



Speech by

Mr S. SANTORO

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Committee (Cognate Debate)

Estimates Committee F

Report No. 1

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (3.11 p.m.): It is a pleasure to participate in this debate, because it gives me the opportunity to highlight some of the deficiencies contained within the Estimates that we are debating and to rebut some of the more scurrilous comments made by members opposite.

I admit that my report of reservations is somewhat political, as was the performance of the Minister at the Estimates committee hearing. I think the Estimates committee process has been the subject of gross abuse by this Government. It has been politicised right across the departments. Rather than seeking to inform the Parliament and the public of the detail of its expenditure estimates, the Government has politicised the process—for example, delving into consultancies—as it undoubtedly will at next year's Estimates committee hearings. We will then see how this Government's record compares with that of others.

The Government politicised the process. It expects us to just sit here and cop it, but I will respond accordingly. I said that the Minister lacked knowledge. That is true. He sat there and could not tell us what his Government's employment targets were. He could not assure us about the 5% unemployment target. I am simply stating the facts. I do not want to be personal or nasty. I am just disappointed that the Minister could not tell us what the Government's employment targets were.

One of the major aspects of my probing into the Government's Estimates related to how they protect the jobs of TAFE staff. I asked questions in relation to job security and the reform and

restructure of TAFE. The Minister assured us that everything was okay. He was not prepared to accept my suggestion to him that TAFE was in trouble. I will quote from page 13 of the most recent edition of the State Public Services Federation Queensland newsletter, which sets out its assessment of the Minister's budget. Let us see if it differs greatly from my own. It states—

"The budget has also confirmed the Government's decision to 'maintain the level of non-user choice competitive funding at January 1998 levels for a three-year period'.

The Union wrote to the Department seeking clarification of a number of parts of the TAFE budget. The responses from the Department showed that despite the increased funding, more jobs would be lost this financial year and total student enrolments in TAFE had not increased on the earlier estimates."

There we have it. The SPSFQ backs up what I said at the Estimates committee hearing and outside of this place. Jobs are at risk; enrolments are down but more money is being given to TAFE. Is that an efficient use of moneys? I would suggest not. If those opposite call that politicisation, then I stand by it and I will continue to do it. Those opposite talk about speaking the truth; I have been backed up by the SPSFQ, which for once has done the decent thing and gone on the record and told the truth.

If I talk about the Government depriving Dalby and Noosa, which are in two coalition electorates, of the colleges that were funded in the coalition's Estimates, am I being political? I am simply stating a fact. How convenient that two

facilities which are very much needed within those electorates have been taken out of the Minister's budget.

Am I being political if I defend myself against the scurrilous, unsubstantiated charge that I destroyed the Long report, when the Minister knows that prior to the Estimates his director-general physically saw it and handled it and other people on the 12th floor physically saw it and handled it and when there was a copy of the report in his department, in one of his regional offices? I sent it to one individual, who gave it to that particular office prior to the election. We have a Minister who seeks to make things up. I defend myself. On that basis, I am said to have been politicising these issues.

Mr BRADDY: Madam Temporary Chairman, I rise to a point of order. I find it offensive and untrue that I am a Minister who "seeks to make things up". I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SANTORO: Those comments are withdrawn. Is it being political to state that the agricultural colleges were deprived of \$6m, despite the fact that those new dormitories are needed? I totally stand by the statements that I made. Not only do I stand by them; I will widely circulate them and let the real judge, the public, decide whether it is the Minister's performance or my performance that is credible.

We are proud of our training achievements. We had a record number of trainees and apprentices when I was Minister and when the coalition was in Government. This Minister, through TAFE, will be training fewer students. Unfortunately for them, they will be much worse off as a result of this Minister's lack of effort, lack of attention to detail and lack of intelligence.

Time expired.
