



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ministerial Accountability

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (2.30 pm), by leave: Earlier this morning the Leader of the Opposition sank to a new low. He launched a cowardly attack on a number of former members who are no longer in a position to be able to defend themselves within this parliament. His accusations were false and misleading. If he made them outside this chamber I hazard a guess there would be a number of legal proceedings initiated.

Bizarrely, because some former members only listed a few items on their personal register of members' interests, the Leader of the Opposition infers that they are guilty of fudging or some form of improper behaviour or corruption. What an absurd and offensive suggestion! Is he suggesting that his own colleagues who have an interest in only one property have fudged their entries as well? I am sure that the member for Burnett, the member for Cunningham, the member for Toowoomba South, the member for Southern Downs and the former member for Robina would be just as offended as everyone else by the Leader of the Opposition's comments.

Let me say to the Leader of the Opposition: we are not millionaire graziers, we are not all wealthy landed gentry who believe they have born-to-rule rights. The reality is that there are some people who are humble Queenslanders who have been elected to this place, and I am happy to be their leader. As for the millionaires and the property owners over here—the landed gentry who think they have a divine right to rule—I say to the Leader of the Opposition that not everyone is as wealthy as he is and not everyone is as wealthy as the Leader of the Liberal Party, who is worth something like \$50 million. Not everyone is in the financial category of the Leader of the Liberal Party.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I say to the Leader of the Opposition that if he is so brave he should go outside the House and repeat his claims. Do not be a coward, go outside and repeat them.

Mr Seeney: I did, at the press conference.

Mr BEATTIE: No, he did not. I have endeavoured to contact all the members and past members whom Mr Seeney slandered today. The member for Greenslopes, Gary Fenlon, says his entry in the pecuniary interests register is impeccable and based on advice that he received from his accountant, his lawyer, the Clerk of the Parliament and the Integrity Commissioner. The member for Murrumba has already corrected the Leader of the Opposition on the public record this morning. The former member for Inala has also rejected the accusations, stating that his entry was always 100 per cent correct and fully complied with the requirements of the pecuniary interests register. I understand that the former member for Chatsworth has already challenged the Leader of the Opposition to make his outrageous claims outside the House. Now is his day to do it. As I understand it, it is the registered—

Mr Seeney: I did, at the press conference.

Mr BEATTIE: What we hear is that the Leader of the Opposition backed off at a million miles an hour because he does not have the guts to stand up and repeat outside this parliament what he said in here.

Mr Seeney: I did so.

Mr BEATTIE: As I understand it, the register published in May 2004 showed Mr Mackenroth had a 50 per cent share in his Carina house and cheque accounts with the ANZ Bank. I understand that he bought a unit at the Sunshine Coast that was not included in the last published register on August 2005 because he had already retired. However, I have confirmed that Mr Mackenroth notified the Clerk of this purchase in line with the appropriate guidelines, and the details of that investment were publicly available. Mr Mackenroth has authorised their release and the Clerk has just confirmed it. I hope the Leader of the Opposition takes up Mr Mackenroth's challenge to repeat his accusations outside the chamber.

Mr Seeney: What about the accusations you made before?

Mr BEATTIE: I doubt he will have the guts, but I hope he does so.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Mr BEATTIE: The Leader of the Opposition should remember that not everyone—and I want to repeat this—is as well off as him or the Liberal Party leader with their extensive interests in real estate, shares and other investments, nor does everyone inherit family money or find themselves in the fortunate position of accumulating wealth over generations. The Leader of the Opposition should also know that many members divest themselves of interests before they enter parliament to ensure that there is no conflict of interest, which is what I did. I sold my share portfolio at a loss and I invested it in managed funds. I did so because I do not believe in conflicts of interest.

The Leader of the Opposition needs to get out of the gutter. Our government has some of the most stringent and open accountability processes in the country. I made it clear that I expect the highest possible standards from my government and I expect the highest possible standards from those who are part of my caucus. I was as shocked as anyone by the behaviour of Gordon Nuttall. The matter is now before the CMC and will be dealt with in due course.

Talking about general matters—and I will refer to general matters involving Gordon Nuttall—I have made it clear to the party secretary that I want a process begun for his expulsion. I will ensure and insist that he is expelled from the Labor Party. The reason for that is very simple. It has nothing to do with the specific matters that may be raised by the CMC—and I remind members that I referred the matter to the CMC; no-one else did that, not the Leader of the Opposition, I did it. I will move for his expulsion because he did not comply with the register; he did not comply with the rules of this parliament. While I am leader anyone who does not comply with those rules will be expelled.

Moving back to the issue, I asked cabinet and caucus members not to deal with Mr Nuttall. As I have indicated, I have spoken to the party secretary. The question was asked, 'What did I do when I returned?' I raised this matter in cabinet, as I said publicly, and the Leader of the Opposition knows that. I raised the issue with every member of cabinet in that cabinet room. Everybody understands that I will be doing it on an annual basis. I will be writing to Government members to follow up the cabinet decision. My position was confirmed by cabinet. Secondly, I will be tabling in this House on an annual basis the gift register, which will be extended to shadow ministers as well as ministers.

I want to say a couple of other quick things about this. In terms of appropriate behaviour, what is important is that we set high standards here. High standards mean that if anyone misbehaves, they are dealt with appropriately by the leader and by the parliament or the CMC or anyone else. What is also important, though, is that we do not set out to try to denigrate innocent individuals by some sort of attempt to smear people simply on the basis that they are not as wealthy as the Leader of the Opposition. That is what happened today. I think it is disgraceful that the Leader of the Opposition came in here with not one skerrick of evidence against any of these individuals and sought to somehow besmirch their name because of the fact that they were humble Queenslanders and not that well off. What sort of an attack is that? The reality is that if the Leader of the Opposition had some information, why did he not table it? He had nothing new. If it were not for the *Courier-Mail* he would have nothing to say. If it were not for the *Courier-Mail* and the television networks he would have nothing to say. It was a disgraceful ploy. What has happened here today is an abuse of parliamentary privilege by the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr Schwarten: Gutless.

Mr BEATTIE:—who has not only been gutless—and I take that interjection—but who wants to simply damage people's reputation by way of innuendo and inference. If the Leader of the Opposition has something to say he should send it to the CMC. He should do what I did: have the courage to actually send it off to the CMC. He has nothing to say about this. Empty vessels make the most noise. The Leader of the Opposition has sunk to a very low level today. He has nothing in relation to any information on any of these

individuals and yet he came in here and besmirched them. What about the members on the Leader of the Opposition's side of the House whom I named who have modest returns. What did he say about them?

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! I have asked the Leader of the Opposition to cease interjecting. If he interjects again I will have to warn him.

Mr BEATTIE: I come back to the point. I want to make it clear. I have no criticism of the member for Burnett, the member for Cunningham, the member for Toowoomba South, the member for Southern Downs or the former member for Robina for the returns they made. I simply highlight for the House that they are on par with the members referred to by the Leader of the Opposition.

I think it is disgraceful. I think that the Leader of the Opposition owes every single one of them an apology. If he can draw to my attention any serious information of any improper behaviour in relation to any of my members then I will be referring that member to the CMC and I will not need the Leader of the Opposition to do so. I think his behaviour is reprehensible. It is a cowardly attack. He should have the courage to apologise to every one of those members.