



Speech by

**Hon. J. ELDER**

**MEMBER FOR CAPALABA**

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Hansard 17 August 1999

**INTERACTIVE GAMBLING (PLAYER PROTECTION) AMENDMENT BILL**

**Hon. J. P. ELDER** (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (5.24 p.m.): What the Government is doing today is putting completely up front its actions in relation to this matter through the introduction of this legislation—far from, as the acting Leader of the Opposition says, covering up jobs for the boys. The Government is dealing with this matter in an appropriate and responsible manner by withdrawing the ability for these people to have any moment at all.

What have we seen from the Opposition? It has undertaken no research on this issue. It has produced no facts. There has been no investigation. All the acting Leader of the Opposition has done is repeat the allegations that have been raised in the Courier-Mail. We have had a lot of posturing from the Opposition. The acting Leader of the Opposition is darn good at that. His actions prove—and have proved for some time, which is why he is under pressure from his backbench—that he is a commentator on Queensland politics. He is not a participator, and has not been a participator in politics in this State for some time. On this issue, with the Courier-Mail again taking the lead, the acting Leader of the Opposition is nothing but a commentator.

In the last 20 minutes—and even before that—we have seen simply a rehash of the allegations that he has made time and time again. We have heard all the conspiracy theories that the acting Leader of the Opposition weaves into any presentation. We hear one conspiracy theory after the other. The fact of the matter is that it is crunch time. Those opposite have to vote to match the standards set by their rhetoric. The standards set by this Government are not about to be matched by the Opposition. The Opposition had the inability in Government to deliver good government with appropriate standards. Where is the acting Leader of the Opposition now when he is called upon to set standards in relation to this matter? He is found wanting. The Opposition is found wanting.

The acting Leader of the Opposition had his chance tonight to become a participant in politics in this State. He had an opportunity to change the way that he has been acting over the past 12 months, but he failed. When he had a chance to do something he failed miserably. He comes into this House and jumps up with one-liners—something he is good at—but when it comes to actually doing something with the crux of this issue he is found wanting. He wimps out, as he always wimps out. The one thing that I know the acting Leader of the Opposition lacks is ticker—is heart. He has lacked ticker and heart for a long, long time. Today we have heard more allegations—

**Mr Seeney:** Look who is talking.

**Mr ELDER:** If the member for Callide had any sense he would have done the right thing with his vote and supported the member for Toowoomba South. But what happened? When the chance came in his first term in Parliament for him to stand up and make a decision, he wimped as well. We know how many double-crossed the member for Toowoomba South at the end of the day, because it was the talk in the bar. We know whom the member for Toowoomba South could not rely on when the time came. The member for Callide wimped it as well. The Opposition's wimping has landed it with an acting Leader of the Opposition who at all stages of this debate has lacked integrity and forthrightness and has been as duplicitous and hypocritical as he has been in the past.

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Dr Watson** interjected.

**Mr ELDER:** I will take the interjection from the Leader of the Liberal Party. He cannot talk because at the end of the day he was sold a dummy in relation to Deloitte. It is a different issue, but I have to say that it is a despicable and disgraceful effort on the honourable member's part. It has not gone down well in the business community. The member for Moggill has lost a lot of credibility because the acting Leader of the Opposition sold him the dummy and he was quite prepared to take it. This proves lack of nous and is the reason why he will not be in his position much longer. I say to the Leader of the Liberal Party—and I say it as someone who believes that he may have some potential—do not take the dummy from him. The member for Moggill should not run on the advice that he gets from the acting Leader of the Opposition's office because he will lose credibility.

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Dr Watson** interjected.

**Mr ELDER:** You have lost a lot of credibility in the last week. You do not need me to tell you that; all you have to do is make a few phone calls to members of the Liberal Party to find out how much credibility you have lost in the last seven days.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Mickel): Order! It would be better if the Deputy Premier addressed his comments through the Chair and it would also be better if the interjections from the member for Callide and the member for Moggill ceased.

**Mr ELDER:** All we have had today is more allegations—

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I just asked the member for Callide to stop interjecting. He is now warned.

**Mr ELDER:** We have heard more allegations today in the acting Leader of the Opposition's contribution. He says that all these issues raise eyebrows. He says that all of this needs to be questioned. He asks, "Who else is in there?" What he means is, "Let's throw some mud because if we throw enough, some of it will stick." That was the type of attitude that the Liberal Party adopted last week. The Liberal Party was saying, "Let's throw some mud and see what sticks." I invite honourable members to look at the calibre of the allegations that have been made. Let us look at the high moral ground occupied by those opposite—this lofty position from which they presume to lecture others on propriety. If there is a silver lining on the dark cloud of the Borbidge/Sheldon years it was that Queenslanders were reminded of just how shoddy the coalition was when it was previously in Government.

Let me take members of the House back to a time of a political soap opera matched by none. It would be amusing if it were not true, but it is. It began with the involvement of the Police Union in the crucial Mundingburra by-election. Only days after the new Government being sworn in, it was revealed that just weeks before Mundingburra, the new Police Minister, Russell Cooper, and the Premier at the time, Rob Borbidge, had signed a secret agreement with the Police Union. It was a sleazy deal to win a by-election. It promised increased police powers and a winding back of the powers of the CJC.

**Mr Knuth** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Mickel): Order! The honourable member for Burdekin will cease interjecting. If the honourable member wants to interject or participate, he should do so from his own seat.

**Mr ELDER:** If he does, I will give him a lesson in history.

The CJC was targeted by the deal. It was necessary to appoint an independent figure in Kenneth Carruthers to investigate whether the Police Minister, Russell Cooper, or the Premier at the time, Rob Borbidge, were involved in a by-election deal in an attempt at electoral bribery to induce the Police Union to support the coalition in Mundingburra. The Premier and senior Government Ministers appeared before the Carruthers inquiry. The Treasurer at the time, Joan Sheldon, and other Liberal Ministers took the stand and exposed serious discrepancies in the testimony of both the Premier at the time, Rob Borbidge, and the Police Minister, Russell Cooper.

The Government launched a determined effort to undermine the CJC's inquiry. In fact, at that time it seemed that is all that it did and it forgot about running the State.

**A Government member** interjected.

**Mr ELDER:** I will take the interjection, because I will refer to it again. The member is right: those members were never cleared, because the then Government scuttled the inquiry. The then Government launched a determined effort to undermine the CJC's ability to investigate that case. It forgot about running the State, it forgot about the economy and it forgot about jobs. However, it

slashed the CJC's budget to limit its ability to investigate the case. The then Government announced a judicial review into the CJC and, as we all know, appointed a vocal critic of the commission, Peter Connolly, QC, to head it.

**Mr SEENEY:** I rise to a point of order. Does this have any relevance to the Bill before the House?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Mickel): Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr ELDER:** It is very relevant, because it is about introducing legislation to set a standard. It was never within the auspices of the Government at the time to do anything like that. I am going to give the members opposite a lesson in history, and they are going to listen.

**Mr HOBBS:** I rise to a point of order. Could the Minister advise the House as to the part of this legislation that relates to the Carruthers inquiry?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

**Mr ELDER:** When Connolly was appointed to head the inquiry, it was known then that Connolly had advised Russell Cooper on the Carruthers inquiry which, at the time, rejected any allegations of wrongdoing.

**Mr SEENEY:** I rise to a point of order. I respectfully submit that this has absolutely no relevance to the Bill before the House.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr ELDER:** The inquiry gave Connolly the power to investigate the Carruthers inquiry before it had concluded. This legislation is about appropriate action by Government. When a Government is tested, it is how it responds that matters. In this case, we are responding with the introduction of this legislation. For the benefit of those members opposite who are preaching from the high moral ground, I am pointing out where their responsibility lay when they were last in Government and, in relation to that responsibility, how they were found missing in action.

Carruthers believed that that inquiry was set up to scuttle him, that it threatened his independence and that he had no choice but to resign before making a finding on the former Premier, Rob Borbidge, and the former Police Minister, Russell Cooper. How convenient that the inquiry was scuttled before Carruthers made a finding. Carruthers said, "Two of the persons into whose conduct and possible misconduct I am currently inquiring have participated in setting up a commission of inquiry into my inquiry into them." That is exactly what happened. The inquiry was scuttled. What a farce! To make matters worse, the person appointed to head the inquiry was none other than Connolly, who had been appointed as the Police Minister's barrister for the Carruthers inquiry.

After Carruthers' resignation, the Supreme Court found that the Connolly/Ryan inquiry should be closed down due to the overwhelming evidence that its chairman, Connolly, was biased. We are talking about taking appropriate action and responsibility. Who appointed Connolly? None other than Denver Beanland, the Attorney-General at the time. He was responsible for wasting \$11m of taxpayers' money on a biased inquiry to nobble Carruthers and to protect the leader at the time, Rob Borbidge, and the then Police Minister, Russell Cooper. Denver Beanland, the Attorney-General at that time, delivered that for the Government. When the Parliament moved a motion of no confidence in the Attorney-General, did he resign? No, he did not resign, but he was quite prepared to waste \$11m of taxpayers' money!

The coalition had barely been in office when the Police Union matter came up. Then who was up to their raised eyebrows in corrupt activity? None other than the members of the then Government—the member for Surfers Paradise and the member for Crows Nest! Did they stand down while the investigation was under way? No way did they stand down!

The reality of life is that the members opposite have a nerve to come in here and talk about the standards of morality and propriety when in Government they squibbed it themselves, when in Government they lacked the integrity to do it, and when in Government they lacked the ability, the intellectual rigour and the morality to do it. When the members opposite were last in Government, the standards that they now preach as being good and proper were not good enough for them. In this place, the coalition is really good at preaching but, when it comes to action, it is no good at all. At the time, the coalition had only bucket loads of gratuitous abuse for the CJC.

At the time when the CJC was investigating a deal that went right to the heart of how the coalition won office, there was not even a moment's thought from the Premier and the Police Minister of standing down. Yet now the coalition demands stand downs all round. The fact of the matter is that the worst offender of all was the previous Government's Attorney-General, because he set up that farce to scuttle the Carruthers inquiry. When the House censured the then Attorney-General and found no confidence in him, did he stand down? No! That was the standard set by the previous Government. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition, who at the time was Premier, went as far as saying that he had legal

advice that the Attorney-General could stay. There was no leadership, no morality and no propriety then from the Opposition. No! The simple fact is that the Opposition has no right—about as much right as Arthur Daly—to lecture the Government on morals.

Today, we have heard a lot of contributions from members opposite. At the end of the day, it is simply this: we will have an investigation conducted by the Auditor-General. I suspect that when the CJC reports on its investigation, it will show—as I expect will the Attorney-General—that in relation to this process, everything was aboveboard. However, when that time comes, I expect to hear nothing from the coalition. When I say "coalition", I mean the newly expanded coalition, which includes the members of One Nation. As I said, when these reports come down from the Auditor-General and the CJC—because the coalition will get reports from the Auditor-General and the CJC—I expect them to find that the process was aboveboard. But mark my words, when those reports come down, complaints will then be raised by those opposite about the CJC. Let me tell the members opposite that, over the years, the CJC has never done us any favours. One only has to look at the records to see that.

**Mr Seeney:** Ha, Ha!

**Mr ELDER:** See, it has started already. I bet that when those reports come down and the process has been seen to be aboveboard, the members opposite will complain.

The actions of the Treasurer in relation to this matter have been appropriate. His actions have been those of a responsible Minister of the Government, which is in stark contrast to the actions and the behaviour of Ministers of the previous Government. In introducing this legislation to deal with the issue once and for all, the Government has acted in stark contrast to the previous Government. This is all about politics. This is all about throwing as much mud as possible. This is all about the politics of the National and the Liberal Parties, the politics of Rob Borbidge and, unfortunately, the politics of the Leader of the Liberal Party.

Politicians do not have a great name. People are sick and tired of politicians who wallow in this form of mud slinging and moralising and they know for a fact that the record of the previous administration is pretty poor. People see through that and they have seen through it time and time again. The coalition had a terrible record when last in Government and it is exposed as duplicitous and hypocritical in relation to its criticism of both the Treasurer and the introduction of this legislation.

All I have to say to those opposite—and they should mark these words—is: put up or shut up. This is one of those times when legislation will be introduced and they will be found wanting. When that happens, the hypocrisy will be dripping from them in relation to this issue. Once and for all the people of Queensland will see just how duplicitous, hypocritical and untrustworthy the Opposition is on this issue. The coalition is not worthy of being in Opposition in this State. This State deserves an Opposition that understands that with matters such as these there is appropriate action to take, and that is the action that this Government has taken. Members opposite are not fit to be in Opposition in this State. It is a pity that I have to say that, but it annoys me to see the actions that the Opposition has taken in relation to this matter. Coalition members have no other agenda but to throw as much mud as they can in the shortest possible time. When these processes are revealed to be aboveboard, they will be back into it again.

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