



Speech by  
**Mr DENVER  
BEANLAND**

**MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPIILLY**

---

Hansard 30 July 1998

**MOTION OF CONFIDENCE**

**Mr BEANLAND** (Indooroopilly—LP) (2.21 a.m.): At the outset, Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on your election to that high office. In debating this confidence motion, this Chamber is dealing with the future and the direction of this great State of ours. In particular, in debating this confidence motion, we are debating a motion about this minority Labor Government—a motion of confidence which it believes it will gain with the support of the member for Nicklin, based on a letter from the member for Nicklin to Mr Beattie, the Leader of the Labor Party, and, prior to that, a letter from Mr Beattie to the member for Nicklin dated 25 June this year, when Mr Beattie was Leader of the Opposition. I mention these two letters because they are most important factors in this debate. I believe that it is legitimate to make them part of this debate. The letters should be part of the debate and part of the motion. It was for that reason that the Leader of the Opposition included these particular matters in his amendment to the motion of confidence.

This matter is of major concern to the member for Nicklin, and I can understand that. He is no doubt coming under a great deal of pressure from members of the Labor Party, because they are concerned about the amendments to the motion which have been moved by the Leader of the Opposition. What are the Opposition's amendments? They clearly and simply spell out the basis on which this minority Government will govern. I would have thought that the member for Nicklin would have been able to accept this particular amendment without any qualms, because it does not go outside the letters that have been mentioned in this Chamber. It simply emphasises their importance and significance.

**Mr Schwarten** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! If the Minister is going to continue interjecting he should do so from his correct seat.

**Mr BEANLAND:** The member for Nicklin talked about integrity and principle. In fact, I felt that he was lecturing all members in this Chamber. On a couple of occasions I have heard the member talking in the media about integrity and principle. How can he talk about integrity and principle if he is not prepared to insert into the motion of confidence the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition? Firstly, it recognises the commitments given by the Premier to his good self. Secondly, it requires the resignation of the Premier and the Government if those commitments are not honoured in full. I would have thought that, by putting those commitments in this letter and by raising these issues in this letter—

**Mr Borbidge:** Setting a standard.

**Mr BEANLAND:** Yes, he was setting a standard. These issues were significant to him. They are not matters to be lightly jettisoned or abandoned and thrown overboard. If the member for Nicklin is not prepared to accept the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition, I believe that the people of Queensland—and certainly I—will believe otherwise. And when the member talks about integrity and principle, I will not be able to believe that he is genuine in his concern about those matters. What we are talking about is that genuine concern—nothing more and nothing less. I know that the member for Nicklin is under great pressure from members of the Labor Party. I have noticed them moving across

the Chamber to talk to the member for Nicklin to shore up their position on this matter—as well they might. That occurs all the time.

This is a very serious and important matter. The letter of 25 June from the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr Beattie, contains no trickery or nonsense that would be of concern to the honourable member. I believe that it would be worth while going through some aspects of this letter. I am not sure whether members have done this, but they should. The first subject raised in the letter is "Liaison with Independent Members". The second paragraph of that section states—

"A senior member of the Premier's personal staff will have responsibility for assisting the two Independents to ensure access to Ministers, key public servants including heads of Departments, and the Premier."

Surely that is not a matter about which the member for Nicklin or the Premier would be concerned.

The next section headed "Parliament" states—

"I note and share your strongly held desire to lift the standard of behaviour in the Parliament."

Mr Speaker, I reflect upon your election to that position on Tuesday of this week. At that time the Premier indicated that he is determined that his Government will play its part in setting high standards of honesty and accountability. If we are talking about honesty and accountability, then why should the Government not be called upon to resign if it is not fulfilling these significant issues that were raised in that letter by the then Leader of the Opposition—now the Premier of this State? He considered them to be serious enough to include them in a letter to the member for Nicklin. The letter goes on to state—

"... ensure Standing Orders allow adequate opportunities for all Members to:

1. Ask Questions both without notice and on notice."

I believe that that has been the case and will continue to be the case. The letter continues—

"Move private members bills and have them debated."

That is a matter which I understand the Premier has accepted and, in due course, members will be debating the Sessional Orders. The letter continues—

"Participate in the 6pm debate"—

which I understand has been taken care of—

"Participate in legislative debates"—

all members of this House have always had that ability—

"Assume an appropriate role on at least one of the Parliamentary committees"—

I understand that matter has been taken care of—

"Involve Independents in the budget process, in particular through Estimate Committees."

That certainly happened in the past with the Independent member for Gladstone, and I am sure that it will happen in the future.

The letter then mentions the "Term of the Government". The Premier has picked this up in his motion. I would have thought that the most significant part of that section would be that—

"There would be no election held before May 2001."

The Premier's motion picked that up and goes on to say "without express resolution of the Parliament". That is fair enough. The matter has been covered. So why should we not have reference to this letter in the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition?

The next section headed "Assurances from Independent Members" states—

"Independent Members deserve to be treated with courtesy and respect."

That is not something that members opposite did at all times in the previous Parliament. I refer members to the Hansard debate in February 1996 in relation to this particular debate. The letter continues—

"I confirm my verbal advice that I would seek your support and the support of Mrs Cunningham for Parliamentary motions of confidence/no confidence and supply. I also seek agreement to detailed consultation on any new legislation arising from the electoral platform that I took to the electorate for the June 13 election, noting however your right as an Independent to vote on bills and clauses as you see appropriate."

Again, that is fair enough. The "Community Consultation" section mentions citizen-initiated referenda. I will not go into that, because private members' Bills will be allowed.

The next heading in the letter is "Queensland Finances", which I thought was a fairly straightforward issue. I point out to the member for Nicklin that that section sets out what I understand to be the Labor Party's position on this matter. What could be more clear than the section under the heading "Queensland Finances"? The letter states—

"In our meeting you expressed very clearly your commitment to maintaining sound financial management of the State."

The letter then sets out a number of points that I think are worth reiterating—

- "1. Labor's new initiatives are accommodated within the framework of the existing budget and forward estimates with only modest adjustments to outlays.
2. Labor will maintain a surplus budget framework and in each year, will further reduce net debt.
3. Labor will deliver a budget surplus in both cash and GFS terms.
4. The adjustments to the surplus figures reported in the recently delivered State Budget can be funded without drawing upon reserves for future superannuation liabilities or the contributions paid by members of public sector superannuation schemes.
5. Labor can deliver its capital and current program without imposing any new taxes or increasing existing taxes and charges above current real levels."

They will not be increased above the CPI level. The list continues—

6. "Labor's policies are fully costed and fully funded."

I ask: what can be the concerns in relation to those provisions? Perhaps the Treasurer of this State is planning on some increases in taxes and charges above the CPI. However, the letter states clearly that Labor's election commitments are fully costed and can be contained within the budgetary framework and that there will be no real increases in its taxes and charges, that is, above the level of the CPI. I ask the member for Nicklin: what can be of concern? According to the Labor Party, it is quite clear that those commitments can be met. Why would there be pressure upon the member for Nicklin and why would he be concerned that this Government should resign if it does not honour those commitments in full?

Next is the section headed "Ministerial Financial Responsibility". That section goes into some detail. I will not take up the time of the Chamber, because I want to deal with some other matters. That section contains a number of points. No. 1 states—

"Six-monthly reports to Parliament on Ministerial expenses provided in a format that is readily understandable by the community."

Annual reports have been presented to the Parliament. Whether they were provided six monthly, annually or quarterly—so be it—they were still reports to this Parliament. No. 2 states—

"All overseas travel by Ministers will require personal approval by the Premier, based on a detailed submission outlining the benefits for Queensland and the proposed cost. There will be a full report to Parliament ..."

Under the former Government, that was certainly the case. I believe that that was the case also under the Goss Labor Government. For as long as I can remember, there have been reports to this Parliament. Just as the first point contains nothing new, the second point contains nothing new. No. 3 states—

"Ministers will only be given approval to be accompanied on overseas travel by their spouse or partner when expressly approved by the Premier ..."

Again, there is nothing new in that provision. No. 4 states—

"Ministers will not be entitled to Ministerial credit cards."

I certainly did not have a ministerial credit card in the former Government. I was not aware that Ministers did have them.

**Mr Borbidge:** We cancelled them. They were only issued for overseas travel.

**Mr BEANLAND:** The former Premier informs me that they were issued only for overseas travel. I certainly did not have one. I do not believe that other Ministers in the former Government had them. I make the point to the member for Nicklin that Ministers did not have those.

No. 5 deals with the Ministerial Services Branch being free from political influence. I have always believed that that was the case. I do not believe that there is anything new in that provision. There are a couple of other points in that section that raise some more entertaining matters. Generally, they have been along lines similar to the policies of the former Government. This Government may have made some minor changes, but there is nothing drastically, extraordinarily new.

The next section deals with parliamentary entitlements. I understand that the current Government has indicated that it will honour that. I understand that that has been foreshadowed. We might be given more information about that either later today or in the very near future. That commitment will be honoured; there is no problem.

Under the heading "Concluding Remarks", the letter states—

"In our discussions you have emphasised parliamentary accountability and a government committed to addressing the sense of alienation among many Queenslanders. I believe the initiatives outlined here—and broader policy program advanced by Labor during the 1998 election campaign—can make a real difference.

Our job now as parliamentarians is to ensure honest, stable and accountable government for Queensland. I believe Labor can work effectively with the Independent Members in the interests of our State, and I look forward to discussing these issues further.

Kind regards

Peter Beattie

Leader of the Opposition"

That letter was dated 25 June 1998.

Following the receipt of that letter of 25 June, the member for Nicklin wrote to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Beattie, saying—

"Thank you for your letter dated June 25, 1998 outlining our recent discussions.

In light of the above, I confirm that I will support your Government on Confidence motions unless, there is evidence of gross fraud, misappropriation or like illegal activities, and, that I will support your Appropriation Bill and not abstain from voting."

That is fair enough. What is the problem with supporting the amendments put forward by the coalition? Why is the Labor Party so afraid of this amendment? What does it have to hide?

**Mr Borbidge** interjected.

**Mr BEANLAND:** As the Leader of the Opposition says, what is the value of this agreement if it cannot be enforced? What is the value of the whole arrangement? Members opposite discuss integrity, honesty and accountability. Where is the accountability in this agreement? This is not just some private agreement; this is a public agreement. It is an agreement that involves this Parliament. It involves the Chamber; it involves the people of Queensland. Therefore, in relation to this matter, I say to the member for Nicklin that if he is genuine—and I believe that to this point he has been genuine—the test is about to arrive. If he is genuine, he must support the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

A number of other points need to be raised in relation to this matter. It is clear that the Labor Party has a great deal of concern about some matter. If there were no concern, the member for Cook would not be moving an amendment to the Leader of the Opposition's amendment. Clearly, the member for Brisbane Central is concerned about some commitment in this letter, which was given by him when he was the Leader of the Opposition. That is a commitment that he now wants to sneak away from—otherwise he would be supporting the Opposition's amendment. So much for his comments about integrity and honesty. So much for his genuineness in relation to this Parliament. Of course, this letter is supposed to be the foundation of the new-found Beattie Labor Government. What a foundation it is!

If Labor is not prepared to stand by these arrangements, they are fundamentally flawed from the outset. They are straightforward arrangements. There is nothing clever about them. I have been through most of them in detail. I do not think anybody will find anything in those arrangements that one could not genuinely expect this minority Government to keep in this place. It is straightforward.

**Mr Cooper** interjected.

**Mr BEANLAND:** As the member for Crows Nest says, the member wrote that letter when he was Leader of the Opposition. He believed that he could keep those commitments. I ask the Premier: what has happened to cause him to try to walk away, to turn his back and to do yet another of the backflips for which he is well known? They did not call him "Backflip" for nothing. The public of Queensland will experience distrust and uncertainty in relation to this minority Labor Government if this particular amendment by the Leader of the Opposition is not accepted. Of course, the actual letter itself will not be worth the piece of paper it is written on. It will be nothing more than a set of words. It will not be worth a cracker. If one is not prepared to stand up for it, it certainly will not be worth the paper on which it is written. It is a straightforward commitment by the former Leader of the Opposition to the member for Nicklin for the benefit of the public of Queensland. As the member was telling us before, he is interested in genuineness, sincerity, accountability and integrity. That is what I thought this motion of confidence was all about. So Labor has moved an amendment in an attempt to wriggle its way out of

the basis of this Government. No doubt the people of Queensland have something in store for them down the track. So much for the dignity of Parliament and lifting the standards of Parliament!

Earlier today, the Premier endeavoured to portray his Government as receiving 53% of the two-party preferred vote. I think that was the figure he used.

**Mr Beattie** interjected.

**Mr BEANLAND:** I am pleased that the Premier agrees with me. Of course, that is another furphy, another attempt by the Labor Party to rewrite history. Under the situation that existed at the last election, there was no two-party preferred vote. The electoral office has not distributed it and, as I understand it, that is not something that is going to be done. It might be a lot of wishful thinking, but I say to the Premier of this State that it is not true. It does not stand up to scrutiny. It is just one of those throwaway lines that might make him look good.

We on this side of the Chamber are concerned—and, no doubt, the Government is also concerned—firstly about the Government's commitment to 5% unemployment. The time in which to achieve that figure has gone from three years to five years. Secondly, the Opposition is concerned that each day the Government has to find \$1.5m—and it has been in office some 34 days—in order to honour its election commitments. Over its three-year term, the Government has to find \$1.5m each day in order to fund its \$1.5 billion worth of election commitments. No doubt, the Government is concerned about that also.

Time expired.

---