



Speech by

Mrs J. SHELDON

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

Hansard 29 April 1999

MOTOR ACCIDENT INSURANCE AMENDMENT REGULATION (No. 2) 1999

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (5.02 p.m.): I rise to support what the member for Moggill said in relation to the disallowance of this motor accident insurance amendment regulation. We have heard from a number of people on the other side of the Chamber who could only be regarded as hypocrites. The member for Ipswich referred to that well-watched program Fawltly Towers. The member reminds me of Mr O'Reilly the builder. Everything that Mr O'Reilly puts up falls down.

Mr Hamill: Come on, Sybil. You can do better than that.

Mrs SHELDON: I believe that Mr O'Reilly has a definite place in history. He puts doors in the wrong spot. He closes up the wrong things. He puts things where they should not be. Generally speaking, he is a walking accident waiting to happen. He reminds me very much of the member for Ipswich.

Dr Watson: Railroads, roads, now Treasury.

Mrs SHELDON: That is true.

When one considers Labor's 25% increase in compulsory third-party insurance, one wonders at the total hypocrisy of what went on before. After hearing what the member for Ipswich and the member for Brisbane Central have said, I do not know how they can have the effrontery to say that this is just a fireball; that they are doing the right thing; and that the insurance industry would collapse otherwise. When they were in Opposition, they said that it was unnecessary; that it was a tax; that we were putting our hands in people's pockets; and that the poor battler was having to pay that money. I agree that any increase in either registration fees or compulsory third-party insurance is very difficult for anyone to meet, let alone people on fixed incomes and pensioners. But all of a sudden the scene has changed, because now, whereas we were putting our hands in the pockets of the battlers, Labor is not. We are talking about exactly the same issue: an increase in third-party insurance premiums.

It was interesting to listen to Mr Briskey's speech, because I thought it could well have been my speech from three years ago. I congratulate him on borrowing and plagiarising so much of my speech. I thought at the time that it was a pretty good speech, and then I heard it back from the member.

As has been mentioned, this is the second rise in premiums in a very short period. When I was the Treasurer, yes, we did have to increase the CTP. That information had been very clearly given to the former Labor Treasurer, Keith De Lacy, but he would do nothing about it because there was a by-election coming up in Mundingburra which, if I remember, the Labor Party lost anyhow. But in point of fact, we were left facing that problem when we first came to office. The people from the Insurance Commission came to us and said to us exactly what they have just said to the Treasurer: that the fund would be in disarray; that people would not be covered, and it was important that they were. We did not, as has been suggested here on a number of occasions, just accept their recommendations and the amount and say, "Right, go ahead and do it." I asked for a full report and got it. I looked at the situation as it was and felt that it was the only thing that we could do. I believe that the rest is history—the total hypocrisy that went on amongst members opposite. Now we are back to what is happening here. There have been two increases in a period of nine months, which is true.

Mr Hamill: Why is that?

Mrs SHELDON: The Treasurer is the man with all the information, which he will not table. He will not table the actual figures. If he did, we could look at that situation.

When I was Treasurer, yes, we had to increase CTP, but we also decreased it by \$5. The information given to me at that time was that it could be decreased and that, in the future, this may well continue. All of a sudden, Labor is in office and there have been two increases. That information is available, if the Treasurer wants to follow that up, and he knows it. The fact is that we could decrease CTP by \$5, but this Treasurer has introduced two increases in nine months. If anyone has been sold a pup, it is himself.

Yet again, the people of Queensland are having to put forward more money to prop up this industry. I know that the Treasurer has put in place a review. As I said in this House the other night, that was exactly what I asked to be done when I was the Treasurer, and I was told that an increase in CTP would be a possibility. I said, "We need to have a full review. We just cannot keep going on actuarial advice and what is being given to us, because it is hitting people very hard." Two things that most Australians try to have are their own house and their own car. Meeting the ongoing expenses of running a car is a very expensive exercise for anyone, particularly those on fixed incomes.

As has been mentioned, we faced many other financial problems that Labor had left behind. One was most certainly the workers compensation fund, which contained a \$400m black hole. There is now \$35m extra a year in consolidated revenue, which I had to put in every year for three years to help prop up the ailing fund that Labor had left behind. That was an absolute scandal. That \$35m per year could have gone into hospitals, schools and roads. But because the workers compensation scheme was collapsing—which it will do again under this Labor Government—as well as putting in place a revamp of the whole system and dragging that back up into the black, every year for three years we had to throw in \$35m. I wonder what the Government is doing with that \$35m.

Mr Hamill: What about the \$20m you threw into the Sunshine Motorway?

Mrs SHELDON: I am very happy that, when I was in a position to do so, I could right the wrong that Labor had perpetrated on people living on the Sunshine Coast. A small two-lane road was put in and it imposed not one toll, but three. The Treasurer's mate, Tommy Burns, said that the people on the Sunshine Coast would suffer because they had not elected a Labor member. I ask honourable members to look at what has occurred with roads in every other part of the State, including the Gold Coast. I do not see a toll on any of those roads.

I made an election promise—as did Mr Goss—that I would lift the toll. Mr Goss broke his promise and Labor lost the seat of Noosa as a result. I am proud to say that I fulfilled my promise. If honourable members speak to people on the Sunshine Coast or in Brisbane they will find that the people support politicians who fulfil their promises. Those opposite came in here promising the earth and announcing that there would be no tax increases above the consumer price index. However, Labor has introduced tax increases of 25% and 14%. One asks how Labor arrived at the figure of 14%. Labor says, "Oh, we added up the CPI for 12 years." What an absolute joke! The member for Nicklin swallowed it. I find that absolutely amazing.

The people of Queensland do not believe the Labor Party. The electors are not quite the fools that those opposite believe they are. The people did not believe Labor when it was last in Government and, as a result, it was tossed out. The people will do the same thing again in a very short time. I would not be too complacent and I would not be too arrogant about the situation.

As the relevant figures have not been made available to the Opposition, could I ask the Treasurer if he is going to make the full review public. Is he going to make public the results and the recommendations of the review? Is he going to make public all the work that went into it? We do not want selected bits and pieces which the Treasurer decides to release. The people need to see for themselves exactly what is happening. The people need to know what increases there will be in the future.

It has been suggested in this House that the insurance companies are not giving the right information. I am not suggesting that that is so, but the question has been asked. It is not possible to have such an increase in claims over that short period. For 11 years there was no increase at all. It defies logic that, suddenly, in the past four years, things have galloped so far ahead. I now the Treasurer has dragged out the hoary old chestnut and said that hungry lawyers are chasing ambulances. It was the Labor Government which enabled lawyers to do that. No-one really believes what the Government says about this issue.

Mr Hegarty interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: Yes, they probably do like to have a lot of fat in their future claims on insurance companies. The people of Queensland are paying for that. I hope that is something that this Government will look at in the future.

Time expired.