



Speech by

**Mr DOUG SLACK**

**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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Hansard 10 March 1999

**BEATTIE LABOR GOVERNMENT**

**Mr SLACK** (Burnett—NPA) (6.25 p.m.): I have listened with interest to the Premier and the Deputy Premier and I think that, rather than call them the can't do Government, we should call them the gunna Government. They are gunna do this and they are gunna do that. Instead of listing the achievements that they have made that were not initiated by the coalition, all they can do is throw personal insults at the Leader of the Opposition.

The Government and particularly the Premier have spoken incessantly about a 5% jobs target and how, in order to achieve that, they have pledged their support to industry development, particularly value adding to our vast range of primary products, both mining and agriculture. Those are laudable objectives that the Opposition supports. As has been said by the Leader of the Opposition, most if not all of the so-called Government initiatives announced by the Premier and the Deputy Premier were developed by the coalition Government while in office. In fact, I do not know of any new projects that have not been a natural progression of projects that were promoted and developed by us while in Government. Government members talk about delivering major infrastructure projects such as Airtrain Citylink, the Brisbane Light Rail Project and the \$300m upgrading of the north coast rail freight line, and all were initiatives of the coalition Government. The other day Government members talked about exports to Germany and investments in light metals by Fiat, which were all initiatives of this Government.

When I was Minister for Economic Development, I was accused of being Marco Polo. I would much rather be accused of being Marco Polo than Pinocchio. This Premier is claiming initiatives that were developed by the coalition Government and the Deputy Premier is in the same category as his Premier. Perhaps the Government can claim Baywatch, but Queensland is only being considered because Avalon in Sydney did not want it. There is even some confusion as to whether Baywatch will come to Queensland.

The big project that the Government went out on a limb to foster was the proposed Chevron gas pipeline to service potential industry development along the coastal strip south of Gladstone. In the early stages of this Government, they talked of nothing else, indicating that Chevron was to be the rainbow that would deliver the pot of gold of increased industrial activities and a jobs bonanza for Queensland. It was to be the catalyst to ensure that Comalco would develop an aluminium refinery at Gladstone. Suddenly, the Government has gone all quiet about Chevron. Indeed, rather than claiming it as this Government's great initiative, a spokesperson for the State Development Minister Jim Elder stated in the Courier-Mail of 4 March, "Governments have done about as much as they can." That has happened because press reports indicated that the project is likely to fall over and Minister Elder's office now wants to distance itself from it. While they wanted the glory of a can-do Government, they now want to share the responsibility if it fails.

**Mr ELDER:** I rise to a point of order. The Governments were the Federal Government, the PNG Government and our State Government.

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

**Mr SLACK:** I raise the Chevron issue not because the Opposition does not support it; the Government knows that we do with the proviso—and it is a big proviso—that it stacks up commercially in a free competitive commercial environment. Our criticism of the Government is in relation to the

Government's preparedness to load the dice in favour of Chevron. In the long term this will mean higher costs for industry and consequently——

**Mr Elder:** Where?

**Mr SLACK:** The honourable member should listen. In the long term this will mean higher costs for industry and consequently will have the opposite effect to that which the Government was seeking, which will be a negative rather than a positive effect on long-term industry development. To encourage Chevron, this Government actually took action to distort the electricity marketplace. I refer to the decision to hold back on further development of the Tarong Power Station and Callide C Power Station.

**Mr ELDER:** I rise to a point of order. I do not mind listening if it is not an untruth. That is not true and it is not being done.

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

**Mr SLACK:** Their actions have also had a dampening effect on the development by would-be power stations involved in the previous Government's Surat/Dawson development initiatives. Now it is crunch time. If Chevron falls over, power that otherwise would have come on line will be unnecessarily held up by the actions of this Government, which will cost industry and jobs. I repeat: this will cost industry and jobs. It will also mean diminished confidence, which again will cost jobs.

My other point in relation to the foolishness of this Government's extraordinarily single-minded support of Chevron is that the previous Government had put in place an open electricity policy that would have ensured cheaper electricity rates.

Time expired.

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