



Speech by

Mr SANTO SANTORO

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Hansard 9 November 1999

MR M. JOHNSON; COMMENTS BY MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (7.14 p.m.): This morning, the member for Springwood made a disgraceful contribution. He made a series of totally unsubstantiated allegations about Mr Michael Johnson, an energetic and very hardworking Liberal, claiming that he was seeking to sign up members of the Indian community for the purposes of branch stacking. The member for Springwood misused parliamentary privilege. He did not name names. He did not give details to back up vague and imprecise allegations. It was a very cheap attempt at character assassination. It was a total fabrication. Not one scintilla of evidence was produced.

Whenever a member stands in this Parliament and makes statements like "Mr Johnson approached the leaders of my local Indian community and asked them if they would like to join the Liberal Party", without saying whom he approached, when he approached them and what exactly was said, one has to view such a statement with suspicion. But I will inform the House that I welcome the efforts of fellow Liberals to reach out to our ethnic communities and bring them into the political process. Unlike the Labor Party, we do not take the ethnic communities for granted. The Liberal Party is an inclusive organisation, and it has been very successful during recent months in attracting many members of various ethnic communities both to join the party and to make a very successful and welcome contribution. It will not be long before we see some of those members elected to this Chamber.

I suspect that much of the member for Springwood's comments are motivated by sour grapes and jealousy, because it is clear that, as time goes on, our ethnic communities have woken up to the Labor Party. They are realising more and more that it is the Liberal Party which is closest to their ideals—supportive of the family unit, encouraging private enterprise and strong

law and order policies. We actually practise multiculturalism. But of course, the Labor Party has a fixation with branch stacking, nepotism and corruption.

The member for Springwood would know only too well that he should be the very last one to try to character assassinate others. The Musgrove gang are well known. If the member for Springwood wants to have a debate about lack of ethics, I will be happy to refer to his time and activities in the Premier's Department while he was paid by the taxpayers to be a non-political public servant. Then we have Ross Musgrove and Ashley Musgrove, the honourable member's older and younger brothers, who are employed by the Police Minister as police and correctional services advisers. It must be good when three members of one family are all being paid out of the public coffers due to their membership of the ALP.

The Musgrove gang are only outdone by the Budd bunch, four of whom are employed—mum, dad and, of course, both sons—in the offices of the Primary Industries Minister, the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Education. I now appreciate how the Labor Party is aiming to achieve its 5% jobs target—give employment to every single member of various card-carrying Labor members' families. As Peter Morley said in the Sunday Mail of 26 September, each of these members of the ALP extended political family must be incredibly talented.

So I view with contempt the member for Springwood's half-baked political hatchet job on Michael Johnson and the Liberal Party and their most worthwhile activities within the ethnic communities of Brisbane and this State. He could not even substantiate any aspect of his story. It was akin to classroom gossip and a total waste of this Parliament's time. I suggest to the member for Springwood that, if wishes to use this place to defame the good name and reputation of people

who are actually out there in the real world doing something for society, and not part of a clan that sponges off the public purse, he provide some facts—some substance—to his allegations or keep his innuendoes to himself.

People may wonder why I speak about cronyism and nepotism. I remember sitting in this place from mid 1989 and hearing members of the Labor Party constantly denigrating members of the National Party and the Liberal Party and members of the non-Labor communities for being cronies of the Government. When I came into this place, I decided from a very early stage that I would very simply seek to expose members of the Labor Party as being hypocrites for talking about nepotism and cronyism when they were in Opposition and then practising it—and, in fact, making it an absolute art—when they came to Government. We saw them practise cronyism under the Goss Labor Government.

When I was a Minister, when the coalition was in Government from 1996 to 1998, again those members attacked public servants, such as my director-general, and members of the Liberal Party who were winning contracts on merit. They attacked members of the National Party and members of the non-Labor community of this State. They now expect people like myself to come in here and not deliver a speech such as the one that I delivered this morning about cronyism and nepotism. They are absolutely wrong.

Unlike what the honourable member for Townsville said before, I named the names, I quoted the Premier and I quoted the instances in Hansard and in the Estimates committee transcripts. And members can bet their bottom dollar that as long as they keep having a go at myself and the Liberal Party, and as long as they continue practising cronyism, I will be there to expose them and to prove the hypocrites that they are. In Opposition they say one thing, but in Government they practise another—cronyism to an ultimate art form.
