



Speech by

Dr DAVID WATSON

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Hansard 22 August 2000

ELECTORAL FRAUD

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (5.38 p.m.): I am delighted that the member for Nicklin has seen fit to support my call for fundamental reform to help restore the integrity of the Queensland electoral roll. Political self-interest has finally overcome his customary reluctance to hold the Beattie Government to account. Not even he wants to stand by while the ALP continues to corrupt the most tangible symbol of our democracy—the electoral roll. Not even he is prepared to cop the Premier's false assurances that everything possible has been done to clean up the ALP's disgraceful record of electoral corruption—and with good reason. The Premier's denials are the latest examples of Labor's Fluffygate strategy to laugh off the stench of electoral corruption despite what they know internally.

Former ALP president Don Brown started the ball rolling in 1997 when he put his hand on the Bible and rejected any suggestion of electoral fraud. Since then, the Queensland ALP has nailed the trifecta: three officials all convicted on multiple counts of electoral corruption. That is the ALP—not one, not two, but three ALP officials all convicted on multiple counts of electoral corruption.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Dr WATSON: To quote the Townsville Bulletin of 1 August, the ALP has made history for all the wrong reasons. In 1997, former Labor official Andy Kehoe became the first person in Australia's history to be convicted of electoral fraud. On 11 August this year, former ALP candidate and councillor Karen Ehrmann became the first Australian to be jailed for electoral corruption. What a legacy! The first Australian to be jailed for roting our democracy! That is the legacy of the Queensland ALP! In between, Labor councillor Shane Foster was also convicted of electoral corruption. That is three ALP officials convicted in as many years. Between them they racked up 79 counts of electoral fraud. What a record! Three convictions and 79 counts of electoral fraud in just one city. Wait until we get to Brisbane. This morning, the Premier—

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! It is obvious that the member is not taking any of the interjections of the member for Logan, so it would be better to let the member for Moggill speak.

Dr WATSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your protection from that rowdy member opposite.

This morning the Premier told this House that the police should investigate yet another Labor official, the ALP candidate for Herbert, Jenny Hill. This is the same Jenny Hill who he claimed had already been investigated and cleared, the same Jenny Hill who is now being investigated by the Criminal Justice Commission. That raises another concern. The other day the CJC chairman claimed that the public watchdog could still bark just as loud and bite just as hard. All I want to know is: when is that going to happen? Right now, it is more like the three monkeys: see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil. We might as well call in the ALP disputes tribunal, which cleared Karen Ehrmann. The stench of corruption is overpowering, but the CJC is wearing a peg on its nose. The only reason it is even pretending to investigate these allegations is the public pressure brought to bear on it by the media and the Opposition.

We now have three criminal convictions on 79 counts of electoral corruption and the very real possibility of more to come. The Premier has already admitted that he was misled by Jenny Hill, who claimed that allegations against her had been investigated and dismissed 15 months ago. He agrees that she should be investigated as well. How many more convictions will it take to spark a full and open judicial inquiry?

Let us not forget that the general returning officer for the ALP in Townsville at the time of this wholesale corruption now works for the Deputy Premier, and a lot of people reckon that she was working for him then as well.

The rot has to stop. It has to stop here and it has to stop now. The Government can no longer deny the demonstrated need for tighter identification requirements with respect to electoral enrolment. The Premier claims that he is doing everything possible to stamp out electoral fraud, but his own Attorney-General is dragging the chain. He will not even take the first step. The Beattie Government would rather set up its own electoral roll than do anything that might restrict its capacity to continue rotting the system. The Labor apple is rotten to the core. How can it claim to be fair dinkum about fixing the problem if it will not even protect the integrity of its electoral roll? At the moment, it is easier to lodge a fraudulent electoral form than hire a video. That is not good enough. The people of Queensland deserve better. I commend the motion to the House.
