



Speech by

**Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE**

**MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE**

Hansard 3 October 2000

### **ELECTORAL FRAUD**

**Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE** (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.31 a.m.): I will correct the record. My Government also paid the legal expenses of the Labor Party in regard to the Carruthers inquiry when the Labor Party sent us the bill and put in a claim, in line with established legal precedent. But there was one difference, and that is in regard to the inquiry into the deal with the Shooters Association. There was no secret legal advice hidden in the safe that the CJC ignored. So the Premier should not come in here and say these things when his party was the beneficiary of the same legal precedent. His party said that it would not seek to claim—

**Mr BEATTIE:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Their legal advice would have been along these lines: they could not steal \$1m of taxpayers' money unless they offered an opportunity for other parties to have their fees paid. That is the only reason they did it. They stole \$1m of taxpayers' money.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** I think today the people of Queensland are seeing the real Peter Beattie—the substance and the reality—as he slinks out of the Chamber and into the comfort and security of his staff waiting for him in his office after making allegations that he knew were wrong. The Labor Party followed the precedent that was available to it and had its legal costs paid for by the Government of the day as well, despite the fact that there was no secret legal advice hidden in the safe that the Labor Party had no case to answer.

What we have seen today is a continuation of the Beattie doctrine: it is always someone else's fault. It is Rob Borbidge's fault. It is John Howard's fault. It is Joh Bjelke-Petersen's fault. It is the fault of the Boer War! The office of Premier of this State comes with a very heavy responsibility. That heavy responsibility is that the buck stops at the top job. The Premier cannot come in here and say, "We weren't in Government at the time. I wasn't Premier." The fact is that he was Leader of the Labor Party from 1996 onwards. He was Leader of the Labor Party which campaigned for and endorsed Karen Ehrmann, when he knew that the Australian Federal Police were investigating her and others in respect of possible corruption of the electoral process.

What we have is a situation consistent with the Beattie doctrine of blaming someone else and of seeing no evil, speaking no evil, hearing no evil—the three monkeys rolled into one. It is always someone else's fault. He did not see it. He did not hear it. He did not speak about it. He just happened to be leader. What we have is a situation in which this Premier is desperately trying to distance himself.

I am very concerned at what happened in this Parliament today because the Premier, to receive his commission, gave certain assurances to the honourable member for Nicklin and those assurances are looking particularly shaky. I remind honourable members of the recommendations of the Fitzgerald inquiry. I remind Labor of those recommendations. I believe that these words are very relevant today. The report states—

"Any Government may use its dominance in the Parliament and its control of public resources to stifle and neuter effective criticism by the Opposition. This can be prevented by mechanisms such as an impartial Speaker. Because of its necessary numerical strength, the Government in a parliamentary democracy is obviously able to change or ignore the rules. In these circumstances the authority and neutrality of the 'referee' is of critical importance."

Tony Fitzgerald goes on to say—

"The Speaker cannot afford to adopt a partisan role either voluntarily or in order to retain the confidence and support of the Government party. If the Speaker enters the arena, there is a risk that Parliament will not be able to make the Government accountable."

Tony Fitzgerald goes on to say—

"One of the functions of any opposition party in Parliament is to expose errors and misconduct by public officials. Unless the Opposition can discover what has happened or is happening and give consideration to events with expert assistance, it cannot expose and criticize activities and the people involved. It is effectively prevented from doing its job."

He goes on to state—

"... the Opposition is dependent for information on the Government's own accounting to Parliament.

...

It is essential that the Government is not able to claim that secrecy is necessary when the only thing at risk is the exposure of a blunder or a crime."

These are not my words; they are the words of Commissioner Fitzgerald—a person heralded and trumpeted by honourable members opposite. Today, with the utmost respect, I remind Mr Speaker and the Government party in this place of those very relevant words of Commissioner Fitzgerald in his report at the end of his inquiry.

I was disappointed this morning when the Speaker ruled out of order what we believed to be some very substantial questions. So I had my office check questions that were asked—despite rulings by then Speaker Fouras and despite rulings by then Speaker Turner—relating to the memorandum of understanding between the Police Union, the then Leader of the Opposition, the current Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Crows Nest. At last count there were 23 questions asked.

At last count, the current Premier, the then Leader of the Opposition, asked nine questions. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the current Deputy Premier, asked four. The current Police Minister asked four. The current Attorney-General asked four. The current Minister for Industrial Relations asked one. The Government Whip asked one. And we are still counting! Yet what we saw today was an effort, despite the recommendations of Tony Fitzgerald, to prevent this Parliament operating in the manner that it has operated largely since the Fitzgerald inquiry.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fouras): Order! As Deputy Speaker here I have to uphold the rulings of the Speaker. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that he cannot use the words of other people to reflect on the Chair. You cannot say that somebody said, "The Chair is this." He has to own the words he says. I warn him that I will not allow him to reflect on the decision of the Chair. There are a number of dissent motions on the same issue to come before the House. That is the proper time to debate those matters. Under those circumstances I ask the Leader of the Opposition to respect the position I am in and not reflect on the decision taken by the Speaker today.

**Mr BORBIDGE**: Of course I respect that decision and your position. I was merely quoting the words of Tony Fitzgerald and I felt that those quotes were relevant to the Parliament in view of what happened this morning. I reiterate that there were a number of questions—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Order! That is reflecting on the Chair.

**Mr BORBIDGE**: Are you saying that Tony Fitzgerald reflected on Speaker Hollis?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Order! Resume your seat. You just did exactly what I asked you not to do. You just reflected on the Chair.

**Mr BORBIDGE**: Let us also look at the conduct of the Parliament despite the commitments that were given to the honourable member for Nicklin. In the six and a half years of the Goss Labor Government, the guillotine was applied 22 times. In the two and a half years of the Borbidge Government the guillotine was applied twice. In the term of Premier Beattie—the man who promised a new era in accountability in this Parliament—he has applied the guillotine to 17 Bills in two and a half years. This compares with the guillotine being applied to 22 Bills during the six and a half year period of the Goss Government and twice during my tenure as Premier.

The Premier says that he believes in the Parliament. He says that he believes in accountability. What we are learning every day of the week is that there is a vast difference between what this Premier says and what this Premier does. It defies credibility that someone who could be State secretary of a political party for half a dozen years and a leader of a party for four or five years can claim like the three monkeys that he did not hear, see or speak in regard to any of these matters.

Time expired.

