



Speech by

BILL FELDMAN

MEMBER FOR CABOOLTURE

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INTERACTIVE GAMBLING (PLAYER PROTECTION) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—ONP) (12.30 a.m.): I must commend the Premier for what is supposed to be the heart of the Bill, which was to amend the Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Act 1998 to provide the legislative framework for ensuring that community expectations are being met in relation to the involvement of elected officials and associated persons with interactive gambling licences.

Before I go on, I must say something about the contribution of the member for Nicklin. He spoke about section 45 and the fundamental principle in relation to licensing. He said that if a licence holder has a licence and falls into disrepute during the term of his licence, that person should be called in to show just cause. But if the licence were illegally obtained and should never have been issued, that is a whole different ball game. If the licence should not have been issued, it should just be cancelled straight out—no show cause, just a straight-out cancellation.

Getting back to the Bill at hand, not only do we see this Bill as a smokescreen and totally unnecessary to achieve a just outcome but also I am absolutely appalled by the manner in which it was introduced into this House. We strongly opposed the suspension of Standing Orders to allow this Bill to be rushed through. No, not because we wanted to allow Labor mates to help themselves—inappropriately, arrogantly and with the benefit of greed-driven inside information—to millions of dollars in windfall profits, but because we believe the procedure used to introduce this legislation was inappropriate, arrogant and an abuse of the Westminster system.

We have had little time to study this legislation and to assess its benefits and its shortcomings. Indeed, we have yet to be convinced that it is even necessary. It is our firm conviction that the Premier could have acted promptly and decisively under existing legislation. This has already been highlighted several times in this House, but the Premier did not do that. The urgency about this legislation and, in fact, its very existence reeks of grandstanding. It is a thinly veiled attempt to take the high moral ground on this issue, a thinly veiled attempt by the Premier to appear strong, and a thinly veiled attempt by the Premier to show leadership. And on all three counts he has failed.

Let me refer to the opening of the Premier's second-reading speech in which he stated—

"This is a small, but very significant piece of legislation. It is a piece of legislation which I am disappointed to have to present to the Parliament."

Indeed, I share that sentiment. It is a disappointment. But obviously the Premier would find it very disappointing to have to bow his head in shame and introduce this legislation to try to remedy the corrupt activities of his Labor colleagues. He went on to say—

"It arises from circumstances where public figures placed personal gain above their responsibilities to the community and their own political party. This is something which I believe no Queenslanders can condone—and I certainly do not."

Again, I concur with what the Premier said.

However, the damage has already been done, and the voting public may not be so quick to forget the simple fact that members of the Beattie Labor Government have used their public positions

to influence Government decision making to pursue their individual interests and personally profit from such decisions. The voting public deserve to have their elected representatives of sound character, with good morals, values and ethics, who will do the right thing by their electorates and work hard towards addressing the problems that are evident in our society. But with the major parties, far too often dishonest and shady characters claiming to be worthy politicians find their way through the woodwork only to use their positions to push through Government their own personal interests. This is exactly what the general public is sick of—the corruption of present and previous Governments—and this is precisely what motivated the formation of Pauline Hanson's One Nation.

I wonder how the members of the Labor Party really feel about their union mates in the CFMEU and, more particularly, how the coalminers feel about this Labor Government. They must certainly have grave doubts about the sincerity of this Government, which has been posturing about delivering safer and better working conditions to miners yet is now prepared to delay debate on that legislation for the sole reason of pushing through this debacle. And the sole reason for delaying that legislation is just to enable them to do a bit of political point scoring and shore up their collapsing credibility and defend their corrupt stewardship of this State.

When the chips are down, this Government is far more concerned about saving its hide and that of its avaricious Labor mates than it is about the fate of the coalmine workers. When it comes to priorities, this Government has shown a remarkable propensity to look after number one. It has developed as a real art form its ability to posture about the fate of the workers, but its first allegiance is always to the chardonnay socialists.

We have heard the Premier railing loud, long and often about the involvement of the member for Surfers Paradise and the member for Crows Nest in the ill-fated memorandum of understanding and the subsequent Connolly/Ryan inquiry. But did the members for Surfers Paradise and Crows Nest or the Queensland Police Union members, such as Merv Bainbridge or Gary Wilkinson, stand to gain \$20m—whatever the figure was—out of the MOU? Not on your life! The MOU was about a police Christmas wish list. In the case of net bet, the Gocorp application was the Christmas wish list. But ho ho ho, the Treasurer, the member for Ipswich, turned out to be Santa Claus. Did the three Labor mates stand to gain some \$20m? Most definitely on the balance of probability! Would the members of the Queensland Police Union pass the required probity tests? Definitely yes! Now, could the participants in this shameful net bet fiasco survive the probity tests? We will soon find out. From what has been broadcast on radio and television and in the newspapers, we do not think so.

I seriously ask the members of this House: if they considered the MOU deserved not just one inquiry but in fact two, and this was fully supported and did not involve any illicit transfer of money—no \$20m to any of them—then what is the net bet fiasco deserving of? Like me, the general public believe that there should not be just a judicial inquiry but a full and open royal commission into it. The net in the net bet spreads far and wide, its tentacles reaching right into the very heart of Labor. Where now is the Premier's open, transparent, honest and accountable Government?

Some time ago, the Premier outlined how his Government was like the movie Star Wars and how he had heroes in his Government—great heroes. We have actually seen some of those heroes perform. We saw the member for backwash perform on the Today Tonight show. But as an actor, I do not think he quite makes it. He just does not have it. And with net bet imploding, stars such as the member for Ipswich are imploding all around the Premier. His Government now resembles another remarkable movie about space: a Mel Brooks movie called Spaceballs—a very good movie. Mel Brooks was a man of vision, but he measured it by the schwarts. And unfortunately, this Government is the only one with the schwarts. Thank God the schwarts is not on this side of the Chamber. But the similarity is remarkable. As big a joke as that movie is, that is how big a joke this Government is turning out to be.

I ask: where is the Premier's open, honest, transparent and accountable Government? All that possible impropriety and a sleazy \$20m net bet fiasco deserve is merely locking in an Auditor-General's inquiry and a CJC inquiry run by a bunch of Labor lawyers. Add it up. The MOU—no money changing hands and two full judicial inquiries. Net bet—millions, and possibly more money, and two lightweight internal inquiries. Who is protecting whom?

This legislation does not go far enough. As has already been stated, the Premier could have used his powers under the present legislation to cancel the Gocorp licence, completely restoring the faith that people had in our gaming industry. Does this legislation cancel a smelly and possibly corrupt issue of a licence? No! It simply takes out some of the Labor mates contained in the tentacles of deceit woven into this licence—in particular Navari Pty Ltd—the Navari connection, namely the member for Woodridge, Mr Livingstone and Councillor Pisasale.

The public is fed up with politicians in general, let alone corruption in relation to Labor mates, jobs for mates, insider information, abuse of power, abuse of responsibility and downright arrogance as displayed by this Labor Government. As I mentioned earlier, the community puts its trust and its faith in the members of this House to do the right thing and to represent them. The member for Ipswich and

the member for Woodridge have failed to perform this basic and fundamental task and have betrayed the trust of the people of Queensland.

The very least that could have been expected is that the member for Ipswich did not continue to receive the benefits or the entitlements that came with ministerial office. However, once again the mate network protected his job, the public of Queensland have been pick-pocketed again and we are paying top ministerial dollar for a backbench workload now being performed by the member for Ipswich. The least he could do is approach the Premier and pay him for the extra work that he is now doing. What does the Premier think about that? Oh, if only the people had the chance to vote for Heather Hill in Ipswich all over again. As has been said so many times before, this Bill is just a very shoddy piece of legislation aimed primarily at protecting Labor mates—those with a remaining interest in the Gocorp licence.

Did the Premier contact my office to arrange a briefing on this atrocious piece of legislation, considering he rushed it into the House this morning, to be debated today and voted on tonight—all in one day? No, no, no! The Premier has ripped the heart out of the One Nation budget, denied us research staff, and now rushes in legislation with little chance for the coalition, let alone One Nation with even fewer staff, and the Independents, to investigate the ramifications of this atrocious piece of legislation.

I was appalled when this integrity-deficient Government rushed through the industrial reform legislation consisting of 500 pages with some 800 amendments. The Government guillotined the debate and raced off to a Labor Party conference with the ill-gotten Act as a trophy. I thoroughly agree with what the coalition has put forward: the Premier could have quashed the licence under present legislation. This could have been done, and the public of Queensland expect it to be done.

This legislation does not go far enough and the sleepers have stacked their ill-gotten shares in the web and tentacles of this deceit. To stop any inference of guilt on this Government this licence will have to be totally scrubbed and the process must start all over again. Let us at least have time to look over this legislation and receive a briefing. Rushing the Bill through in the dead of night in a lengthy, mind-numbing, credibility-destroying sitting reeks of the very corruption that this Bill seeks to prevent. I have heard it said that this Bill reeks of what a previous coalition Government used to do. That does not excuse what this Government is doing.

Because the legislation does not go far enough and because it has the covering of camouflage, we in One Nation cannot support it. It does not satisfy the community expectations concerning this filthy little money-making exercise. It does not satisfy any of the criteria that it seeks to correct.

It is the Chinese meal equivalent of legislation. If we are forced to eat it tonight, we will only be hungry for a more substantial legislative meal tomorrow. It has been displayed that there are plenty of hungry players on the floor at the moment. As the member for Gladstone has already said, if a whitewash comes back from the Auditor-General and the CJC, it may very well state that the letter of the law has been followed, but what about the spirit of the law? The questions remain unanswered and the extremities of the net are unseen. For full confidence in this Government, the licence must be revoked. On the surface, this legislation appears good but it has no depth—no meat—and we will not support the Bill.
