

Ray Braithwaite letter to Sir Robert Sparkes, 17 July 1987
(Chapter 14, p. 183)

Dear Sir Robert,

I feel it is my duty to the National Party to express to you my concern, or perhaps my disgust, at what has happened within the Party, particularly over the last six months.

The recent Federal campaign and its result can only serve as evidence of what our supporters feel about the abortive "Joh's Nationals" campaign.

Firstly, you will recall that I spoke against the break of the Coalition, both in Management and Central Council at Hervey Bay. However, in spite of my opposition, I have adhered to the terms of the Hervey Bay Resolution completely, and have not "gone public", and have reserved my comments for you and the Party only.

Again, you will recall the Thursday night discussion, prior to Federal Council in Canberra, with Ron Boswell and myself urging no break in the Coalition as this would be used as a trigger by the Prime Minister for an early election.

You preferred to accept the promise of the Prime Minister that there would be no early election, against the advice we gave at that time. It is therefore completely unacceptable to me that the Premier should blame the election fiasco on the broken Hawke promise of "no early election".

During the period since the Hervey Bay Resolution, I might say that the loyalty I gave the Queensland National Party in that decision was not reciprocated.

That loyalty included my support for the Queensland Industrial Relations Policy in the preparation of an attack on the Federal Industrial Relations Legislation. I was indebted to the advice of David Russell in the preparation of our opposition and amendments and, might I say, he was able to add some of our own amendments which he later incorporated into policy.

When our amendments, already prepared, were printed, I was accused that the Federal Members couldn't be trusted because we had "leaked" Queensland policy. That was not the truth - what was printed was our opposition to the amendments, which had been widely circulated.

Again, in spite of a specially arranged visit to see John Stone on the taxation policy, in the week prior to the Central Council meeting in Brisbane, I had 30 minutes when, in spite of the fact that newspapers of that day carried substantial detail (later to be proved accurate) on the single rate policy, I was given NO details whatsoever. This meeting was sought by Federal Members and had your approval, but I can only infer a further lack of trust in us when no information was supplied.

And, at that Central Council, we were given NO opportunity to comment or criticise the policy itself. To claim that the election disaster was caused by the Liberal Party's miscalculations on taxation overlooks the substantial reservations many of us held in trying to support our tax package, and also the fact that no-one took it seriously.

The Central Council at Milton [Brisbane] on Saturday, 13 June, was preceded by the launch of the campaign slogan "Joh's Nationals" etc., which was a recipe for the election defeat. Joh's refusal to run for a federal seat put paid to all the Hervey Bay resolutions and the change to the new campaign was done with maximum electoral ignorance. Yet we had no say before, and no resolution for acceptance at the Central Council, nor for the tax policy.

It was a travesty of normal National Party procedures. When the Premier pulled out, Hervey Bay should have been aborted and forces joined to ensure the defeat of Hawke. Also, your failure to allow debate on your opening statement and others, which impugned the motives of some of us not to accept the "Joh's Nationals" in our campaign, does less than credit to a Party President.

Finally, I would want you to know that I will no longer receive instruction from the Executive, Management, or Central Council which I believe is in conflict with, or not in the best interest of, National Party members or my constituents of Dawson, nor which, in my opinion, are not in the best interests of our State or Federal organisations.