



Speech by

JEFF SEENEY

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Hansard 27 October 1999

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (6.26 p.m.): I am pleased to rise to support the original motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition calling on the State Government to recognise the shortcomings of its much-trumpeted RFA agreement and provide assistance to those workers who will inevitably lose their jobs. I begin tonight by correcting some of the tremendous misinformation that was provided earlier tonight to the House by the Deputy Premier in what was a scandalous attack on the Leader of the Opposition, simply because he dared to raise the detail of this agreement.

This morning in question time, we raised the issue of Peter Carter's Sawmill and Transport and the loss of the supply of timber that it has enjoyed up to this point. Nobody said that it was a Crown allocation. The Deputy Premier made that up. I will quote from the letter—

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. The RFA is based on Crown allocations. If the criticism of the RFA—

Mr SEENEY: The Deputy Premier should sit down and listen, and he will learn something. He should sit down and listen for a while.

The letter from Peter Carter states—

"Each time we retendered for the timber it was put up in 3 year lots until december 1998 when we were told it would be in a 6 month tender as the timber in question would be allocated to larger mills as they were to lose some of their allocation due to the R.F.A."

That is the detail. That is what happens when big-picture arguments get put out there in the bush.

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. Clearly, as he states, the timber was put up for tender. It was put up tender 12 months ago from plantation, not from Crown allocation.

Mr SEENEY: And clearly, as the letter states, they are losing their supply of timber because of the RFA agreement. When one takes the Government's great theatrical agreements into the forest, it is the detail that matters and it is the detail that the Government is not interested in. It is time that this Government provided some of that detail. It is time that this Government started to fill in the gaps that exist and that we know will threaten the future of the timber industry.

The harsh reality is that there needs to be a lot more detail about how some parts of this agreement will be achieved in the real world. There is growing uncertainty in all of the timber towns. There is growing fear that, despite the fine-sounding words of the State Labor Government, it is more interested in the politics of the issue than in providing any real future for the timber towns and the people who are dependent, either directly or indirectly, on that industry.

Of particular concern to me are the timber mills at Eidsvold and Theodore, both currently owned by Boral and both proposed to be purchased by the State Government and sold on to another operator. It is a great shame that the Theodore mill is involved at all. It was never in an area covered by the RFA and does not source timber from the area. The only reason that Theodore got involved is that it is owned by Boral. Therefore, it got caught up in the deal that the Government struck to purchase Boral's operation in order to get them out of the picture because the Government could not agree with them. Similarly, the Eidsvold mill is not located in the RFA area, but it does draw some timber from the area. Despite the continual assurances in this House from the Deputy Premier, the Eidsvold mill now faces an uncertain future. Has the Deputy Premier not been proved wrong again? How many times did the Deputy Premier come into this House and assure us that Eidsvold would not be impacted on? Who

remembers the day when he came in here and tried to do a bucket job on me because I dared to raise the details surrounding the Eidsvold mill? Who remembers that? How wrong he has been proven to be. He has no idea about the detail. He does not care about the detail. He is interested in the politics of the issue. He is trying to make a political issue out of it and blame the Federal Government. He has been proven wrong over and over again.

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. The Eidsvold mill will not close. The Eidsvold mill will be sold as an ongoing operation.

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

Mr SEENEY: The fact that the Eidsvold mill is one of the mills that will be bought by the Government as part of the RFA puts the lie to the many statements that the Minister made in this House concerning the points that I raised on behalf of my constituents in Eidsvold. It makes him look like an absolute fool.

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. I found that remark offensive. I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SEENEY: I withdraw any remark I made that offended the Minister. He is sufficiently capable of making himself look a fool without my pointing it out. Both the Eidsvold and Theodore mills and their dependent communities certainly have not shared in the false euphoria generated by the proponents of the RFA.

Time expired.
