



Speech by

BILL FELDMAN

MEMBER FOR CABOOLTURE

Hansard 1 December 1999

TOWNSVILLE INDUSTRIAL PARK

Mr FELDMAN Caboolture—ONP) (6.35 p.m.): Tonight I rise in support of the motion of the member for Burdekin. I can understand why the member for Burdekin is so passionate about this matter. He has been out there, spoken to this group of people at Woodstock, felt their pain and walked in their shoes, as has the member for Whitsunday, who knows how much there is to gain for the people of Bowen and Collinsville in relation to the Abbot Point site. We could not find two more grassroots honourable members.

I am strongly supportive of any and all initiatives to inject economic stability back into rural and regional Queensland. What I cannot support, though, is an ill-conceived, knee-jerk reaction to problems that impact so seriously on the average Queensland family. There is no justifiable reason to inflict upon the Woodstock community a project that it does not want—a project which poses substantial threats to their environment, health and quality of life and which would provide many more benefits were its location determined logically.

Not only are the residents of Woodstock reluctant to accept this project; the Government will also be using its brand-new Acquisition of Land Amendment Act to steal their land from them. As has been said already by the member for Burdekin, these are second and third generation families who have raised their families, as did their pioneering forebears, secure in the knowledge that they had their own little piece of Queensland which, with proper care and management, would provide for them and their children long into their future for generations to come. That was until this ill-conceived plan, supported by this draconian legislation, put their life's work under threat. It is immoral for a Government to treat its citizens in such a brutal and uncaring manner, especially when a nearby community is crying out for such a project. This project could be accommodated on Government land without destroying people's lives. If it were located correctly and thoughtfully, it would provide nothing other than benefits for all of the families in this region of high unemployment, and the project itself would enjoy all of the benefits of the area's infrastructure and resources, which would contribute to its success. And I believe it would be a success.

Over the years Governments have recognised the danger inherent in the rapid consumption of good-quality agricultural land for housing and industrial uses. This was the motivation for the subordinate legislation within the Integrated Planning Act which seeks to preserve such land. The Woodstock site comprises good-quality agricultural land. Let us not be mistaken about this, because that is exactly what it is—good-quality agricultural land. To rezone it as industrial land would be to fly in the face of the Integrated Planning Act and would be an exercise in environmental and economic vandalism. These families have tended this fertile land for generations and have established a productive and healthy quality of life. We find totally reprehensible the destruction, through just one ill-conceived project, of something that has been built up over several generations and which has the potential to continue to deliver sustainable productivity for generations to come. Enough high-quality agricultural land is being stripped as it is.

Much has been made of the actual sizes of the parcels of the land required for each of the industries nominated. Anyone who has practical knowledge or, indeed, some sound commonsense would realise that whoever dreamed up the acreage requirements has none of either. To set aside quality land in the lot sizes specified will result in gross underutilisation and will lead to degradation of

large areas which will remain unused and not maintained. To use force to wrest land from people who have made it their whole life is unfair and unjust, and we in this House have already said that. To seek to take more than is necessary is wasteful and unforgivable.

There are approximately 3,000 hectares of eminently more suitable Government land at Abbot Point which would be adequate for the purposes outlined. Environmental impact would be minimal, economic potential would be maximised and the project would have the complete support of that community. The infrastructure is there and the benefits are evident for all concerned to see.

I urge the members opposite to support this motion for the good of rural and regional Queensland and because it does make the sound economic sense that the community at Woodstock and the community at Collinsville have already stated. As we have heard, the community at Collinsville is looking for a boost to its own unemployment situation—

Time expired.
