Are you saying something was used against Harvey?

J.P.  
Harrelson:

No. I'm saying ...

Chuck Compton :  
Senator Peeler:

I mean you...

It looks to me like that because I was supporting the man, it tainted the process and ...

Chuck Compton :

I thought there was a letter ...

Senator Peeler:

Chuck, if you'll show me different,

J.P.  
Harrelson:

I was just saying that anytime, anytime a letter comes in that's detrimental to an applicant, somebody writes in or comes to the Department, I think it ought to be part of the background investigation to ...

Chuck Compton :

Oh, ok. I thought you meant there was a letter ...

J.P.  
Harrelson:

...resolve that type of situation because they, sometimes they, if it's an allegation of a fellow that's dishonest or that he is psychologically unfit for a job, then certainly we ought to investigate to be sure there's no substance to that thing before we can consider it. I'm, my purpose of making



this statement is that the good that may have come out of the hearing is that, that, that we would clear the air as to in the future if there is anything that could possibly affect the interview in the mind, subconsciously or consciously, that that be resolved before the interview that any such rumors or allegations that may come be thoroughly investigated and be resolved before so the question will not come up later or could not legitimately come up later and that we resolve this issue about the letters of recommendation. Either that we state an applicant, on the application form that none should be, come to this Department, or that it is clearly understood that the fact that they get letters of recommendation from their elected representatives it certainly is not going to be harmful to them; whether it does them any good or not, I tell them, as I tell them, I don't know if it'll do you any good, but I don't know as it'll do you any harm. And that's about the best resolution that we can come out of this meeting with. It's obvious that there's going to be no change in the hiring of the people that were done. Therefore, since its nothing further I think can be resolved, I think it's about time to adjourn the meeting.

*Senator*  
Peeler:

Mr. Chairman, if you would, just let me finish up. I just want to reiterate that I appreciate you calling the special meeting. We shouldn't have had to had this special meeting. I feel like if you had postponed the hiring of this individual, and if we had had the meetings, and I still would like to see the interview scores to see just how that works, and I see people shaking their head, I don't know why. I don't know why I can see the written scores and know the agility test, whether they passed or failed. This interview process, and I would suggest that Preacher Harrelson, he just said that if you are not going to change anything and probably you are not, but I would suggest that you take a look at this process because it is evident to me, and I haven't been convinced otherwise, that the process can be, that interview process needs to be changed some way to keep it from being tainted. And it is apparent to me, and I have not been convinced otherwise, that



because of all this, because of the things that were mentioned in this letter that are untrue, that it was at least in the minds of at least two of the interviewers and it should be done, this interview, if you still are going to have interview process, it should be done by people totally removed from the Department, either through Personnel or wherever and Dr. Timmerman has made the statement that he would like for that to be.

Dr.  
Timmerman:

Nothing would suit me better. One of the toughest jobs I have is selecting a conservation, it'd make my job much easier. (inaudible)

Senator  
Peeler:

Sir, I would suggest that the Commission look into this on how you go about hiring a conservation officer because clearly at least one Commissioner was interested in the thing. Why, I do not know. But clearly he was. I'd like to know why.

James O. Thomason:  
~~Bennett:~~  
Senator  
Peeler:

(inaudible) (hold the fort?)

For some reason he wrote this letter. Why, I do not know. But it clearly indicates to me that he had some type of interest, pro or con in the thing. No question about it above board.

Dr. Timmerman:  
~~Chairman:~~

He wrote the letter because I requested it. My rule of thumb that if I hear any allegations of any sort, I ask staff to put them in writing. Now, that might be a wrong thing to do, but I don't go on hearsay.

Senator  
Peeler:

I sure wish you'd have called me or copied me or something of the memo prior to all this. What could I have said? Let's just assume that you called me up, or the two members of the interview panel called me up and said, 'Senator, there've been some allegation. I just want it cleared up. Are you doing it? Are you saying this? You shouldn't be saying it?' And for me to at least tell them prior to the interview that 'no,' I'd have been glad to found these two men. I did anyway. I have signed, sworn statements that they didn't make that statement. At least cleared it up prior to the interview process, what would I have? I wouldn't have a leg to stand on, Mr. Stokes.



Wouldn't have been happy about it. My man didn't get the job. But, at least my integrity wouldn't have been questioned or at least been cleared up prior to the interview process and then, well, I'd have said, 'Well, my man, as you call him, didn't get it.' But, clearly in my mind it was subject to tainting the interview process. And if you show me in black and white where it didn't, I don't have any argument.

G.B. Stokes:  
Bennett:

Sir, you questioned my integrity awhile ago when you said I was possibly part of a conspiracy.

Senator  
Peeler:

Did I say that?

G.B. Stokes  
Bennett:

Well, you didn't say that, no. But you inferred that I was possibly a part of a conspiracy to go on and hurry this thing through last week because, or not last week or whenever it was, the 16th, I believe it was, of October, to go on and hurry this thing through.

Senator  
Peeler:

Mr. Owens said, spoke to that.

G.B. Stokes  
Bennett:

You spoke, you said that I ...

Senator  
Peeler:

That it was a 3-2 vote.

G.B. Stokes  
Bennett:

3-2 vote. Yea. And that you insinuated that I was part of a conspiracy. Sir, I don't know any of the applicants, wouldn't know 'em if I saw 'em and never spoke to any one of 'em. And have known whatsoever to do that. I guess this is what alienated me this rumor bit. You started to question my integrity just a little bit, too.

Senator  
Peeler:

The whole Commission comes in question to me because that (inaudible). Let me ask you this. If you had called the Chairman and said that there was a Wildlife Officer, a vacancy, in your district, in your Congressional district, and you weren't going to be able to be there, but there was some question and you wanted to get it cleared up prior to hiring this man, if you called the Chairman and asked that be done, and then turn around and found out that would be done. How would you react to that? Would you be real happy about that?





G.B. Stokes  
~~Bennett:~~

No, sir. But a lot of things that the majority of this Commission does that I'm not happy about.

Senator  
Peeler:

I don't call it a conspiracy.

G.B. Stokes  
~~Bennett:~~

I just went along with it.

Senator  
Peeler:

I'm just saying, you called it conspiracy. I didn't call it conspiracy. I'm just saying for some reason it was rushed up. For some reason.

G.B. Stokes;  
~~Bennett:~~

No, sir. It wasn't rushed up. It was done on the normal day it was supposed to be done, that the letters were supposed to be mailed out on Monday and they were not mailed out because out of respect to you, sir, that they did not mail them out. I feel certain this is why whoever stopped them, the Chairman or the Vice Chairman, whoever stopped them from mailing them, it was done out of respect for you, sir.

Chairman Webster:

Excuse me. I don't believe that Senator Peeler thought there was any conspiracy. That didn't come across that way.

G.B. Stokes  
~~Bennett:~~

That came across that way to me.

Chairman Webster:

Well, the vote's public record.

G.B. Stokes;  
~~Bennett:~~

Oh, sure it is.

Chairman Webster:

And voting is not a conspiracy. That was just ...

Senator  
Peeler:

Nobody said conspiracy. You said conspiracy.

G.B. Stokes;  
~~Bennett:~~

Well, I did use the word conspiracy.

Chairman Webster

Senator Peeler, we are sorry you are not thoroughly satisfied with the interview process. I wish we could change that. We maybe can change it by following Mr. Harrelson's suggestions and we'll look into that. I hope you are satisfied about the questioning of your integrity because I feel sure no one here questions that. I certainly don't. Of course, we are all sorry when anything unpleasant happens and we are sorry about this happening. And, unless there is something further to say, and I want to give you every opportunity, I



just don't know that there is anything new we can say. Is there anything new?

*Senator*  
Peeler:

I just would request that you at least open the interview portion of the hiring process on the Cherokee County wildlife officer, back up to five different interviewers. I request that you do that. It's totally up to you. It's up to you to have this meeting today. I appreciate you having this meeting to allow me to give you the facts and I gave you the facts as best I know how.

Chairman *Webster*;  
*Senator*  
Peeler:

Yes, sir.

I gave you the facts. That's the facts and because of the facts that I have given you, I'm requesting that you at least open up the interview portion of which it's tried to be proven that it's above reproach, and if it is above reproach, you should come up with basically the same results if you have five different interviewers. Correct me if I'm wrong, but it was told today that the interview process was above reproach. I want to believe that. Prove it to me. Name five individuals, you pick 'em, pick 'em out of a hat, five different individuals to go through this process that's above reproach and should come out within a variance the same result. If not, something's wrong. If it does, Mr. Stokes, I'll apologize to you and apologize to the Commission. But, until then, there's going to be a question in my mind.

*G. B.*  
Stokes:

Well, I'm sorry.

Chairman *Webster*;

We understand that. Is there any other comment? We had a motion to adjourn, is there a second?

*Harry Owen*

Second.

Chairman *Webster*

All in favor, say 'aye.'

*Commissioners*;

Aye.

Chairman *Webster*;

Meeting's adjourned.

~~Chairman~~ *Senator*  
Peeler:

Thank you very much.

