



Speech by

Mr D. BRISKEY

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard 30 July 1998

MOTION OF CONFIDENCE

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (3.43 p.m.): I rise to second the amendment moved by the honourable member for Cook. I will speak briefly about this most significant day in the history of Queensland. This is the day when the Parliament of Queensland will pass a motion of confidence in the Beattie Labor Government. Today is significant not only because Queensland will have another Labor Government—and not before time—but also because it provides stability in Government in Queensland. That is what Queenslanders want. That is what Queenslanders voted for at the last election. I congratulate the member for Nicklin on providing the extra vote that was required to provide stability for Queensland. This debate is about one issue and one issue only: stability.

As the member for Nicklin mentioned in his maiden speech in this House, unemployment is the biggest problem in the State that needs to be tackled by this Government. During the election campaign, Peter Beattie, now the Premier of Queensland, made a commitment to fight unemployment. I congratulate him on that. That is what this Government will do. That is why this day is so significant in the history of this State. This debate provides for stability and for those jobs to be provided for all Queenslanders.

All of us as elected members represent our constituents. My electorate of Cleveland has 26,000 constituents. I thank them sincerely for the confidence that they have shown in me by once again electing me to be their representative in the Queensland Parliament.

Mr Lucas: They made an excellent selection, too.

Mr BRISKEY: I thank the honourable member.

When travelling around the electorate and talking to electors—as we all do in our electorates—we hear first-hand the problems being faced by our constituents. Their children cannot get jobs. People who were in the work force for some time and then lost their employment are now on the scrap heap. Many people over the age of 50 in my electorate and in other electorates in Queensland cannot get jobs. Dealing with those issues is what Government should be about. As the member for Nicklin said, we have to work together. The Opposition, the Government and other members in this place must work together to ensure that there is stability and that jobs are created. We have to look to the future. That vision has been lacking during the little more than two years that the coalition was in Government. The coalition was all about running the State for the few instead of running the State for the many.

I will spend a little time discussing some of the initiatives of this Labor Government in its first of many terms. The low tax rate that Queensland has had for many years will be maintained by this Queensland Government. That will continue to provide the incentive for businesses to come to this State. As businesses in other States see what is being done by the Queensland Government, they will be motivated to move to Queensland. The heart of Labor's policies is jobs and more jobs. The 15 September Budget will reflect that. Our first target will be the Capital Works Program. Last financial year, the coalition underspent its Consolidated Fund Capital Works Program by \$250m. As a result, 2,750 potential jobs were not created last year and the

community did not receive the service delivery that it deserved, particularly from the portfolios of Health and Corrective Services.

One need go no further than my electorate of Cleveland where the previous Labor Government made a commitment to construct a new police station and a new courthouse in Cleveland. When it was elected, the new conservative Government put those projects on the waiting list as a result of its capital works freeze. No jobs were created and no new police station or courthouse was built in the coalition Government's first 12 months. In the past 12 months, we have seen those much-needed jobs and construction projects go ahead. Soon the people of the Cleveland electorate will see those buildings opened. I am proud that they will be opened by Labor Ministers.

It is good to see that the motion moved by the Premier this morning contained a commitment that no general election would be held before 5 May 2001 without an express resolution of the Parliament. That commitment is required for stability in this State. This Labor Government will turn around job creation projects in this State. We will be accelerating spending and implementing a Capital Works Program that has the potential to create 65,000 jobs for Queensland. During our first term in office, we will hit the ground running with our Community Jobs Plan, a \$276m program to get people back to work. As part of that plan, we will create 24,480 new apprenticeships, traineeships and job placements. We will offer a \$2,000 cash bonus to private sector employers for each additional apprentice employed in areas of skills shortage. This will be achieved despite structural problems in the Budget created by the previous coalition Government. As the Treasurer outlined this morning, there are a number of issues that are placing increasing pressure on ongoing Government finances both for the 1998-99 financial year and more critically in subsequent years. However, we will not use that as an excuse to back out of our election commitments.

I turn now to the National Competition Policy. The Beattie Labor Government will seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Queensland industry but not at the expense of secure employment for Queensland workers. That has to be a priority and will be a priority of this Labor Government. Labor will apply a thorough public benefit test to ensure that job security and economic and social stability are not needlessly squandered in the name of competition. The public benefits test will take into account all the effects of proposed changes including job security, social cohesiveness and service quality. The test will also consider regional employment, particularly with local government, so that economic theory is not permitted to decimate local work forces.

Additionally, Labor will seek to further strengthen the public benefit test in the form of the Competition Principles Agreement, which is to be reviewed in the year 2000. Importantly, it must be remembered that the previous Borbidge/Sheldon Government failed to apply this public benefit test to its restructuring of the electricity industry even though there were real concerns about job losses and the price impacts of these proposed changes. The Beattie Government considers that the onus of proof should be on those advocating competitive reforms to demonstrate the benefits of change. That approach to National Competition Policy reforms will help to reduce the uncertainty and insecurity that many employees and industries have endured in the past.

As I said at the outset, this Government will be about looking to the future of Queensland—where jobs are created, where unemployment is reduced substantially. It is important to go into any commitment that is given with some view to the future—with aims and objectives. We have an objective to reduce unemployment. It is not going to be easy: we never said that it was going to be easy, but one does not go into anything without having good aims. That is what Labor Governments are all about. It is about looking after the people of Queensland and it is about providing jobs for their children and providing jobs for those who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

As the member for Nicklin said, we have to work together. I wish to take this opportunity to once again thank him for his courageous decision—and it was a courageous decision—to provide Labor with the ability to form a Government. As he said, he will leave it to history to judge him on his decision. I can tell members now that I believe that history will write up his actions well. He has given Queensland stability and given Queenslanders an opportunity to see a Queensland Labor Government once again elected to this State to provide jobs for this State.
