



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 24 August 1999

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER'S RULING

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (5.12 p.m.): Let me oppose this nonsense. Today, the Opposition is wasting the time of this Parliament on a frivolous stunt. I will talk about the truth, which is what the Opposition Leader raises in this House. There is only one side of the Parliament that is being untruthful, and it is the Opposition. I refer to the record of the Parliament and what was said by the Leader of the Opposition. The Hansard accurately reported what I said, which was—

"And is it my fault that the bloody Clerk's office lost it?"

Office, office, office! What did Mr Borbidge do? He said—

"I rise to a point of order. Is it acceptable to the Chair to have the Premier swearing at the Clerk?"

At the Clerk, not the office. So who tells the truth? I do. The Leader of the Opposition did not. I took exception, because under no circumstances would I swear at the Clerk. I made the position absolutely clear, and the record shows it.

We had from the Leader of the Opposition not only dishonesty but also he came in here and made a very vicious personal attack on the member for Mansfield. Did he want to deal with issues? No! What did he do? He came in here and, in his typical style, sought to vilify and attack in a very personal and unparliamentary way the member for Mansfield. Could the Leader of the Opposition deal with the ruling by the member for Mansfield? No! He had to get into the gutter and deal with it in a vicious way.

What I said is recorded clearly by Hansard. When this matter was raised, the Opposition, as it always seeks to do, adopted the Richard Nixon approach. The Leader of the Opposition is very good at it: you spin it, you tell half a truth, you try to manufacture it, you distort it and you try to tell half-truths, which is what he did. I made it clear that I would not find the behaviour alleged acceptable. I made it absolutely clear. I personally went to the Clerk—a person for whom I have respect. Mr Speaker, in your presence I made it clear what I had said because under no circumstances would I show that disrespect for someone for whom I personally have a great deal of respect, and so do both sides of this Parliament. Mr Speaker, in your presence and in the presence of the Attorney-General, I made my view absolutely clear.

However, I will now get to the heart of all this. This all started because the Leader of the Liberal Party and the Opposition had on a number of occasions dishonestly made reference to a letter that I had tabled in this Parliament in relation to my pecuniary interests. On 17 August the member for Moggill said—

"We already know what the Premier is like. He gives us some things, and he always leaves out the crucial pages. We saw that earlier, when he tabled a letter about his own involvement in Labor companies back in 1992 which he failed to put into the register. He left out an appendix and he has never found it. We still do not know what they are."

I have them. Thanks to the Clerk's office, they have been found. The truth about this is that it is exactly as I told the House. In fact, I wrote a letter to the Clerk—not the current Clerk, and my reference was to the previous Clerk's office—on 9 August, a copy of which I now have, which the current Clerk has found, and to it is attached a letter, the so-called missing letter. It is a letter from my solicitor, Peter Channell and Associates, dated 9 August. It explains in great detail exactly why I behaved appropriately in terms

of the return of my pecuniary interest. It not only lauds my behaviour but also I draw everyone's attention to a letter that I received from the then Clerk, Alan Woodward, in which he states—

"Given the circumstances outlined in your advice from Peter Channell and Associates, no action will be or needs to be taken."

In other words, I had acted properly entirely throughout this whole matter. I table all of those letters for the information of the House.

If we had not had the Richard Nixon approach from the Opposition, that is, the continual untruths, misrepresentations and dishonesty, this matter would never have happened. Thanks to the current Clerk, I now have all the material that happened to be misfiled in days gone by. I table it for the permanent record of this House. Let us hear no more untruths from the Leader of the Liberal Party or anyone else about my pecuniary interests. The facts speak for themselves. In this debate, we have not only exposed the Opposition's dishonesty in the past but also we have exposed the half-truths from the Leader of the Opposition based on our own Hansard record.

I refer to this word "bloody" that has been mentioned. I am an Australian. "Bloody" is a colloquial Australian term. It may well have been a swear word prior to World War I. It may well have been a swear word in 1910. However, it is not today. Although it is not the sort of word that one may use in the sheltered company occupied by the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr Mackenroth: Or Surfers Paradise.

Mr BEATTIE: Or limited people in his small group at Surfers Paradise, and most people in Surfers Paradise would agree, ordinary Australians use the term "bloody" every day. Some members would recall the movie They're a Weird Mob. In that movie, the Italian migrant got in the cab and said, "Take me to Kings-bloody-Cross." The word is part of Australian colloquialism. If the Leader of the Opposition gets sensitive about such a word, then heaven help us. The word is colloquial Australian and, frankly, I do not see anything at all wrong with its use.

Ms Bligh: They would need to turn off the TV.

Mr BEATTIE: The members opposite would need to turn off the TV. Let me assure them that if they listened to Triple J, they would hear a lot more than that word, and that is the ABC.

Ms Bligh: What about the Toyota ad?

Mr BEATTIE: We have the Toyota ad. Good heavens! If we had Mr Borbidge's censorship, we would go back to black and white TV and we would have ads in monosyllables. The ads would say, "This is Dick and this is Dora and they are having a lovely time. Please buy Toyota."

Mr SPEAKER: As long as the Premier does not go to Kings Cross.

Mr BEATTIE: That is right. There would be none of this, "Take me to Kings-bloody-Cross."

This is a nonsense. It is a waste of taxpayers' money. It is a beat up and they know it. I make the point very clearly: I have never denied making the remark that is recorded accurately in Hansard. I deny making the remark that was made by the Leader of the Opposition on that day and today when he sought to twist it.

Mr Mackenroth: He's the twister.

Mr BEATTIE: He is the twister. He seeks to twist words to get an outcome and exudes false indignation like one would see only on stage at some theatrical or operatic performance. One would not see such a performance from any normal Australian.

I stand by my concern about this issue. I am delighted that this matter has been resolved. I thank the current Clerk for resolving the issue and finding the correspondence. I thank him for his assistance. That correspondence is now tabled.

I repeat what I said before: I find the Leader of the Opposition's attempt to carry out a personal and political assassination on the member for Mansfield despicable. It shows that the Leader of the Opposition has no respect for Parliament. He comes in here on a daily basis and pulls the Parliament down to new depths. As a Government, we are restoring some integrity in the Parliament. We have lifted the standards significantly. It is the Opposition that is dragging down the standards.

This Government has set a three-minute answer period for Ministers during question time. Every morning, Ministers get three minutes to answer questions because of this new standard. Members of the Opposition have never been able to ask as many questions as they have been able to ask under this Government. Never before in the history of the Parliament has that happened. However, what happens? Constant interjections and trivial points of order are made, which disrupt those three minutes and significantly prevent the dissemination of important information to Queenslanders and for the important record of the Parliament. It is about time that the Leader of the Opposition and other members of the Opposition lifted their game.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Exactly, he does that every day. He comes in here and distorts the truth and tries to manufacture information. However, it takes two to tango, and the Government is determined to lift the standards of this Parliament and our behaviour reflects that. The Opposition has failed. It is dragging the Parliament into the gutter for cheap political purposes. The debate tonight is nothing more than a cheap political stunt. We should be dealing with serious issues such as education, health, jobs and Queensland's future.
