



Speech by

JOHN MICKEL, MLA STATE MEMBER FOR LOGAN

Hansard 11 September 2001

PETER SLIPPER, MP

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (11.56 a.m.): Terry Sweetman observed in last Sunday's *Sunday Mail* that the federal member for Fisher, Peter Slipper, is a man of many beliefs. When he was a National he believed that Joh should be PM and not John Howard. I assume that now that he is a Liberal he believes that John Howard should be the Prime Minister.

Mr Slipper is fairly fluid in his beliefs. The one belief he has been consistently dedicated to is his belief in political self-preservation. Members may not be aware that, when Mr Slipper rose without trace to the exulted office of Parliamentary Secretary of the Finance Minister, he had his office sign completely redone at a cost of thousands of dollars to the taxpayer so that the title of honourable could be put in front of his name. According to internal Liberal Party letters, branch motions and emails that I have obtained, that is about as honourable as many Liberal Party branch members on the Sunshine Coast think that Mr Slipper is.

For example, the Caloundra branch of the party is so concerned about his tactics that a branch meeting carried the following motion—

The Caloundra Branch of the Liberal Party is disturbed by the methods used by Mr Peter Slipper MP and his staff in the election of office bearers prior to the Fisher F.E.C. AGM on 26th May 2001. The branch registers its strongest protest to Mr. Slipper regarding this matter and also the manner in which he subsequently contacted members of the Caloundra Branch who have chosen to personally express their concerns.

The same meeting also censured Mr Slipper's successful candidate for chairman, Maroochydore shire councillor Andrew Champion, on his behaviour—

Mr Cummins: Caloundra.

Mr MICKEL: I am sorry, the Caloundra shire councillor Andrew Champion was censured for his behaviour at the meeting. Champion is painted by Liberal Party members as little more than a puffed up standover merchant for Peter Slipper and the Brisbane-based Santoro faction. A letter of complaint, which I have with me, was sent to members of the Liberal Party management and reform committee. It cited political interference in the democratic process of election, a total disregard for the independence of the members of the parliament and flagrant manipulation of the constitution as the basis of complaint against Slipper.

Bussing is a tactic used by the Santoro faction. In fact, it was used in the recent plebiscite in the federal division of Ryan when voters were not just bussed in, but flown in from other states. Thank goodness for Richard Branson and Virgin Blue! It made the exercise of flying in so much cheaper. Virgin Blue, however, does not fly into the Sunshine Coast. So, as part (d) of this document of complaint showed, Slipper bussed them in—another about-face in Slipper's belief.

On 22 May this year two Liberal Party branch members sent a letter outlining Slipper's actions to the then president of the party, Con Galtos, with a copy marked for the attention of none other than the Honourable the Primer Minister. It said—

What I and fellow members of the F.E.C. witnessed during the election of a new chairman would have to be the most blatant example of stacking a meeting to get Peter Slipper's preferred candidate into office that we have ever witnessed.

An email from the branch members to Slipper ended with this withering observation—

Please give us credit for having some intelligence. You know what you did and we know what you did. We need to move on now. Just for once, try working with us instead of treating us with such contempt.

The whole ordeal was to remove incumbent branch president, Mark McArdle, for a Santoro spear thrower like Andrew Champion to position him to undermine the respected member for Caloundra. It also gives the Santoro faction one more vote on the state executive so that it can begin the undermining process of the member for Robina, who has stood up to them.

Slipper's heavy-handed tactics are similar to those he used to rort his own preselection last year when he faced a serious challenge. In what must rank as a unique event even by the shabby Queensland Liberal Party's preselection standards, Slipper convened his own preselection with just 24 hours notice and stacked it with his supporters to head off the challenge. The internal report on the Liberal Party's loss at the recent state election prepared by Lynton Crosby—which I must say I have had the pleasure of reading—says on page 6 under the heading 'Internal Disputation'—

If there was a common thread to the submissions to the inquiry it was a sense that the Queensland Liberal Party often suffered from those more interested in advancing their own interests than the Party's.

The big question is this: what has the Prime Minister done to bring his parliamentary secretary into line, or have Slipper's actions been swept under the carpet just like the GST tax avoidance scam engulfing most of the Queensland Liberal Party? It is little wonder that Liberal Party membership has dropped by 20 per cent this year. As we saw in Ryan and have evidence of in Fisher, the new constitution of the Liberal Party designed by the Santoro faction not only enables rorting, branch stacking and standover tactics but actually encourages them.

Time expired.
