



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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WATER STORAGE, IRVINEBANK; ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.24 p.m.): I second the amendment moved by the Opposition. Tonight, what hypocrisy have we seen in this House! The Minister moved his amendment to the motion and called on the Opposition to move away from the culture of blame. If the Opposition does not keep the pressure on this Government, we are going to end up with the exact disaster that we have right here and now in four or five years' time.

Throughout the mid 1980s, the Labor Party, particularly some former shadow Ministers and Ministers—Mr Vaughan and others—talked continuously about Queensland having too much power. They blamed the National Party Government of the day for creating too many power stations. However, when the Labor Party came to Government it inherited a magnificent situation: the Callide B Power Station was completed and Stanwell Power Station was well on the way towards completion. The Labor Party inherited an absolutely beautiful situation. Yet what did it do? For six years it mucked around, did absolutely nothing, and then towards late 1995-96, in blind panic it decided to throw the umbilical cord across the border to New South Wales in the form of Eastlink.

Today, what rubbish have we heard from the Government side in this Parliament about Eastlink. It never had a chance of being in operation by 1999. When the coalition came to Government in 1996, it still had six months to go at least before there was any formal written commitment by the Labor Government to Eastlink getting under way. Members should also consider all the protests and the court procedures that would have had to be undertaken.

Unlike Labor, which came to Government and inherited a wonderful situation of about 29% surplus power to allow for all of those times of peak demand—and the experts reckoned that something like 28% was required—when the coalition came to power, that surplus power was down to around 16% or 15% and deteriorating rapidly. It takes six years or seven years to plan, construct and commission base load power stations. It takes about four years or five years to put in the peak load power stations.

When the coalition came to Government, it inherited a disastrous situation. However, it acted immediately and put in place the peak load power stations in Townsville. Tonight, the Minister referred to those power stations in his motion. He should have recognised that those power stations were put in place by the former coalition Government. I believe that the commencement of those power stations was put in place within six weeks of the coalition coming to Government. The former coalition Government also had under construction the peak load station at Oakey and signed contracts for Callide C.

The Labor Government wants to slither away from its responsibilities and slither away from any criticism. There can be only trenchant criticism of the Minister, because he was one of the main reasons for the disastrous situation that the former coalition Government inherited—the Labor culture of not having sufficient or adequate reserve power supply. That is the problem that this State faces. That has to be rammed home to make sure that everybody understands it clearly and so the mistake is not repeated.

However, there is every chance that it will be repeated, because we now have a Labor Government that, instead of making decisions about a new base load power station that can be started now and be finished in four years' or five years' time, such as North Tarong, Chinchilla, Millmerran, the

Darling Downs and the Surat Basin, which uses Queensland's own resources, workers and staff, it is trying to pick winners in looking at all sorts of other alternatives. The Labor Government is running around looking at the possibility of getting away from the level playing field, putting on an electricity tax and having power purchase agreements so that the people it favours can get projects up. Consequently, Queenslanders will not only face a delay in the commencement of major base station projects but also in four years, five years or less, Queenslanders will be paying a hidden tax in their electricity charges because of the power purchase agreements that the Labor Government put in place to try to favour the special projects that it particularly wants to see.

If there is one lesson out of this, it is that Labor is incapable of managing and planning and making decisions to ensure that we have base load power stations and a reserve capacity of around about 25% to 28% for this State to allow for those peak periods that we strike. The Minister stands condemned for the time during which he was previously the Minister when he fiddled around and did absolutely nothing. Now we are seeing exactly the same performance from him. The criticism from the Opposition will continue. The Minister might not want to see a culture of blame, but we are going to make sure that he is made accountable and that he performs.

Time expired.
