



Speech by

**HARRY BLACK**

**MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY**

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Hansard 3 December 1999

### **FORESTRY AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr BLACK** (Whitsunday—ONP) (3.48 p.m.): That is a very hard act to follow. I rise to speak to the Forestry Amendment Bill. This Bill is yet another example of the treachery of the Minister and this Government towards the people and businesses of the south-east Queensland forestry towns. The Government used the promise of 25 years' guaranteed supply to coerce industry into signing off on the agreement before all the fine detail was available. After several years of uncertainty with the threat of the RFA process hanging over their heads and being unable to make decisions to invest and to grow, the sawmillers grasped at this promise as drowning men clutch at a straw.

Unfortunately the promise is a fraud. The Government cannot keep that promise. Independent expert scientific opinion is that the supply is not there. Even officers within the Government's own DPI Forestry are convinced that the supply cannot be maintained. Having now been able to assess the maps and the fine print, the millers know that the supply promise is shaky. Add to this the facts that many follow-on enterprises have not received due consideration and the full flow-on ramifications to local communities have been inadequately assessed and there is no wonder that such enormous depth of concern exists. The concern is so great that mayors from almost every shire in south-east Queensland have seen the need to seek the answers.

This Bill is about the death by a thousand cuts of those hardworking towns that are the heart of this country. Those are the towns that give Australia its unique character that makes this country recognised as one of the greatest societies of the world in which to live. Those towns have been struggling to survive for years. No rich people live there. No rich workers and no rich local businessmen reside in those communities. Those are not rich towns. Those are the salt of the earth towns. The big cities of this country are essential to our way of life, but they cannot and will not survive without the bush. The bush is largely self-sufficient and has previously survived quite happily for many years without big cities. It is time the big city Government woke up to itself and started representing the entire State and not just the high population density city areas.

This part of our State is dying. Does anybody on the other side of the House understand what that means? It means the smell of death when one walks down the streets of those little towns. Most members of this Government probably do not know how that feels.

**Mr Pearce:** I can take you around a few towns.

**Mr BLACK:** I said "most".

The only time they see those little towns is when they drive through with the windows up and the airconditioning on. Every so often, Mr Beattie and his pampered cronies flit into some politically sensitive regional town, swan around, shake a few hard, callous hands, have a nice lunch, hold a short, fake Cabinet meeting and then flit back to the comfort of George Street leather—but I digress. I return to the distasteful subject of dying. When one walks along the main street of a little town that is dying, one can smell it. One can see it in every deserted, dusty, neglected shopfront. One can sense it in the attitude of people who are close to giving up the fight—people who have fought all their lives for the right to raise their families in dignity and safety in the community that is so much a part of their lives. I would say that the member for Fitzroy would see it now. Their despair and sense of hopelessness are not because they are quitters. If they were quitters, they would have moved to the city and gone on the

dole years ago. No, the reason that those hardworking men and women of the bush are close to giving up is that they are running out of hope.

The Government does not give a damn about the bushies. To them bushies are just a nuisance, particularly around election time when they have to try to convince them to vote the right way. Imagine how galling it must be for those soft handed, lily livered, big city lawyers and accountants to have to stoop to talking first-hand to whingeing bushies just so that they can be assured of a return to Government. After all, are they not born to rule? Is it not their right? It is not their right. How dare they assume their condescending and imperious stance towards timber workers for demanding the right to a decent living from a renewable environmentally sustainable resource such as native timber, a resource that now contains more timber than it did in 1770 when Captain Cook paid us a visit. There is no desire for those responsible custodians of that resource to live in the lap of luxury. Not for them the trappings of wealth—just a decent living and a sufficiency to raise their families in the hope that they would continue their tradition. What a proud tradition it was! What a tragedy it is that this limp-wristed and gullible Government is totally under the influence of a handful of lunatic extremists in the environmental squad. I see the Minister for Environment laugh, but he knows that he is prepared not only to allow but also to assist in the dismantling of such a proud tradition.

I would like to reject this Bill, just like the member for Caboolture. I know the member for Caboolture, the Leader of One Nation, stated that he would be opposing this Bill. He intended to say that we are opposing aspects of the Bill. We are considering seriously the amendments to be introduced at the Committee stages by the shadow Minister, the member for Crows Nest, on behalf of the coalition. I know from speaking with members of the community who are affected—industry workers, flow-on industry workers, millers and town businesses as well as the 21 mayors and 16 councils—that they would like the Bill opposed totally. But we will examine the details of the coalition's amendments, because, on this issue, we need a united front to beat the devil in the detail of this Bill and the RFA.

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