



Speech by

PAUL LUCAS, MLA

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Hansard 6 August 1998

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (3.17 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that I take the opportunity to speak to the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply to His Excellency's Speech in which he set out the platform of this Beattie Labor Government.

At the outset I thank a number of groups of people who have given me the opportunity and great honour to represent them in this place. Firstly, I acknowledge the men and women of my electorate, who very strongly put their faith in me as their member and in the Labor Party, with me as their Labor representative. Secondly, I thank my wife and four children, who put up with my frequent absences, my late nights home and frequent inability to be there when a father would normally be expected to be there. I thank my campaign director and assistant campaign director, Darcy O'Dempsey—a Labor icon known to many members on this side of the House—and Linda Harnett. I thank my many campaign workers and supporters who turn out for Labor election after election.

Mr Fenlon interjected.

Mr LUCAS: That is right; Darcy O'Dempsey is the doorknocker par excellence. He has doorknocked just about everywhere on the south side of Brisbane and some places on the north side as well.

It is with great pleasure, in particular, that I am able to thank those members of my branches whom I was able to send away to help in other areas. Many members of Parliament who are here today were helped by members of the Lytton branches of the Labor Party during the course of the campaign.

Ms Spence: They are much appreciated.

Mr LUCAS: I thank the Minister for that remark. Not only is it good to be able to help people in other areas; it is also a great pleasure when on election day one can turn up at a booth such as that at the Bethel Alliance Church and find that one is outnumbering the Tories 9 to 1.

Mr Hegarty interjected.

Mr LUCAS: The member for Redlands could not be more right. I have both quality and quantity. I have the cream of the working class in my electorate, and they are great people—great Labor members and people who work very hard just for the pleasure of seeing a Labor Government elected.

Lastly, I would like to thank that great party, the Australian Labor Party, which I am very proud to represent in this place. It is a party that is over 100 years old—the party of tradition in this country, the party that has been there through the good times and the bad for the ordinary working man and woman. Words cannot express what a great honour and privilege it is to be a Labor member of Parliament. It is our party that is the one that is rich in history; it is ours that was born out of struggle; it is ours that was born out of a realisation that, with collective united action, the ordinary man and woman could achieve great things.

We know that we have our blues. We are a very broad church in the Labor Party, but the mortar that holds our bricks together is a fundamental commitment to improving the lives of ordinary Queenslanders and Australians. Honourable members should contrast that with the three parties on the other side of the House. There is the National Party, which is devoted to a sectional interest with an

inability to stamp out its mark federally and an equal inability at a State level to shake off its sordid past. There is the former Premier and current Leader of the Opposition, who was on Four Corners. From seeing Mr Borbidge on Four Corners, anyone would think that the Queensland election result was totally John Howard's fault; it had nothing to do with what the people opposite did at a State level. The National and Liberal Party take no responsibility. That is what they want people to believe.

Mr Knuth interjected.

Mr LUCAS: The member for Burdekin is quite right. Their decimation is partly our fault. It is partly due to brilliant campaigning by Peter Beattie and the Labor Party campaign team. I am glad that the member for Burdekin has asked me about. Later on I will take a few moments to tell the House what some research has discovered about what members of the community thought about the relative merits of the campaigns in the course of the election. I do thank the member for Burdekin for his assistance in that regard.

The Liberal Party, of course, is nothing more than the lickspittle of the National Party taken over by opportunists and careerists, such as the member for Clayfield and the president, Bob Carroll. All of the National Party's members, of course, have paid the price for those two who were too smart when it came to dealing with One Nation and presided over their decimation in the Parliament with little hope of a comeback.

Finally, there is One Nation, which does not know what it stands for but does know what it stands against. It is an eclectic mob of individuals which claims to represent a rejection of traditional politics. The member for Thuringowa made an excellent, traditional maiden speech. I did not agree with everything he said, but the way he delivered it was according to the traditions of this place. The maiden speeches of the members for Caboolture and Tablelands were nothing short of disgraceful. In terms of our expectations in terms of standards of conduct and actually mentioning a member's own electorate, they were really quite disgraceful.

I note that the members for Maryborough and Barambah have not yet made their speeches, and I see that they actually seem to be sizing up the place at the moment. I hope that, when they make their maiden speeches, they do not descend to the sort of rot that we have heard from the members for Caboolture and Tablelands. There are many traditions of honour in this place the observation of which has been the hallmark of both sides of this Chamber. As the member for Cairns stated the other day in her excellent maiden speech— and I have to say that all of the maiden speeches delivered by members on this side of the House left me with such great pride as a Labor member—"It is much, much harder to be positive and proactive than it is to be negative."

To listen to the Opposition Leader's speech on the Address in Reply and those of his colleagues, one would have thought that it was the electorate's fault—that the people got it wrong, that they threw the National/Liberal Party out. The fact is that the people opposite squandered their opportunity to govern. In modern times, only one Government has lasted for about the same period that the previous Government did, and that was a more conservative Government between 1929 and 1932. The previous Government lasted only two and a half years. What a sad, disgraceful indictment! The Moore Government lost in three years, but the members opposite did even better than that; they lost in two and a half years. What a disgrace!

Let us look at the facts about the relevant support for the four political parties in this Chamber.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr LUCAS: I have no idea how they could have done it.

Mr Schwarten: They have no idea, either.

Mr LUCAS: The Minister is quite right; they have no idea how they did it. If one looks at the percentage of primary votes, it does not take much guessing to work out which party had the lowest primary percentage vote in this House: the National Party, with 15.2%. The Liberals were next on 16.1%, One Nation on 22.7% and Labor on 38.9%. We have a preferential system, resulting in a very clear two-party preferred mandate for Peter Beattie and Labor, which I think was in the vicinity of 54%.

Mr Seeney: What about some positive stuff?

Mr LUCAS: There is plenty of positive stuff in there. It is about time that members opposite realised that the mandate of Government founded at the ballot box was not just due to their incompetence or the fact that the constituents did them like a dinner in their traditional seats, but it was due to the fact that they cannot campaign their message to the people of this State.

When one looks at the most interesting features of this election campaign, one sees that it was the public reaction to Labor's positive campaign. According to Labor research, on the questions of who ran the most impressive campaign and who concentrated on the issues of importance, Labor outpolled

the coalition two to one. How many of their National Party supporters honestly told them that they ran a good campaign?

Mr Hegarty interjected.

Mr LUCAS: I notice that the One Nation/National from Redlands has a bit to say. If it was not for his mates down the back of the Chamber, he would not be here, so I suggest that he be pretty quiet. He ought to be embarrassed that he is here because, if it were not for One Nation's preferences helping him over the line, he would not be here.

If one looked at the July 1995 election and the Mundingburra campaign, one would see that the conservative parties were campaigning the cheap shot—the "send Labor a message" sort of campaign—and that is exactly what they did this time. They were in Government, but what was their message? "Send Labor a message"! They could not even have a message on their bunting that was positive. That is how moribund they are; that is how much pride they took in their policies. I can tell them that, when we on this side of the House were in Opposition, we were happy to talk about Peter Beattie, because Peter Beattie is a leader of whom I am proud, and I am proud of his team and the policies that we ran and were elected on.

While the crowd opposite was bickering about preferences, equivocating about whether it would get into bed with One Nation after the election and making ham-fisted attempts at mud-slinging, Peter Beattie and Labor were slowly but surely selling their message to the electorate. When one thinks about the previous Government's tenure—its disgraceful two and a half years—it is amazing to think of one of the great Australian traditions of giving people a fair go. For that Government to get done in two and a half years despite that tradition, it just shows how much of a go people were prepared to give it. They would not trust that Government as far as they could throw it.

Let us have a look at some of the research into what the members of the Queensland population thought about Labor compared with the coalition in terms of their positive ratings. Jobs: Labor 43%, coalition 30%—who could do the most for them. Education: Labor 43%, coalition 32%. Health: Labor 43%, coalition 34%.

Mr Nelson interjected.

Mr LUCAS: I notice that the member for Tablelands is having a few words to say. In fact, I am quite prepared for him to say a few words because the seat of Tablelands is really a seat that will be hard for Labor to win. It will be a hard seat for Labor to win in the future, but one thing is for sure: I can rest assured——

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark): Order! I remind members who are interjecting that they should be sitting in their correct seat.

Mr LUCAS: I will take them from wherever they come from. Can I just remind the member for Tablelands that it will be hard for us to get rid of him. So far I have been very impressed with every effort that he is making to send himself out of here at the next election. He will be doing that without our assistance. I am sure that people on the other side of the House are pretty happy with that as well.

Sorry, I did not finish the figures. Environment: Labor 46, coalition 25. Native title: Labor 37, coalition 30. In short, it was Labor who was offering the best deal and sensible policies on basic issues of importance to ordinary Queenslanders. If One Nation had not been a factor in this election, there is no doubt that the Nationals and Liberals would have been trounced convincingly.

The people of Queensland contrasted the policies of Peter Beattie to the negative "don't risk Labor" campaign and the tired campaigners who did not have the policy nous to sell their message. I have known Peter Beattie for about 15 years. He has shown himself to be a man of integrity, vision and compassion and he is a great Labor leader. When I was elected in the Lytton by-election in 1996, it was a pleasure to campaign with Peter Beattie. His general warmth in the electorate and his ability to communicate with people was an inspiration to me. One has simply to compare that with the performance of the former Deputy Premier whom we could not drag down to Lytton. I would have liked to have seen her campaigning for the Liberal Party in the electorate of Lytton. Her assistance was not needed.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr LUCAS: It was an outstanding campaign performance by Labor and an outstanding team. I look at the other side of the House and see who is sitting over there. I look at the members of the National Party and the Santo Santoro cabal. The proof of the pudding is in the composition of this House. On this side of the House I am surrounded by people who have great experience in life, local government, the trade union movement, Government service, private sector service and the social services sector. These people have experience up and down the length and breadth of this State. The National Party is moribund, is unable to get any new blood into this place and instead is clutching at the

forlorn hope that the members for Warwick, Maroochydore and Toowoomba North might inject some life into a party that is hopelessly out of touch with its grassroots.

Worse still, the Liberal Party, both organisationally and in this Parliament, is totally factionally divided. It has no talent. No-one who existed had any talent, either. The Liberal Party seemingly has an inability to organisationally select decent candidates, other than to stack the numbers for the member for Clayfield and his cabal who are trying to run the Liberal Party at the moment.

Labor is the party which can claim the credit for the very high standard of new and continuing members in this House. The National and Liberal Parties can claim the credit for the decimation of their membership. If it was so right for the Queensland Liberals to give One Nation their preferences, why did the member for Indooroopilly spend his life railing against the member for Clayfield for the havoc that he and Carroll wreaked on the party? Why, if it was the right decision, has every other State branch of the Liberal Party—with the exception of the Crichton-Brown Liberal Party in Western Australia—directed their preferences federally against One Nation?

The Labor Party took a principled decision on preferences. We were not interested in deals. The following coalition members can thank Labor preferences for their presence in this House: Burnett, Callide, Crows Nest, Cunningham, Gympie, Hinchinbrook, Maroochydore, Warwick and Western Downs. One Nation attempted to fraudulently claim——

One Nation Party members interjected.

Mr LUCAS: You crowd tried to fraudulently claim that you were genuinely independent, but you are a de facto Liberal Party. Your Federal leader is an ex-Liberal candidate. You stand condemned——

Mr Knuth interjected.

Mr LUCAS: You need to come over a bit more often than that, brother, if you want to convince the people of this State that you have any Labor principles, because the fact is that One Nation is another de facto conservative party. A number of One Nation members in this place are ex-members of other conservative parties. I expect that about one-third of One Nation's vote came from Labor voters, but when will One Nation members represent their interests? There was a start the other night when certain One Nation Party members crossed the floor in relation to workers compensation. There is some important industrial legislation coming up and we look forward to seeing what the One Nation members do.

One Nation Party members interjected.

Mr LUCAS: Madam Deputy Speaker, this new standard of conduct really is surprising. I do not mind if they want to talk about it. I am glad that they are animated, actually. This new standard of conduct really is a surprise.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark): Order! I would remind the member for Lytton to direct his remarks to the Chair.

Mr LUCAS: The One Nation Party said that it was a non-aligned party, but the fact is that in 15 seats where it mattered, One Nation gave its preferences to the Liberals and Nationals.

One Nation Party members interjected.

Mr LUCAS: In the words of the member for Caboolture: shame, shame, shame! Nationals elected to this Parliament on One Nation preferences were the member for Charters Towers, the member for Redlands, the member for Albert and the member for Keppel. Had Labor done the same, One Nation would have held 20 seats and would have been the majority Opposition party. Where no One Nation preferences were allocated, Labor got an average of 35% of those second preferences. In seats where preferences were allocated, Labor received only 27%.

I want to have a bit of a talk about One Nation, but I do not know that I will have time to mention everything at this stage. I might do it in the Adjournment debate tonight.

I accept that in a democracy the people have voted the One Nation members into Parliament. That is the will of the people, and that is that. Many disillusioned Queenslanders opted for One Nation out of dissatisfaction with the current parties. In its very short time here, One Nation has sown the seeds of its own destruction.

One Nation supporters want certainty, help, security and economic sovereignty, just as our supporters do. One Nation supporters are not interested in loony-tune conspiracy theories, chants about LBJ, the history of the Communist red peril menace, conspiracy theories about Heiner or preposterous allegations about the——

Mr Nelson: When were you last on the tablelands? I'll take you around and you can have a yarn to a couple of people.

Mr LUCAS: The member for Tablelands is telling me that his electorate is interested in the Heiner documents. Certainly the One Nation members have not spent any time mentioning issues. When I go to Franklins at Wynnum the people there talk of everything else but the Heiner documents, the Vietnam War and what Peter Beattie did at university. Those subjects are of no interest to the voters at all. It is about time that One Nation members concentrated on issues and worried about supporting a Government that is interested in governing for Queensland. They should stop worrying about factional brawling for their Senate team—whether Heather Hill or the member for Caboolture will lead the party. They should worry about millions of dollars spent on security for their Federal leader when we cannot get enough police on the beat.

I will make a prediction. I predict that the One Nation members in this House—or at least those who cannot fully understand the mood of the electorate and do not understand the electorate's aspirations—will be destined to spend a very short time in this House. I warn the One Nation members that the National Party is already looking at those of their members whom it believes it can pinch to bolster its numbers. This need to get recruits comes about through the incompetent election performance of the National Party. I predict that it will be here to recruit the member for Barambah, the member for Maryborough, the member for Lockyer and the member for Tablelands. It is after them. I look forward to being corrected if that does not occur. A house divided within itself cannot rule. Labor is united and those on the other side of the House are divided. The people of Queensland have given a clear mandate to the Labor Government.
