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"A LEADER IS SOMEONE WHO WILL GET THE BEST OUT OF EVERYBODY"

THE BLAKE MEDAL

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Clark got bodyguards after Brethren 'harangued' her

By DAN EATON - The Press | Friday, 20 April 2007

Prime Minister Helen Clark says unwanted approaches from Exclusive Brethren members before the last election forced her to increase her police security detail.

Clark was replying to comments from the secretive sect that she had met members before the 2005 election and asked for a copy of a Brethren lobbying document circulated to MPs on issues such as defence spending.

Those comments were picked up yesterday by National Party deputy leader Bill English, who accused Clark of "breathtaking hypocrisy".

"Helen Clark and Labour have been merciless in their attacks on any politician who has met with Brethren members, including a scurrilous attack on me for meeting (them as) constituents," he said.

"It is now clear that while she was attacking other politicians for meeting with members of the Brethren, she had discussed political issues with them herself and been sent documents."

A spokesman for Clark said she had never formally met Brethren members, either in her constituency office or elsewhere. However, she had in public situations been "harangued" by men from the conservative church.

A spokesman said the men surrounded her at a school hall opening and later "harangued" her office for meetings which were refused.

"On her way to the House she got harangued to such an extent that she upped her security detail."

The spokesman said Clark had until then not required a security escort while walking from her Beehive office to Parliament. Now she is routinely shadowed by two or more Diplomatic Protection Squad officers.

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