NOTE: The fishing industry has a long history of using its money and influence to get the Government decisions it wants and when Stuart Nash was Minister, cameras on fishing boats and restrictions on fishing were delayed.

Stuart Nash received $51,000 in donations from Troy Bowker

The minister has a longstanding relationship with the contentious investment banker, who donated to three of his election campaigns and helped him look

into establishing a new centrist party to compete with Labour and National

Stuart Nash, Minister of Regional and Economic Development, received at least $51,000 in direct and indirect donations from Troy Bowker, the controversial

investment banker who recently accused animation entrepreneur Sir Ian Taylor of “sucking up to the left Māori-loving agenda”.

In a response to a LinkedIn comment by Taylor celebrating New Zealand’s Pacific heritage, Bowker said: “Another example of European NZers not being proud

of their own ancestors … FFS. Wake up NZ.”

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Nash is a senior Labour Party politician who represents the Napier electorate and also holds the Tourism and Small Business ministerial portfolios. In

a statement, he said: “Like others, I find the comments appalling and insulting. Sir Ian Taylor is an eminent New Zealander and deserves more respect for

his innovative contributions to Kiwi business and cultural life. I have not spoken to Mr Bowker about his comments. The last donation to the Napier campaign

was made more than 14 months ago and was applied to campaign costs at the time.”

Nash’s statement did not address questions from Newsroom about whether he would be returning or donating Bowker’s money. However Prime Minister Jacinda

Ardern – who called Bowker’s statement “astonishing and appalling” – said that Nash “has made it clear to me that no donations will be received from Mr

Bowker in the future”.

Bowker and Nash have a longstanding political relationship. According to donation records filed with the Electoral Commission, Nash received a total of

$51,000 from Bowker over the 2014, 2017 and 2020 elections – either directly or through Bowker’s investment company Caniwi Capital. Bowker also helped

fund

a 2014 report examining the possibility of establishing a new centrist party, led by Nash, to compete with National and Labour. Nash has repeatedly

described

Bowker as a “mate”.

Bowker – who is also a part-owner and board member of the Hurricanes – has been widely condemned for his comments. The Hurricanes have distanced themselves

from Bowker and said they cannot control his comments. Hurricanes star TJ Perenara

said

Bowker’s comments were “insulting” and showed “underlying racism”. NZ Rugby chief executive Mark Robinson said, “The comments made by Troy Bowker are

not supported by New Zealand Rugby in any way”.

A number of Nash’s parliamentary colleagues have also

criticised

Bowker’s comments, including Speaker of the House Trevor Mallard and Deputy Prime Minister Grant Robertson. Mallard compared Bowker to rugby administrators

during the Springbok tour. "Bowker is doing the sort of damage ignorant rugby administrations did 40 years ago. We made tremendous progress in race relations

and rugby is a very big part of that. What he has done, has undone it." He vowed to boycott Hurricanes matches until Bowker resigned his stake in the organisation.

Robertson has said Bowker’s comments are “appalling” and is also considering boycotting the Hurricanes as a result.

In response to a request for comment, Mallard emphasised his comments were personal and in the context of his past support for the Hurricanes. He said,

“It is not my role to comment on MPs’ sources of donations and I think that would conflict with my role as Speaker.”

Robertson said he stood by his comments, but did not respond to questions about whether he thought Nash should retain Bowker’s money.

Bowker has since doubled down on his comments, and

said

to Stuff that, “The calls from the political left for my ‘resignation’ mean absolutely nothing since I am not actually employed by anyone. I own my own

business and have a vast array of investments. I am actually a shareholder and my director position is part of my ownership rights.” He has since either

taken down or made his LinkedIn account private, and attempts to access the website of his business Caniwi Capital lead to error messages.

Bowker’s donation to Nash is the latest in a series of controversial donations across the political spectrum in recent years. Newsroom recently

found

that Nash had accepted tens of thousands of dollars from prominent figures in the forestry industry, which he helps regulate and develop policy for as

Minister of Forestry. It found that the Green Party had

received

$53,970 from a person later found guilty of among the worst animal abuse in New Zealand history, and that National and Labour both

appeared

to have lawfully circumvented disclosure rules to hide the original source of tens of thousands of dollars in donations.

Newsroom also found that Minister for Disarmament Phil Twyford had

received

$2,000 from a person who had previously claimed that the Christchurch massacre was a Jewish conspiracy (Twyford returned the donation). In addition, Newsroom

reported

last year that ACT had accepted (and subsequently retained) a donation from a far-right extremist who threatened to destroy mosques.

National Māori Authority chairman Matthew Tukaki denounced Bowker’s comments. He called on Nash to return or donate Bowker’s money, and said: “This guy’s

views on Māori in particular are pretty horrid. Politicians need to take a cold hard look at the kind of people they take money from.”