



Speech by

Tony ELLIOTT

MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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MOTION OF CONFIDENCE

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (12.04 a.m.): Firstly, Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on your elevation to that position. I have worked with you on the Public Accounts Committee, and I believe that you will be able to do the job pretty well. We all look forward to seeing how that goes.

I agree with some of the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition. I accept with some grace—although it might be a bit difficult at times—the numbers that we have been dealt in this House. I believe that we all have to learn something from it. I have taken on board the message, and I believe that anyone who does not take that message on board is a fool. Quite frankly, the public have had enough, particularly in regard to political correctness and the level playing field, which does not exist. No-one would like to operate on a level playing field in respect of farming more than I would, if there were such a thing. It would be a great thing worldwide if it were to exist. But it does not exist. We all have to accept that that is the reality.

If anyone has any doubts that the National Party is alive and well and is keen to represent rural electorates, then I suggest that they read the speech of the new member for Callide. I thought that it was the outstanding contribution here tonight. What I liked about it was that it came from the heart. The member delivered it with conviction. He believed what he was saying. I believe that, when they read his speech or hear about it, the electors within the electorate of Callide will realise that he is keen to get out there and represent them.

I have looked with interest through some old records and press cuttings, and I read an article about a lot of farmers who actually blocked a train. I thought that was rather an interesting operation.

Mr Littleproud: You would have recognised their names.

Mr ELLIOTT: I recognised a few of their names; that is right. It was a little bit like what the French farmers did. Quite frankly, I think that we are all too tame.

Mr Purcell: You want to go on strike, brother, and get a bit of guts.

Mr ELLIOTT: I believe that we could learn from old "Cement Boots" over there. We need to liven up the whole show, because it is a bit tame. They all play us off a break and say, "We will do this for you and we will do that for you". However, at the end of the day, they do not do much for us at all. If we were a hell of a lot more militant and we stood up for ourselves and were prepared to fight a little bit harder, then perhaps we might get somewhere.

I know what the question is that members are discussing here tonight. It is whether or not we agree with this vote of confidence in this, the latest ALP Government to come along. Of course, this one is propped up slightly. Over a long period I have watched a large number of Labor Governments come and go—both Federal and State. I will give members a rough scenario of what one Federal Labor Government achieved, particularly for its own supporters. I hope that this Government will be better than that.

The first thing that Government did was to say, "We will float the dollar." We all thought that that would be all right; we would have a free dollar, and we would have some real private enterprise. That is what we were all about. But that Government did not float the dollar. Instead, it nurtured it, played around with it, poked it and prodded it and, in the end, interest rates rose to around 24%. I was paying penalties of 24.5%. So effectively I had to just about buy my property again every four years. That was particularly helpful! It pushed my overdraft up like members would not believe. I was not a great proponent of that Government's fiscal abilities. I thought it was pretty ordinary.

The people who thought that Government was more ordinary still were the battlers in my electorate, particularly in places such as Kingsthorpe and Gowrie Junction, where there were many young married couples living in their own houses. Interest rates went up so high that, in the end, they were all tipped out of those houses. They took their keys back and put them on the table of the real estate agent, the bank or whoever they borrowed the money from and said, "You can have the house because we cannot afford to make the payments." What was the next scenario after that? Because the start-ups for housing and units were so slow and there were so few of them, we immediately had a housing crisis. There was not enough housing for people to rent. Therefore, because there was not enough rental housing—surprise, surprise—the rents increased, and the people who had been tipped out of their houses finished up in caravan parks. Members opposite are the supporters of the battlers. They are supposed to look after the battlers. They work for the battlers.

Mr Littleproud: What about Tom Burns and the Home Ownership Made Easy Scheme?

Mr ELLIOTT: I will come to him. I have his name in my notes. Do not worry about him.

Over the years, I have found that, unfortunately, Labor is a Trojan Horse in relation to looking after the people whom they are supposed to support. I have to say that the Federal guys have been worse—even the new blokes. This is an amazing issue.

Let us consider the State Goss Labor Government, the last Queensland Labor Government. We had a fair degree of ability to watch and take in what it was doing. What did it do for us? It absolutely gutted the bush—rural and regional Queensland. It took the courthouses away. It took 690-odd DPI staff away. Just about every service in the electorate of Cunningham disappeared off the face of the earth. It took the former member for Barambah, followed by the member for Hinchinbrook, to gradually restore the DPI staff.

Mr Palaszczuk: And what's John Anderson done to you?

Mr ELLIOTT: I will come to him. Do not worry about him. I will suggest what the Minister can do to fix a few of his problems. I do not think he is much more popular than members opposite were.

It will be interesting to see what goes on. I will touch also on some of the other Goss Labor Government initiatives in relation to the railways. We had a very good example in my area of their wonderful economic ideas. They decided to close the railway line. It was obviously uneconomic to spend \$1m to fix the railway line between Toowoomba and Cecil Plains. A lot of grain is grown there and a hell of a lot of grain used to be freighted by rail to the port. They decided to close that railway line. That seemed like a smart idea; it was obviously inefficient! What did they then do? They loaded up thousands of trucks onto the road.

For 10 years Peter Taylor, the Shire Chairman of the Jondaryan Shire Council, members in adjoining electorates and I had battled to obtain the money to fix the Cecil Plains Road from Toowoomba. It was two lanes. That is not two lanes as other members would think of two lanes. When I talk about two lanes, I mean a dual carriageway, not like the three and four lanes down to the Gold Coast. We were very pleased with the good road to Cecil Plains. Labor whacked all those trucks on that road. As a result, three things happened. The trucks wrecked the road. The trucks that used to cart to Cecil Plains, Norwin and the silos in between decided that it would be easier to go over to Brookstead. The roads there had been improved also. Whereas it used to take about a quarter of an hour to get a truck through at Brookstead, as a result of the increased truck traffic it then took about five hours to get a truck through. At Malu, where I mostly used to deliver my grain, it took about four times as long to deliver one's grain.

All of those trucks were going on roads that were unsuited to the size of the loads and the trucks that were travelling on them. Labor's supposed economic decision to close the railway line, in effect, wrecked the roads. Those are the sorts of decisions that members opposite are so good at making. I ask: why should I support Labor tonight? Is it different from the Goss Labor Government? Will we see a whole new ball game? Will we perhaps see some courage from the members opposite?

The member for Inala mentioned John Anderson. I was with John Anderson on Monday. I did not make myself tremendously popular with John Anderson because I asked him a question in relation to Coles, Woolworths and Franklins and the pig industry. I am sure some of the gentlemen behind me on the backbenches know about the pig industry. What is going on in the pig industry today is an abject disaster. I will not stand up and support my Federal counterparts in that regard. The beef industry says that the Government should not help the pork industry, because if it fiddles with the tariffs or reduces the quota of pork from Canada, Canada will reduce the beef quota. The beef quota has not been filled in an age anyway. One cannot compare apples with eggs. The pork producers cannot turn the pigs out into the back paddock to see whether they will survive until the end of the drought as some people in the far west do with their sheep and cattle. It does not work like that. Perhaps the blokes who grow their own grain have some chance. Their costs may be as low as \$1.60 a kilogram to \$1.74 a kilogram. Those who do not produce their own grain and have to buy in feed would probably be paying \$2 a kilogram or more. If they are paid \$1.50 a kilogram for their pork, how long will it take them to go broke? One does not need to be a wizard in the economic stakes—one does not even have to be as good as Paul Keating—to work out that that is not going to be a very good exercise.

Will members opposite show some courage and stand up and do something about the National Competition Policy? We have had it fed down our necks for five years. We have had it held as a gun to our heads. It has been said, "If you do not do this, you will lose your \$800m." Quite frankly, I think we should tell them to put the \$800m where the traditional monkey did.

Mr Palaszczuk: What did you do in Government?

Mr ELLIOTT: Labor members have the opportunity to do something and demonstrate that they will show some courage. They have never showed any courage before. I hope that this time they will show some courage. It will be very interesting to see whether they do. If they do not, there will be no pig industry. There will be three, four or five big players in the whole show. If one considers the industry now, one will see that 84% of the pork that is going onto the shop floor is going through Coles, Woolworths and Franklins. That would not be allowed in America in a fit. The antitrust laws would block that straightaway. They would not allow one operator to have more than 30-odd per cent.

On Monday, I told John Anderson that those people are colluding. They may not be actually getting in a room and saying, "This is what we will pay." However, they say to the pig producers, "If you don't take this price, the bottom line is that we will buy in the Canadian pork. Never mind that it is more expensive than we can buy your pork now; we will buy some more of that pork." That is what they did. None has come in since November. However, all they have to do is hold that sword over the heads of the pork producers and say, "If you do not accept our price, we will buy that other pork." That is totally un-Australian. Never mind what party we are in, collectively we should all be fighting together to stop those people doing that sort of thing. It is unreasonable. It is not a fair go for anyone. It is up to the members opposite to show some intestinal fortitude and do something about it. Labor has not shown a lot of intestinal fortitude in the past. It will be interesting to see what we are going to be up against.

Perhaps I did not read the Governor's Speech correctly. I took notes throughout the speech and I have read it again. It appears to me that Labor intends to knock off some of our water programs. Hell's bells! How long did it take us to get them up and running? The Minister is indicating that he does not think that is the case. I hope he is right. I would not like to think that we have traded all those potential jobs that would get this State up and rolling for an integrity commissioner. That is the sort of stuff that members opposite are really good at. They will run off the back of good old Fitzgerald again.

We will have another lot of committees and people to tell us how to suck eggs and how we should or should not do things. By this time the members opposite should have worked out how to run a Cabinet with some integrity. They have either got it or they have not got it. Members opposite cannot legislate for morality and they cannot legislate for ethics. They have either got it or they have not got it. Believe me, an integrity commissioner will make no difference whatsoever to how the members opposite behave. They will either behave well or they will not. So we will watch with great interest to see just how the members opposite run things.

At this stage, I am afraid that I am of the opinion that the members opposite have not changed a lot. They appear to be much the same as the previous Labor Government. I hope that I am going to be proven wrong and that they are going to stand up and be counted. In particular, I hope that they are going to do something for rural and regional Queensland. If ever there was a need for some assistance and for some real courage to be demonstrated by members of a Labor Government, it is right now. They have the opportunity to stand up and be counted and do something about the problems in rural areas. If they do not, then we will not have a handful of farmers left.

The indebtedness of rural Queensland and other parts of rural Australia has to be seen to be believed. Members should look at what has happened below the border and now along the border with the floods. I can take members to meet people who have just lost \$1m worth of wheat. They have overdrafts that they cannot jump over. One does not have to be terribly smart to know what the outcome of all of that is going to be. We are going to see another disaster. There is flood after flood. Down around that Walgett/Come By Chance area, three lots of floodwater have come one after the other. Those crops have been totally under water for weeks. As members know, no crop can withstand that. So I urge members opposite to give some support to the rural and regional areas of this State and to stand up to the Federal people and be counted.

Mr Purcell: Stand up to Howard.

Mr ELLIOTT: Too right! Stand up to Howard on this National Competition Policy because it is a load of rubbish.
