



Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR WARWICK

Hansard 13 April 1999

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.43 p.m.): Tonight in this Parliament we will see the Government vote against the continuation of a viable and sustainable timber industry based on the native forest hardwood resource with a gradual transition to hardwood plantations as that becomes available; the retention of all existing jobs within the timber industry in the native forests in south-east Queensland; enhanced silviculture practices and value adding; ensuring a scientifically justifiable, comprehensive, adequate and representative forest reserve system; and the continued access to forest reserves by other associated industries and community groups.

We have just heard the honourable member for Barron River waxing lyrical about the responsible position taken by the conservation movement. Around the place I am hearing that they are actually saying that it does not matter if half the timber reserve in the South East Queensland RFA area is taken out of production because that would mean that only half the jobs are lost. Is that not wonderful logic? However, members opposite fail to understand that, in many of these small mills and these industries, if one or two jobs are lost or a small percentage are lost, that makes the whole mill non-viable. That is the sort of thing that members opposite completely and absolutely misunderstand.

When we were in Government, we supported the idea of a world-class, comprehensive forest reserve system. There is no doubt about that, because it is something that we have to have. However, we also supported the idea of making sure that there was a necessary and proper balance between that reserve system and the need to preserve those particular jobs. Today, we heard the honourable member for Capalaba and the Honourable Minister, the member for Everton, and also the Premier talking about the involvement of the Federal Government in this issue as well, saying that it is being unhelpful. All my information states that in this case the Honourable Minister wants to take something like 400,000 or 500,000 hectares, which is almost all of the available resource in south-east Queensland, out of production and the Federal Government, I understand, is falling much short of that.

Mr Elder: Why didn't you do it?

Mr SPRINGBORG: Yes, we were fixing it all right. We were working through this process. There is a completely different approach between that of this Minister and this Government and that of the Federal Government, which is at least trying to take a responsible approach. So we will not have any more of the nonsense from the Honourable the Premier that it is the Federal Government that is at fault and that it is further down the track than this Government; it is this Government that is the problem.

There are a number of issues here and one is that the Government fails to guarantee the jobs. Those jobs are absolutely crucial to the communities in south-east Queensland which have historically relied upon those jobs for their survival—each and every aspect of those communities: the direct timber jobs, the indirect timber jobs, the chemists, the teachers, the hospitals. All of those sorts of things rely totally upon the timber industry. For the past 100 years, or 150 years in many cases, those timber jobs have been the reason for the survival of those communities, but the Government does not guarantee their survival.

There are a number of other issues here related to other user groups. We have the beekeepers. I remember that we went through this beekeeper stuff previously when Molly Robson was floating around on the other side of the House. We remember all the television footage of the F17s coming in and basically bombing the bees in the forest, as we saw on Channel 7. What harm are bees

doing in there? This is just absolutely crazy stuff. The beekeepers need a guarantee. The other day we saw the Leader of the Opposition force the Premier into giving guarantees for the Kilkivan Great Horse Ride. That was emerging as a matter of concern for some people. When I was Minister, they were saying, "What about this?" I said, "Not a problem", because as far as I am concerned community access to and community involvement in our forests is not a problem because they are State resources for people to be able to use.

Mr Cooper: Trail bike rides, rifle ranges.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Trail bike rides and even four-wheel drives. Horse rides such as the Kilkivan Great Horse Ride are all very, very important.

The other thing that is of immense concern—and I hope the Honourable Minister is carrying on from where I left off—is the provision of guarantees to graziers, who have used these forest reserves for over 100 years, so that they are able to continue to run their enterprises. Those people have grazed cattle in those reserves for many years. If honourable members look at the benefits derived from that usage, they will see that it has basically led to a situation in which those people have managed to control the fire danger in those particular areas. Those people need those guarantees, and I was prepared to give to those people a guarantee. There were something like 700 individual leases within the South East Queensland RFA area. This sort of debacle—this sort of process—is not going to stop here, but it is going to go on throughout the rest of Queensland as the RFA process expands. I can tell honourable members that it is creating a very, very uneasy feeling in those communities as it moves—

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. Just before the member finishes, I want to confirm with him that he has never been accused of misleading the House. So that he is not accused of misleading the House, I point out that it is not a State regional forestry agreement; it is a Commonwealth-led regional forestry agreement process. He said that it was a State process.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.
