



Speech by

Hon. KEN HAYWARD

MEMBER FOR KALLANGUR

Hansard 11 November 1999

ST GEORGE IRRIGATION AREA

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (6.35 p.m.): This motion is a typical contribution from the One Nation members sitting at the back of the Chamber. As Mr Schwarten said, they are irrelevant to the process. They were big on rhetoric in speaking to their motion. However, after hearing them speak, we can tell that they have no understanding of the complexities of the issue. As honourable members have heard, the issue is very complicated. More importantly, they not only have no understanding of the complexity of the issue; they also have no solutions. The last speaker had absolutely no solutions to the problems.

If we look around Australia at present, we do not see too many agriculturally alive areas. However, Queensland is very lucky, because it does have some—for example, the Central Highlands around Emerald, the western downs out from Toowoomba, the Mackay area and, importantly, St George. At St George, the traditional commodities of wheat and wool have given way to crops that demand large quantities of water, such as cotton, grapes and other horticultural products. Those are very important products not just to Australia in terms of income but also to the rest of the world. The most recent edition of Queensland Country Life highlights the new agricultural product for St George, namely, potatoes. It appears that that commodity will be very successful.

Farmers in the St George irrigation area tell us that they have heard a lot of this before. People have come along, picked up on something and said, "We've got a solution and we're going to sort this out." Promises have been made about their future. That is what members at the back of the Chamber are doing. They are making promises without understanding the complexity of the issue. As the former Minister and the local member for the area knows, I have been to St George on a number of occasions, both as a Minister and in Opposition. On at least four occasions I have gone out there and listened to what these people have had to say about this issue. As the local member would be aware, I know a number of the people who live out there very well. As I have said before, the issue is complicated. Would any member think that, if the issue was not complicated, the former Minister and the local member for the area would not have found a solution? The reality is that this is extremely complicated.

If the people down the back here were genuine about a solution, they would actually get down and do some of the work involved in it; they would do some of the hard yards involved. I am prepared to bet that between the five of them, probably two of them might have been out there twice, but I am sure that all of them have never been there; some of them would not even know where the area is.

They think that they can just get up here and move the motion and then generally talk about it, but they have to understand that the farmers who live out there are not silly. They are a wake-up; they know what is going on. They know that, with all the hard issues—and this is an extremely difficult issue and it has been a difficult issue for the former National Party Government and it was terrible position for the local member himself to be in—in the end it is going to be up to a Labor Government to find solutions to these problems, and that is what we are doing. Solving the problems in St George is simply not about infrastructure; it is about ensuring fairness. It is about a fair and equitable access to water, and there is nothing simple in that.

Time expired.