



Speech by

JOHN MICKEL

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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LIBERAL PARTY BRANCH STACKING

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (12 p.m.): Michael Johnson's withdrawal from the contest for Liberal Party preselection for the Federal seat of Ryan even before nominations have been called is a temporary setback for Queensland's tourism industry. I notice in the House the presence of the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing. I ask him to take special note of what will be a decline in tourism early next year. This decline will occur because the right of hundreds of eligible overseas delegates to vote under the curious rules of the Queensland Liberal Party will be now denied to them.

It was a major rebuff for the takeover plans of the member for Clayfield and the faction he dominates. Mr Johnson's dumping by the Santoro stack, which had been both encouraging and supporting him, was a wholesale abandonment of Mr Johnson, who has been—

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. I regard some of the personal references being made by the honourable member speaking now as offensive and I ask them to be withdrawn.

Mr MICKEL: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker, in much the same way as Mr Johnson had to. Mr Johnson has been mistreated and was nothing more than a stalking horse for another challenge by someone else later. The withdrawal in no way diminishes the serious charge raised in this House two weeks ago. The Liberal Party executive refuses to confront ethnic branch stacking engulfing the Federal seats of Ryan and Moreton under the loosest membership rules of any serious political party in Australia. The member for Clayfield gave a rambling, incoherent, verbose reply full of the personal family abuse that is his trademark.

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. I regard the personal reflections of the honourable member as offensive. I do not regard my comments as being rambling or vague.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy): Order! The honourable member has asked for withdrawal.

Mr SANTORO: I have asked the honourable member to withdraw those comments.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member does not need to expand on that. The member will withdraw.

Mr Hamill: He didn't object to "verbose".

Mr MICKEL: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker, and retain the word "verbose".

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, I find offensive the lack of willingness by the honourable member to withdraw those comments. I ask him to withdraw those personal reflections.

Mr MICKEL: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker, but the fact of the matter is that in any court of law he would be guilty as charged. It is the same for poor old—

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. I find offensive the suggestions by the honourable member that I would be guilty as charged.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No. I listened to that carefully. That was not anything that could be regarded as offensive.

Mr SANTORO: The word "he"?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not believe the comment that he made was offensive.

Mr MICKEL: I thank the Deputy Speaker for his protection. This is the member who gets up and blaggards in the most personal and objectionable way the member for Springwood's family and the

personalities of public servants, yet here he is today, on his feet. He cannot cop it. The fact of the matter is that he is a shiver looking for a spine to go up, and everybody knows it.

It is the same for poor old Con Galtos, who has nearly gone cross-eyed trying to see which way he should jump. One day he was saying that Mr Moore had nothing to worry about; the next day he was defending the right of any member to challenge using blatant ethnic branch stacking as the weapon. We even had the member for Clayfield, that betrayer of ethnic communities with his infamous One Nation preference deal, saying it was great to see people of ethnic origins joining the Liberal Party.

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. I find those comments about myself offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr MICKEL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw, but I must say that the ethnic communities found it absolutely objectionable that they were betrayed in this way.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member simply to withdraw and then get on with his speech.

Mr MICKEL: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker.

That would have been fine if they had joined out of genuine interest. More people should legitimately be part of the democratic process. But any pretence of legitimacy was blown away by Professor C. L. Chiou in the Sydney Morning Herald of 13 November. The professor's admission was breathtaking in its honesty and openness in relation to the lax Liberal Party membership rules. He said—

"With the Labor Party, you have all the factions and the party machine and it is very hard. You have to know people. It is easy with the Liberals."

As the journalist, Greg Roberts, wrote—

"Many of the newcomers do not live in the electorate. Some have residential addresses in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore. Under party rules members are not required to live in the electorate they enrol in. They don't have to live in Australia. It is a branch stacker's wonderland."

So rather than joining the Liberal Party out of genuine interest, these overseas members are being blatantly used in this branch stacker's wonderland to entrench the member for Clayfield's control of the Queensland branch of the Liberal Party. The ultimate aim of getting rid of Mr Moore is to hasten the demise of John Howard and install Peter Costello.

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. I regard those personal references to me as offensive. I ask that the member withdraw them.

Mr MICKEL: Mr Deputy Speaker, if he is the life of the party, one can see how dull the party is.

I have it from very reliable sources from the highest echelons of the Queensland Liberal Party that the member for Clayfield has been seen in Parliament House in Canberra five or six times this year operating out of the office of his Canberra representative, the Federal member for Fisher, Mr Peter Slipper. The member for Clayfield had himself made ethnic affairs spokesman late last year. Apart from his foray—

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. I find the comments that I am operating out of any member's office offensive. I go to Canberra to pursue shadow ministerial responsibilities, which I do very well. I ask the honourable member for Springwood to withdraw them.

Mr MICKEL: I withdraw. The member for Clayfield made himself ethnic affairs spokesman late last year, but apart from his foray into the recruitment of a section of then—

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. I find the comments that I made myself ethnic affairs spokesman offensive because I was appointed. I ask the honourable member to withdraw that suggestion, which is untrue.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member knows the rules. If he wants something withdrawn, he should just ask for the withdrawal and then the Chair will make a decision on it.

Mr SANTORO: I would like those comments withdrawn.

Mr MICKEL: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker. I say this for the member for Clayfield: the only thing he has ever achieved on his own is dandruff.

Apart from his foray into the recruitment of a section of the then Taiwanese community, the ethnic communities of Brisbane and Queensland are still waiting to hear from him, and now we know why. They are still waiting to hear from him with an apology for stabbing them in the back with his One Nation preference deal.

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. I find those comments by the honourable member for Springwood offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr MUSGROVE: I rise to a point of order. The member for Logan is speaking.

Mr MICKEL: Mr Deputy Speaker, the poor member for Clayfield is so confused today that he is starting to mix us all up. There are probably a few defeated Liberal Party candidates and former Liberal

members of Parliament waiting in vain for the same apology. At least Professor Chiou should be commended for his honesty about the whole exercise.

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I will listen to the honourable member, but I find it very difficult to find the honourable member's objection to the remarks I have just heard.

Mr SANTORO: No. When I asked for the last withdrawal, the honourable member did not withdraw. I ask you, Mr Deputy Speaker, to ask him to do so.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Clayfield did ask the member for Logan to withdraw that comment.

Mr MICKEL: I withdraw. At least Professor Chiou should be commended for his honesty about the whole exercise. Rather than a healthy exercise in democracy, it is a shabby misuse of one section of the ethnic community to demolish factional opponents.

I mentioned when I began that Mr Johnson's withdrawal will be a setback for the tourism and travel industry in the first half of next year, but it is only a temporary one. The overseas airlines stood to make a financial windfall from the Liberal Party's fly in, fly out membership operation with dozens of bemused new recruits flying in from far-flung destinations to queue up to vote in a Liberal Party preselection vote in some smoke-filled room in Kenmore or Indooroopilly. We can just imagine what the customs and migration officers at the international airport would have made of it all. They would have been gobsmacked when under the section "Purpose of visit" they read something like "to destroy the Australian Defence Minister".

In some countries that would guarantee life in prison. In the Queensland Liberal Party, it would probably get someone life membership. When people are forced to listen to the member for Clayfield, as we are in this place, I am not sure which is the worse fate. The rise in membership is a boon for the Liberal Party in Redcliffe which, according to the Peninsula newspaper, designs and sells T-shirts to all new members. Because Redcliffe is handy to the international airport, the T-shirt sales at least will give a tourism flavour for all the new international Liberal Party arrivals when they are met at the airport and before they are whisked away to vote in any preselection in Queensland. As I said, we are being temporarily denied this mob scene at Brisbane Airport, but only temporarily, because the current Liberal Party executive has not had the courage to solve the problem quickly.

Rather than take immediate action, the Liberal Party executive has set up a committee to review the Liberal Party's constitution. That sounds fine, but who have they put in charge of the review? It is none other than Mr George Brandis—

Time expired.
