



Speech by

Peter Lawlor

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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LIBERAL PARTY PRESELECTIONS

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (5.13 pm): The Queensland Liberal Party has again treated its branch members on the Gold Coast with complete contempt. The Liberal Party has not only forced the endorsed candidate for Gaven to withdraw, allowing the National Party candidate to stand alone for election to that seat; it cancelled the preselection ballot for the seat of Burleigh with just two days notice. The Liberal Party has not given a public reason or excuse for doing that.

Members of the Liberal Party on the Gold Coast have been ringing me asking me if I know the reason, because they cannot find out from their own party. My inquiries confirm that the rights of the rank and file members of the Liberal Party have been totally ignored in the party machine's desperation to cover up yet another example of branch stacking and membership rorting. Not even the ruling faction of the Liberal Party, of which the member for Chatsworth is a member, could allow the preselection to go ahead given the number of dubious memberships, evidence of deliberate branch stacking and possibly even the use of false addresses to get around the party's residential requirements. The situation must be really bad because that is the same faction that tolerated the most blatant branch stacking in the history of any party in Queensland in the electorate of Ryan.

The story behind this branch stacking and rorting goes back to the time before the last election when the party machine, then led by the member for Chatsworth, was trying to end the career of the member for Robina, even though at the time he was the Leader of the Liberal Party. When the member for Robina outsmarted his challengers, the members involved in the stacking shifted their attention to the adjoining seat of Burleigh.

Over the past year the branch stacking has resumed—mainly using Young Liberals—in the federal seats of Moncrieff and McPherson and the state seats of Robina and Burleigh. Many of the new branch members live nowhere near either state electorate. I am informed that the branch stacking and membership rorting, uncovered when the eligibility of branch members to vote in the Burleigh preselection was being determined, was so bad that even the party hierarchy was embarrassed.

The Liberal Party's promises to clean up branch stacking have long been abandoned. On the Gold Coast it is more rampant than ever. That is why the Burleigh preselection was called off with just two days notice.

On an associated theme, I have a trivia question for everyone here. Who said—

There's no doubt that being in coalition with the National Party over a period of time has meant that there have been some compromises and perhaps those compromises haven't been in the best interests of the Liberal Party.

For those members who cannot guess who said that, that was a quote taken from the *Gold Coast Bulletin* dated 21 May 2001 and it was by Bob Quinn, the Leader of the Liberal Party. So the more things change with the coalition, the more they stay the same.