



Speech by

**Mr SANTO SANTORO**

**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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### **LABOR PARTY CRONYISM**

**Mr SANTORO** (Clayfield—LP) (11.29 a.m.): The ongoing unravelling of the net bet scandal is unfortunately just one serious manifestation of Labor's predilection when in Government to look after its supporters and related baggage carriers. The Premier has talked long and loud about ethics and public probity, but the reality of this Government is far different. It is a Government that has changed the rules so that notification of chief executive vacancies do not have to be advertised. It is a Government that has given the Premier the power to do away with selection panels for these jobs. It is a Government that has given itself the power to move this merit principle demolition job down to the SES level.

All in all, it is a Government that views merit and equity with disdain, and its actions highlight it. What other Government would be a party to the Acting Public Service Commissioner by his own directive exempting his own job from being advertised? It is outrageous and it is rotten to the core.

Back in 1991, in a number of speeches I pointed out to this House the extent to which cronyism was creeping into the State Public Service and in the appointments to statutory positions, committees and boards. Yet what we now see in the Beattie Labor Government is an acceleration of this disgraceful approach. I will shortly table a preliminary document that sets out various ALP connected people appointed to important positions and at the taxpayers' expense. I say "preliminary", because there are no doubt others not included in this list, and Labor's insatiable appetite to look after its mates will ensure that this list will grow and grow, so long as the ALP remains in power—a circumstance which, if the events of the past five weeks are any indication, may be much shorter than many ALP hangers-on anticipated.

It is important that the taxpayers of Queensland know who their hard-earned money is supporting. Let me start with an initial selection of chief executives

appointed by this Government—people appointed for five-year terms, generally without a merit and equity selection process and with salaries that were increased by around \$20,000 to \$50,000 as one of the first acts of the Beattie Government. First there is the totally discredited Public Service Commissioner, Brian Head—discredited because what sort of a man, charged with promoting the merit principle in the public sector, would ever issue a directive that exempted the job he was acting in from a merit selection process? He is a discredited Labor hanger-on and has no credibility at all.

Then there is Marg O'Donnell, heading Equity and Fair Trading—having never previously been a chief executive officer, having not gone through a merit and equity selection process, and who for many years has been a Labor Party hanger-on. Bob Marshman no doubt got his old job as chief executive officer of DETIR back in no small part due to the fact that he was chairing the Labor Party public sector transition to government team.

As my time is short, I will move to former Labor DGs who have been looked after. We have Barry Smith, Wayne Goss' old mate and previously DG of Justice, then Attorney General's and finally Lands, and now the chairperson of the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission. We have Ruth Matchett, the totally discredited head of Families, now re-emerging from disgrace on the Legal Aid Board. And we have the absolutely discredited, venomous and foul-mouthed Jacki Byrne back on the payroll in the Premier's Department.

I say "discredited" because, although this political hack took the former Government to the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal for sacking her and obtained more than \$30,000 in damages, when one reads the judgment of Marjorie Pagani, it is obvious that the only reason she got a cent was that the member for Beaudesert sacked her too quickly. If he had waited a day or two and received the full information about her inappropriate use of public resources for the failed Mundingburra campaign, she would not have got a cent.

Yet here we are; she rips damages and costs from the taxpayers last year and then without competing for a job with other applicants, she leeches more money from the taxpayers this year. In the meantime she did the numbers in Ferny Grove to ensure that the Socialist Left got its nominee and now member up, instead of Labor Unity. That is her parting gesture as a number cruncher for the AWU.

It is no wonder that the fast disintegrating Labor Unity faction which, as net bet shows, is pretty good at looking after mates, has so little confidence in its ostensible member, the Premier, when he actually rewards Byrne who, by her actions, ensured that this dying faction could not even get a replacement member for the retiring Glen Milliner. At least the honest citizens of Queensland should thank the Premier for doing so much to destroy Labor Unity, a goal which he has had since he formed the reform group in the late 1970s and Labor Unity was then the Old Guard.

Then we have numerous ALP former politicians who, in the twilight of their extra parliamentary political lives, deserve from this Government's point of view even more injections of taxpayer funds to ensure that they live the lifestyle they have become accustomed to. Poor old Keith De Lacy obviously did not get nearly enough of a golden handshake, so he is now Chair of Ergon Energy. Brian "Digger" Davis, who was the member for Brisbane Central on and off from 1969 to 1989, received an odds-on favourite when he was appointed to the Queensland Harness Racing Board.

Wayne Goss should be especially pleased. He was commissioned to advise on private sector funding for infrastructure, and every solicitors and accountants firm wants him as an associate or consultant because having him connected with their firm is a guarantee of lots of work from this Government. On top of that, and when he is not drowning in sorrow with French champagne and caviar, this battler from Inala is no doubt discussing the merit of Blue Poles in his capacity as Chairperson of the Art Gallery Board of Trustees or the joys of jogging as Chairman of the Goodwill Games Committee.

Then there is Molly Robson, the former member for Springwood and Minister for the Environment and soon to be Labor Party President, who managed to achieve one of the biggest electoral swings in Queensland history against her, who was appointed as a member of the Auctioneers and Agents Committee. No doubt she will be pondering rusty utes—but more of that later. Labor's largesse is not limited to retired State members. Let us look after retired federal members as well! Why not employ poor old John Kerin? No doubt his federal payout was not enough to take care of his lifestyle. The member for Inala has rushed to the rescue and he is now the Chairman of the Fisheries Management Authority board.

But I will give this Government its due: it does not forget its organisational mates. For a start, as we know, it appointed Don Brown, the president of this mates' rates organisation, as a commissioner on the Queensland Industrial Relations Court. Then we have John Bird, ALP Treasurer, who is a member of the soon to be privatised TAB. The list goes on and on.

But the gold medal for cronyism without a shadow of doubt goes to the member for Mount Isa. This is the Minister who was so weak and could not handle the Opposition in the debates on the Coal Mining Safety and Health Bill last week that he had to rely on the guillotine being moved to prevent the public becoming even more aware of his incapacity to answer even the simplest of questions. His performance last week was so substandard that from now on he will be known as the "Minister for Trust Me" because that was all he could say. Now this Minister, whose performance in Parliament on electricity dividends and mine safety was so abysmal, stands out as one of the biggest promoters of cronyism in this crony ridden Government.

Just last month this AWU faction lightweight stacked its so-called community power watchdog group in far north Queensland—the Far North Queensland Electricity Council. Of the seven members of this body, five are affiliated with the ALP. Starting with Cairns Mayor and ALP stalwart Tom Pyne, the member for Mount Isa appointed Mareeba Shire Mayor and former ALP candidate for Leichhardt, Chris Lewis; Labor Party Cairns branch president, Michael Bailey; Labor Party Cooktown branch vice-president, Colin Burns; and Edmonton chook farmer and former president of the ALP's Leichhardt's federal divisional executive.

Can we expect further largesse in helping our long suffering electricity consumers, as the member for Mount Isa moves down the coast? One hopes not! These are a few examples of what is happening. We are witnessing a mates' rates administration; the most hypocritical Government in recent history; a Government that is both incompetent and morally corrupt; a Government on the ropes, but still strutting around full of arrogance and intoxicated with the allure of power and the distribution of spoils. This is a Government that got into George Street by default—by the historical anomaly of One Nation and the fact that its Labor leaning Independent in Nicklin is keeping it alive by his constant support. This is a Government rotten to the core. Net bet is only the tip of the iceberg.

The coalition will be exposing Labor's hypocrisy, its nepotism, its cronyism and its incompetence. It is a one-term Government and will be tipped out on its ear once the electorate becomes more aware of its behaviour, its arrogance and inability to govern this State for the betterment of people who are other than its mates.

I table the first of the coalition's list of people appointed by the Beattie Labor Government with Labor union and other partisan connections. We give notice that we will continue to update this list. We call on all decent thinking whistleblowers within the Public Service, on statutory authorities and right across Queensland to make contact—anonously if they wish, because we can always check these things out. We invite members of the Queensland Public Service and members of the general public to do in Labor cronies because they will help to expose the hypocritical attitude of this Government in power which, in Opposition, said something totally different to what it is practising in terms of cronyism now that it is in Government.