



Speech by

**BILL FELDMAN**

**MEMBER FOR CABOOLTURE**

---

Hansard 8 June 1999

**STATE DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS ORGANISATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr FELDMAN** (Caboolture—ONP) (10.17 p.m.): Along with other One Nation members, I strongly reject the State Development and Public Works Organisation Amendment Bill for the simple reason that the proposal for the Government to acquire land for the benefit of a third party is a disgrace and an insult to all landowners in Queensland. One of the basic fundamental rights, freedoms and goals for generations is the ownership of land and the ability to do what we will with our own land. This Bill attacks that directly and not for Government benefit, not for the development of infrastructure which will make the State profit, but for private interest—for the coffers of private individuals who must be rubbing their hands with glee as we speak. As the member for Burdekin tried to highlight, in this Bill we see the unspeakable truth. We see whom this Government has to pay back for its electoral funding: the rich, the multinationals and the media owners—big money from big business. The Labor Party has sold its soul to these people, and here we see some of the payback.

The Minister advised that the original State Development Public Works Organization Act of 1938 was heavily focused on the development of the State and the creation of employment opportunities in post-Depression Queensland. Through a coordinated system of public works the Government of the day recognised the very important role of Government in the development of public works as integral to boosting employment and providing vital community infrastructure.

The original Act was amended in 1971 to provide for means of environmental coordination of development, the establishment of State development areas and enhanced powers to facilitate the development of the mineral and energy resources of the State. Now in 1999 the Act is to be amended again. However, this time the amendments proposed encourage the private sector provision of public infrastructure, with the Coordinator-General being authorised by the Governor in Council to acquire land required for significant projects on behalf of the private sector.

Just what exactly is a significant project or a project of an economic benefit to this State is not as clear as the Minister would have us believe. In fact, definitions allowing the Coordinator-General to step in and allow entry to someone's property or acquisition of it are very, very broad indeed—too broad when it comes to such an important issue. Land acquisition for whatever purpose should be bound tightly and happen rarely, but not in this case. In this case we see open slather for private developers to attempt petty negotiations with land-holders for entry or purchase and to have a negative response overturned by the Coordinator-General on the basis of flimsy categories of infrastructure which will provide economic or social benefit to a region or to the State.

There is more than one valid argument against this proposition. For a start, it is the Government's responsibility to provide public works and infrastructure in this State and it has failed to do so. Why is it that Governments of the past were able to deliver large-scale public projects to the people and yet Governments of today cannot? Why is it that in the past 20 years or so Governments seemingly cannot provide for public works, cannot fund the upgrading of infrastructure sufficiently and cannot afford large-scale projects such as were once afforded? Passing the development of these projects to the private sector and all the related arguments are merely confirmation of the fact that Governments have got it wrong and they have failed to do their job. They have failed miserably in providing for the people of Australia the public works they deserve and have paid for.

Australia's appeasement of international influences and the belief in false economic theory has led us to this appalling state of affairs—a situation in which the State's own Government is selling it out to private interests. Make no mistake, those private interests or third parties referred to are multinational corporations or large companies. Who else can spare the \$50m or so to invest in public infrastructure and who invests money in anything if there is no planned or expected profit from the venture? Surely these people are not going to develop some marvellous piece of State infrastructure because they want to give something back to the community and they have a wonderful sense of communal conscience, which is something we have seen lacking in large companies.

So to sum up in terms which will truly reflect the situation under this Bill—and I never thought I would see such a display of contempt for an average person—I say that what we really have here is a reversal of the famous Robin Hood story. Instead of the man robbing from the rich and giving to the poor, we have a Government robbing from the poor to give to the rich. The Minister for State Development is doing his evil best for Prince John—in this case, the Premier—and might well be the modern day Sheriff of Nottingham, a sheriff covering up the fact that he, his colleagues and his predecessors have been and are unable to adequately do their job in providing for the people, a sheriff who is interested only in helping the wealthy at the expense of the poor—a sad state for Labor.

By no means is One Nation anti-progress or anti-development. We have always encouraged development and the provision of adequate public infrastructure. But it is this Government's job to provide that infrastructure, not the job of private investors looking to make good profit for themselves, and it is certainly not the Government's job to take advantage of the State's land acquisition powers to aid private investors in their takeover of our public works responsibility.

The Minister advised that the major objectives of this Act have not changed with the development of infrastructure in Queensland. The encouragement of industrial development and the creation of employment opportunities are still objectives of the Act. I say again that One Nation strongly opposes the prospect of Government being involved in the private sector ownership of public infrastructure, especially when it plans to use its arguable power to acquire land required by that third party. The private sector is a profit making industry, and those most likely to be involved in approved public infrastructure projects will be big business, multinationals and foreign developers.

The purpose of Government is not to assist the private sector in business transactions, especially when it involves the taking away of one's livelihood. It is an insult to the institution of Parliament and to the people supposedly represented by this House. The Sheriff of Nottingham is marching into Sherwood Forest and its surrounding villages, ordering people out and allowing private investors to carve it up for profit. But, of course, it is all in the name of providing an economic benefit for the region.

One cannot argue that anybody likes to be in a situation in which their property is going to be taken from them, especially when that property could be their business, their family home or an investment. I am sure that Government members would not be too pleased with the situation if it were their house desired by a developer. I am sure also that they would not be pleased with the amount offered to them for their property either, which leads me to another complaint about the entire land acquisition process: the valuation of land.

The valuation of land in order that a person can be compensated should be the real estate value for that land, not the market value. In addition, it should be the real estate value plus a percentage for inconvenience and loss of emotional or sentimental memories due to displacement and the cost of moving elsewhere. That is only fair. In most cases when Government has acquired property in the past, the owner always walks away unhappy. Nobody likes to be forced into doing anything, especially when it means giving up the ownership of something that they have worked hard towards gaining in. The least that can be done is that they can be given fair compensation for their forced removal and adequate resources to move elsewhere.

We all remember that famous Australian movie, as highlighted by the member for Tablelands, The Castle. It is a movie that touched the hearts of many Australians, and why? Because people could relate to it! People could understand how Mr Kerrigan felt when the Government tried to take his land from him because they would feel the same way if it were happening to them. Sometimes people's land and homes contain memories, sentiments and security which no money—and I repeat: no money—could buy or could ever replace.

Rest assured that the public hates the thought of land acquisition for any reason, let alone for the benefit of big business. It does not matter how much Governments tell them that it will benefit the region or the State, they do not give a damn. What they care about is their home, their security. That is what they care about and honourable members can rest assured that One Nation will spread as far and wide as possible what the Government is attempting to do in this House today. Let us see how much the public likes Prince John, the Sheriff of Nottingham and their weak-kneed troops when election time comes around. We will see how much the public feels about the taking of their land to give to third

parties. The emotions conjured up by the movie *The Castle* will be relived in the public mind when it comes to marking the ballot paper.

Under this legislation what protection will landowners have from having their property taken away from them? None! What freedom of choice will they have? None! What protection will landowners have from having people enter their property for examination or testing? None! What freedom of choice will they have? None! What sort of democracy is this when people lose control over entry to and ownership of their own land and they lose one of their most fundamental basic rights?

The irony of the Government is on display here today. Its members beg, plead and sob for the plight of the Aborigines who were cast from their land without choice 200 years ago. They carry on about the disgraceful antics of the white people who stole Australia out from beneath the Aborigines' feet. At least One Nation members are not hypocrites. We have no doubt that wrong things may have been done in the past by blacks and by whites, but we do not feel responsible for them. We do not feel the need to say sorry for something we ourselves did not and would not do ourselves.

Yet not only does the Labor Party cry foul for the Aborigines and make them apology after useless apology, its members have the hide to stand in this House and pass a Bill to allow private parties use of the State's land acquisition rights to, in effect, take people's land off them without authority and without their having any course of action to stop them, to rip it out from beneath their feet and to hand it over to private profit interests. This is not the 1700s; this is 1999. What an abysmal and hopeless message it will be to begin the new millennium! Where was the consultation with the Indigenous Working Group? That omission was highlighted by previous speakers.

But wait, there's more! Not only is this Government displaying an amazing capacity for hypocrisy; it is hoodwinking the indigenous people again. This Government knows damned well the way this legislation affects native title rights. Honourable members should not think for a minute that I am in support of native title, because I am not. I am merely pointing out that a Government that is supposed to be and that spends an entire parliamentary day saying sorry to the Aboriginal people of this State for actions done in good faith in the past has introduced into this House a Bill which overlooks indigenous Queensland native title rights.

I just wonder how many days of debate it will take them in 10 years or 100 years' time to say sorry to the Aboriginal people once again for what it is doing here today. Of course, a "sorry" will not be necessary for non-indigenous Queenslanders, because I am sure the Government will find a way to ensure that indigenous Queenslanders have a monopoly on being disadvantaged by this legislation, too.

I feel sorry for the Aboriginal people who are fool enough to believe that this Government's promises and apologies mean anything. They are led to believe that they are being helped. What are they getting in reality? They are being handed whiskey and beads as well as empty sorries.

What incentive do citizens of this country have to work hard and do the right thing? None! What incentive will citizens of this country have to work towards buying property when they are faced with a Government that will take their land from them and pass it on to private third parties? None! Let us face it: this Bill is open to abuse and landowners across the State are sitting ducks. Indeed, the private sector will be very interested in putting forward State development proposals if it means the Government can step in and do its dirty work for it.

Perhaps not all developers will cut landowners short. Perhaps some will do the right thing by the landowner and make attractive offers of compensation for their land—offers that will allow the owners to relocate themselves in another area of their choice and not be out of pocket, offers that will make the landowners feel that they are actually benefiting from the sale. Let us hope so, but it is indeed very doubtful. Why should it not be when, if negotiations fail, the Government would step in and settle matters for it? Landowners deserve to have their interests protected. That is what Government should be doing: protecting the rights of the individuals, not taking them away.

Let us look at the recent track record of this caring, fatherly and protective Government. Let us recap, as the member for Lockyer did, the Transport (South Bank Corporation Area Land) Bill 1999. I remind the House about this sorry act, when a Government which prostitutes itself before the public, a Government that speaks highly and emotively about the separation of powers between the courts and the Government, then sells its soul. I am sure we all remember the Bill I refer to. When private citizens won a battle in the Supreme Court to retain their land and keep it, Prince John, the Sheriff and the henchman from Cook introduced legislation to steal private citizens' land. Why? Because the private citizen disagreed with the paltry sum of money that was being offered to him for his land and his business. Oh, yes: there is a vast difference between what the Government thinks is fair and what a private individual thinks is fair. The trouble is, in this case there is no referee, no adjudicator. The Government wins and all bets are off.

Seven people in this Parliament saw this legislation coming. Seven people voted against that last public piece of legislation. I am sure that those seven will again vote against this latest land grab by the self-interests who backed this Government for election. And here we see the pay-off. It is much easier to make one payment at the source and gain numerous benefits than to make numerous payments for one benefit. Honourable members should take a look around and smell the roses. It will be very interesting indeed to see who benefits first from this piece of legislation. This is not the Labor Party that my devoted parents told me about, as the member for Burdekin highlighted. I will certainly be telling them now that they belong to a group of land thieves and perhaps real estate investors.

I note with suspicion and interest that my coalition colleagues have either had a change of heart or a spinal implant, because it seems they will be voting against this Bill also, in contradiction to their last effort. I do not know why they were over the other side of the House voting with the Government last time, but time heals a bad conscience and I see that they are back voting on the right side.

It angers and disgusts me to think that the Beattie Government believes that it has the authority to act on behalf of big business and the private sector to the detriment of landowners in Queensland. I cannot support this Bill because of the fact that landowners are being put in a position of abuse—abuse by an arrogant Government on behalf of the private sector. Let it clearly state on the record: One Nation opposes this Bill in the interests of landowners in this State having control over their land and in the interests of fighting against arrogant Governments intent on removing the rights of decent, honest, hardworking citizens in this State. One Nation will certainly be opposing this Bill.

---