



Speech by

Peter Lawlor

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Hansard Tuesday, 20 February 2007

GOLD COAST TOURISM; LIBERAL PARTY

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (11.41 am): I expect this summer's Gold Coast tourism figures to show a big increase—a huge boost thanks to some political stunts taking place in the southern states. One factor sure to drive tourists north to the sunny, warm and inviting Gold Coast is that conservative leaders in New South Wales and Victoria have taken to being photographed in their budgie smugglers. These photos will help drive people north because they prove that the water along the southern coasts is obviously a lot chillier than it is on the Gold Coast.

The hapless New South Wales and Victorian Liberal leaders, Peter Debnam and Ted Bailieu, have both tried to lift their sagging profiles with the seminude shots, emerging James Bond-like from the surf in their Speedos. They have ended up resembling the cast of the movie *Calendar Girls*. I am puzzled by what they are up to. But with blokes like this parading around southern beaches in lycra it seems only natural that normal people will run a million miles and be scared off and come to Queensland for their holidays.

I call on Liberal leader Bruce Flegg to rule out any such flaccid stunts. Debnam and Bailieu have proved it to be a pretty limp way of getting attention. I beg Dr Flegg to stick to some discreet boardies so he does not write off the Gold Coast's reputation like those two shrinking violets down south did for Victoria and New South Wales.

Ms Jones: Shrinking violets.

Mr LAWLOR: Shrinking all right. Further on the subject of the Liberal Party, not only is it intellectually bankrupt but quite possibly also financially bankrupt. It is in desperate financial straits. At various times since the state election it may have been even trading whilst technically insolvent. There can be no other possible explanation for the extraordinary and possibly illegal pressure the Liberal Party is placing on its members opposite and last election's failed candidates to pay the costs associated with the last state election.

I happen to have a letter dated 23 January from state director Geoffrey Greene to Terry Rogers who members might recall was the previous member for Redcliffe.

Mr Hinchliffe: I don't remember that.

Mr LAWLOR: Not many can. It states—

I hope that you have had a restful holiday.

He was pretty restful when he was here. I thought he was comatose most of the time. It goes on—

The President and I are to brief the Management Committee and State Council in February on campaign indebtedness arising from the 2006 State Election.

He asks for him to please contact him within seven days to resolve outstanding campaign matters. He asks him to bring with him an income and expenditure statement, bank account statements and chequebook. I am told the demand was made for many thousands of dollars. I have been told with regard to the member for Noosa that they took almost \$50,000 out of an account under his control without even discussing it with him. That is how desperate the Liberals are for money.

When Liberal members had a universally glum look last sitting we thought it may have been because the leader had already run up the white flag in the race for the premiership at the next election, but we now know otherwise. They are actually much more comfortable with the member for Callide as the alternate Premier than the member for Moggill.

Every Liberal member opposite and just about all failed Liberal candidates—and God knows there were plenty of them—has been under enormous pressure to pay up. The invoices that they have been asked to pay in at least some cases are dodgy. They are based on the Liberal Party's massive debt problem, not necessarily on the actual debts of members and candidates. Money was syphoned off in the last election from headquarters, a lot of it to Chatsworth to try to save the miserable hide of Michael Caltabiano—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): Order! That language is unparliamentary.

Mr LAWLOR: The Liberal Party convention just after the state election was given a grim report on the party's finances. Creditors exceeded debtors by around \$300,000. The bulk of the debtors were the various state campaign committees. The Liberal Party has stalled on paying its bill to Australia Post of over \$200,000. As Terry Sweetman revealed in the *Courier-Mail* last Friday, it resorted to the lowest and grubbiest trick in the book to justify not paying. It alleged that postal workers had been seen dumping stacks of political mail and that that political material had deliberately not been delivered on time. How low can it go?

When Senator Macdonald was asked to substantiate these claims at a Senate estimates committee last week he could not do so. But Senator Macdonald and the Liberal Party cast an unwarranted and shameful slur on every postal worker. The party officials know and everyone involved in the election campaign knows that the Liberal Party campaign organisation was a shambles, and Liberal members and candidates know that better than anyone.

As it has deliberately inflated these invoices to make the financial position look better than it is, a lot of the demands for \$50,000 and so on will not be paid—certainly not by a lot of failed candidates.

Time expired.