



Speech by

Mr S. SANTORO

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Hansard 18 November 1998

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (12.55 p.m.): It is a pleasure to participate in a debate which displays the often rare signs of bipartisanship. I particularly note the very favourable comments made by all speakers in relation to the performance of the former Minister, the honourable member for Gregory. I think those comments are absolutely fair because, like the honourable member for Logan, who has just spoken, and others previous speakers, I was the beneficiary of a great amount of assistance from the honourable member when he was Minister. I think it is fair to say that the most contentious issues in my electorate are related to transport. The Minister was very sympathetic to the needs and concerns of my constituents. I certainly appreciated his help. He helped me probably more than anybody else. I think it is appropriate that those comments are made.

We are debating an amendment Bill originated by the previous Government. That reflects the good work done by the former Minister. It is a pleasure to be able to offer this Bill my own personal support. This debate also provides me with the opportunity to raise several issues with the current Minister. I am sure that he is hoping I will stop raising these issues with him, but of course I cannot because they are of very genuine concern to my constituents. Today I wish to refer to the Nundah bottleneck, the City/Valley bypass and the Leckie Road connection.

From the outset I declare myself to be the person the honourable member for Chermside referred to but did not name when he said that there was somebody playing politics in relation to transport issues in his electorate on the north side of Brisbane. Bearing in mind that I am in the profession of politics, I suppose my activities could therefore be broadly described as political, but they are not meant to be political in the sense of opposing the Government purely for cynical

political reasons. I oppose some of the attitudes expressed by the Government in relation to those issues, because I believe that my constituents require that I do so. I reject the notion that I am being political for the sake of being political, but obviously I will use my political skills and my political position to look after and advance the interests of my constituents.

I note that the honourable member for Chermside agreed with much of what the former Minister did and with much of what the former Minister said in his contribution to this debate. I give credit to the honourable member for Chermside for that. Later I will ask him, if he would like to interject, whether he agreed with the decision of the former Minister to sell off what is referred to euphemistically as the Leckie Road connection, a decision which has now been reversed by the new Minister. I would like the honourable member for Chermside to place on record his attitude to that decision.

Mr Sullivan: Do you want to take my interjection now?

Mr SANTORO: I will take it in my own time.

Mr Sullivan: I have spoken already.

Mr SANTORO: I will give him an opportunity later on to make that interjection if he wishes. Okay, I will ask him now: does he support it or not? Did he support the decision of the previous Minister? Yes or no?

Mr Sullivan: I support the decision of the Minister to set aside the corridor for the IRT and to make a decision on public transport. It was not a decision to sell off the Leckie Road corridor. It was four houses, and the member knows it. It was just a stunt two months before the election. The Minister always wanted to keep the corridor, and the member knows it.

Mr SANTORO: I absolutely deny that on behalf of the honourable member for Gregory who, for the record, is shaking his head again. The decision of the honourable member for Gregory is on the record. It was a formal decision. It was backed up by the commencement of the sale of the Leckie Road properties. Again, the neighbours, Labor Party branch members, fellow churchgoers and fellow community members of the member for Chermside will be distributed with the record of that contribution and that interjection. The member will remain as uncomfortable as he currently feels in that community because of that attitude.

I refer to a statement made by the member for Chermside during the Adjournment debate on 18 September 1998 concerning the Nundah bypass. In his statement the honourable member had the temerity to suggest that in some way the coalition Government had delayed the construction of the Nundah bypass. The member's statement is based upon the premise that Jim Elder had allocated money for the job just prior to the Labor Party getting the boot in early 1996 and that the coalition then somehow had stopped the funding.

Sitting suspended from 1 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Mr SANTORO: Before the House rose for lunch, I was seeking to rebut some of the statements that were made by the member for Chermside during an Adjournment debate on 18 September 1998 about the funding of the Nundah bypass. I am taking this opportunity to remind the member for Chermside that it was the lamentable administration of the Transport portfolio that cost Labor government to start with, and that any suggestion that Labor would have progressed the Nundah bypass was a hollow election promise that failed, along with Labor, that year or shortly after the following year. No such budget allocation was made, and the honourable member for Chermside knows it. He now tries to make up some story that the funds would have been allocated because one could trust the Goss Labor Government. What obviously has upset the member is that it took the coalition Government to address the Nundah bottleneck. We really need to look at the facts.

The Roads Implementation Program published by Labor in September 1995 did not forecast any commencement of this project until the 1997-98 financial year. It was the honourable member for Gregory, Vaughan Johnson, the then coalition Transport Minister who, after some meetings with myself and local interest groups, made an allocation of \$300,000 in 1996-97 to get the project under way and to permit detailed planning and consultation. This was one year earlier than Labor had been prepared to allocate funding. Furthermore, the publication of the Roads Implementation Program in August 1997 forecast completion of the project in the 1999-2000 financial year. We now see the latest Roads

Implementation Program, which has been published with the authority of the new Minister—the member for Chermside's mate undoubtedly—and which gives us the first objective test of what Labor's intentions are. And did Labor bring the project forward, as the honourable member for Chermside predicted? In fact, the program shows that the completion of the project has now blown out to the year 2002, with the allocation for this financial year reduced by \$1m and next year's funding reduced by \$7m. This is the Labor Party's plan——

Mr BREDHAUER: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is misleading the House. The project has not blown out. In fact, this project was started by the Labor Government, and it will be finished by this Labor Government. The honourable member is wrong.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr SANTORO: I am quoting directly from the document which I outlined before. I have had some assistance with this research. That is what it shows. If the Honourable the Minister does not like it, he can guarantee that the coalition's timetable will be honoured. I totally reject that it was started by a Labor Government. The consultation process has been ongoing for about 35 years. In fact, it was greatly assisted by me, as the local member.

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. The member is misleading the House. This actual project turned up in an addendum to the Roads Implementation Program. It had a funding program. It was a Labor initiative. The member is a pathological purveyor of untruths.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr SANTORO: It is obvious that the tactic of the Labor Party opposite, including the two Ministers, is to frustrate me. It does not really matter because, in the community that I represent, I circulate all of these speeches—each and every one of them—including the utterances of honourable members opposite, and they lose all the time. So I do not mind their coming in here and interjecting, because people will continue to support what I do in my electorate because they know that I am fighting for their interests. All that honourable members opposite are doing is playing cheap politics.

Talking about the Nundah bottleneck—several concerned members of the local community recently visited me in relation to what they perceived to be a lack of progress in the planning and design stage of the Nundah bottleneck project. I was informed that a consultant needs to be appointed to undertake the detailed design documentation but that such an appointment had not yet been made. I was further informed that such an appointment was to

occur in the May/June period and that the decision needs to be made by the Minister. I was also informed that much of the groundwork for this appointment had been completed by the time the Government changed and that the matter is now very much in the hands of the Minister for resolution. People take an interest in this, and only a few minutes ago someone rang me and said that the interviews were either being conducted last Monday or they had been scheduled for Monday and that the Minister would then make the decision. But again, it is deplorable that while members opposite claim that they want to get on with it, they delay the appointment of a consultant, which is essential to speeding up the process.

Mr BREDHAUER: I rise to a point of order. The assertion that I have delayed the appointment of that person is incorrect. It is wrong. I find it offensive and ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SANTORO: If the Minister finds that offensive, I will withdraw it in deference to you, Mr Deputy Speaker. But I would bet that if I put in an FOI request, which I think I will now do—and the Minister might want to rush the documents through Cabinet—I would see the Minister again next year about this specific point.

So what is the situation? When is that consultant going to be appointed? Can the Minister give an assurance to the House that it is imminent? There is no assurance forthcoming, so I assume that the Minister is not being particularly serious—just as he is not serious about answering his correspondence and giving any meaningful response to any representations that I make on behalf of my constituents. Actually, I will correct myself. I wrote to the Minister recently—and maybe he has read the letter—and thanked him for taking an attitude which is totally different from his previous attitude in relation to one of my local schools. I thanked the Minister for that, but it is about time that he got his house in order and his act together and started answering his correspondence on time and assisting local members of Parliament when they make representations to him on behalf of their constituents. Perhaps the Premier and other members around him who want standards to be lifted—particularly representative standards—should take note. Maybe I will write to the Premier and start circulating my original correspondence to the Minister about his total lack of replies and professional courtesies—with one exception, as I said, when I went on the record directly to the Minister and thanked him.

I turn now to the Leckie Road connection. The honourable member for Chermside has accused me of playing politics. The previous Government and the previous Minister did make the decision to sell off the Leckie Road

connection. The reason why we did not put all the properties on sale all at once is very obvious, that is, that the market would have been flooded and it would have totally and utterly depressed local residential prices. The sale of the Leckie Road transportation corridor needed to be undertaken in an orderly and gradual fashion. The previous Minister made that decision, and we were honouring it. However, as I admitted at a public meeting attended by the honourable member for Chermside the other night, it took a while to work through that particular situation. It took a while to get the bureaucrats to agree with the political push that was occurring. It took a while for me to convince the Minister of the desirability of that, but we did in the end honour that particular promise.

The other night the honourable member for Chermside came to a public meeting. He did not commit himself to selling off the Leckie Road connection. I am not saying that he is against it—even though I believe that, from the perspective of any reasonable person listening to what he said today and at that meeting, he does not appear to favour the sale of the Leckie Road connection. If he wants to say that he favours it, I will accept his interjection now.

Mr SULLIVAN: If the member is wishing for a response, I point out that what I said at the meeting is what I said in my speech, that is, what the previous Minister said to do, that is, to plan through the IRTP process. When that process is complete, we will know what the options are. The member for Clayfield wants me to commit to something before we know what the options are for the north side of Brisbane. I will not do that.

Mr SANTORO: I again note for the record his total lack of assurance and support for my constituents who want that connection to be sold. The previous Minister did make that decision to sell all of that property. To show how cynical the honourable member for Chermside is, I refer him to a motion that he moved in this place on 16 May 1996. The motion stated—

"That this Parliament

- (a) condemns the member for Clayfield and the Minister for Transport for their failure to carry out Coalition promises given to northside residents concerning transport corridors near Junction Road and the construction of the cut and cover solution to the Nundah bottleneck; and
- (b) further condemns their inability to convince 16 fellow Cabinet Ministers that the residents of Brisbane's inner northern suburbs should receive the same treatment as the residents who live near Mrs Sheldon's motorway and not just be given empty promises."

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, you can understand why people in my electorate do not take the

honourable member for Chermside seriously. On the one hand he wanted the Parliament to condemn us for not selling fast enough from his perspective the transportation corridor; yet, on the other hand, when we do proceed to sell it, he carps, whinges and invents some fuzzy-wuzzy reasons as to why the Beattie minority Labor Government should not be selling it. No wonder members of my constituency—the member for Chermside's fellow churchgoers, his fellow Labor Party branch members, his friends and his neighbours—do not like him because of that politically cynical attitude. In common with the speeches I have made previously, this speech will be distributed with the Minister's reply, and my constituents can be the judges.

Mr SULLIVAN: I rise to a point of order. The member is misleading the House. He knows that he has misrepresented what I said. I was condemning his hypocrisy for promising something that he did not do. He was hypocritical in wanting the Goss Labor Government to do something that he in Government did not do as a Minister. It was his hypocrisy that was the issue of that motion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr SANTORO: Let the record show his comments. There was no point of order. It suits me perfectly to have the honourable member for Chermside continuing to go on the record as he does. I do not mind his eating into my time in a way that abuses the Standing Orders of this Parliament, because we will circulate his comments. He will be the big loser.

Several questions were asked at the public meeting that need to be answered. Perhaps the Minister can answer these questions that were asked by my constituents. Have the properties on the Leckie Road transport connection, which were listed for sale by the previous Government, been formally transferred to the Department of Public Works and Housing? If not, when will that occur? Does the Minister intend transferring to other State Government departments or State Government instrumentalities any other properties that are owned by the State Government along the Leckie Road transport connection? What is the maintenance schedule that the Departments of Main Roads and Transport intend implementing for the properties they own along the Leckie Road transport connection? They are questions that my constituents would like answered. If the Minister would like to deal with them as questions on notice, I am happy for him to do so. If not, if he cares to answer them, I am sure that they would appreciate receiving some advice.

I turn now to the City/Valley bypass. We hear constantly from the Minister that no State Government money will be made available for that project. However, it is said in debates of the

Brisbane City Council that that particular project cannot go ahead without the State Government giving certain approvals and access to State Government property to the Brisbane City Council, which admittedly has the lead role in relation to this matter. The concern of all the citizens of Brisbane should be that, if the State Government does not support it financially—albeit that it has to support it in other ways for it to go ahead; the State Government cannot run away from its responsibility—two things need to happen: a toll will need to be applied and people will be paying to use that road, particularly if the private sector becomes involved, or Brisbane City Council rates will need to increase. I support totally the efforts of the Liberal city councillors who also oppose the underhanded and totally unjustified manner in which this project, the City/Valley bypass, has been advanced, particularly without consultation with my constituents, particularly those who live from Cooksley Street to the Gateway TAFE college. They are my pleas to the Minister. All that we want the Minister to do is talk to people, to consult.

Time expired.
