



Speech by

Dr LESLEY CLARK

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Hansard 7 December 1999

FORESTRY AMENDMENT BILL

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (11.09 p.m.): This is the third day on which the Forestry Amendment Bill has been debated in this Chamber, and the contributions of members opposite have confirmed yet again for me that the only role that the majority of them want to play in this House is that of spoiler or scaremonger or generally to denigrate the genuine commitment and hard work of a wide range of people to achieve the historic outcome of the RFA agreement.

What is it that fuels this anger and the at times vicious, even slanderous, abuse that has been hurled across the Chamber during this debate? This is the behaviour of people who know that they have failed. They hate to see anyone succeed where they could not succeed—and fail they did. Those opposite had the opportunity to progress the interim RFA to a successful conclusion. They even had a date by which they could reach agreement, and that date was June 1998. However, they failed.

Now they go out into the bush, into rural towns and into council chambers intent on doing their very best to make sure that this Government's agreement does not work. They want it to fail. They want it to fail because that would suit their political purposes. Those opposite say that they are concerned about the future of workers and regional towns, and no doubt they do have some concerns, but I am quite sure that they would get great enjoyment out of seeing the Government fail in what it is trying to do because they would then be able to say, "Look at this Government that could not get its act together. Look at this for a con job."

Mr Cooper: You are too cynical for words.

Dr CLARK: You will have to forgive me for being cynical. I have not been here as long as you.

Mr Cooper: You should have more faith.

Dr CLARK: I should have more faith? That is interesting.

Mr Cooper: Ye of little faith.

Dr CLARK: I am glad to hear the honourable member say that because he, perhaps, should have a little more faith in us.

Mr Cooper: I would love to.

Dr CLARK: Okay. Other speakers in this debate have, I think very convincingly, pointed out the lack of consistency, the distortions and the outright untruths which the Opposition has tried to put forward in this debate—using language which, I might say, I find quite offensive. Those opposite have described the agreement reached between the conservation movement and the timber industry as "a shabby deal", "a sleazy deal", "a con job" and "a cosy little back room job". These words were used by the Leader of the Opposition and they are insulting to the very many people who were involved in coming to this agreement.

In my contribution this evening, I want to focus on two particular aspects of the RFA which are particularly relevant to the Forestry Amendment Bill and which demonstrate that the RFA is not a con job. This amendment authorises the Primary Industries Corporation to issue sales permits for 25 years to sawmill owners based on items 2.9 to 2.13 of the agreement which identify the volumes of timber to be supplied over the next 25 years to the 28 mills in 12 allocation zones.

I want to refer to this agreement in a little bit of detail because one of the things that has been asked time and time again in this debate is, "Where are the details?" I want to refer to section 2.9 of the agreement, which specifies the supply levels which are proposed. We are talking about a supply level of 82,981 cubic metres for the first year, then 54,619 cubic metres for nine years and 49,119 cubic metres for the next 15 years which will be provided to the industry. That level of detail demonstrates the kind of work that has gone into this agreement.

I want to go further and table this document because I do not believe that some members opposite have read it. I believe they have taken these broad generalisations and decided that the agreement is no good.

Mr Rowell: How many trees have you planted?

Dr CLARK: That is very interesting, because for the last 15 years I have been planting trees in creek banks and on hillsides. I do not have any hesitation in saying that I have probably planted as many trees as the honourable member.

A Government member: The difference is that you did it successfully.

Mr Bredhauer: They got black spot.

Dr CLARK: That is right, the papaws had the black spot. I want to refer to section 2.13 of the agreement, which reads as follows—

"To provide timber supply to industry at the agreed volume for the 25 year period logging will continue on State forests and timber reserves and leasehold lands not included in the 425,000 ha reserve.

The balance of the area of crown hardwood forest may be logged once in general accordance with the schedule attached. This schedule has been developed to ensure that the government is able to deliver its commitments to the timber industry while avoiding logging on the areas of highest conservation value unless it is unavoidable to do so. The total area available for logging will be subject to two separate harvesting regimes (Part A and Part B) listed in the schedule. Where any logging occurs within Part A (an area of approximately 80,000 ha) it will occur under current harvesting rules. Where logging occurs within Part B it will occur under modified harvesting rules. These modified rules, after making allowance for the DNR Code of Practice (including habitat tree retention) will involve a harvest of all the trees of commercial species that are 40 cm or greater at breast height and that meet compulsory sawlog standards, known as 40 cm+diameter limit cut. It is understood that the harvesting schedule has been developed based on SKED modelling and will be subject to further refinement through operational planning."

The point of giving honourable members all those details is to refute the claims in this debate that the agreement did not contain details, or that it was not based on any scientific or reliable data. The SKED modelling that underpins the agreement is the same modelling for predicting timber volumes that was used by the Opposition, because the same people in DPI and DNR do this work. It is their data, and there is no reason to suspect that this data is not reliable.

Further to that, I want to draw honourable members' attention to some statements which were made by the member for Crows Nest in this debate because he made great mention of the fact that the harvesting practices were reducing the minimum size of trees. I want to remind the member for Crows Nest of what he said in his speech because this is really important. He said—

"The Beattie Government claimed that no clear felling would be allowed under its plan, but the harvesting practices to be employed in the remaining area of Crown forest able to be logged where the minimum girth size of millable logs is to be reduced so that every tree 40 centimetres or greater in diameter will be harvested is virtually clear felling. It is cutting down the size of the girth, so that they can go for the smaller trees and knock them down within five to 10 years at the most. But then there will not be any timber left to cut."

I think it is quite shameful that the member for Crows Nest and the member for Callide—and I am sorry that he has gone to the bar for a drink—

An Opposition member interjected.

Dr CLARK: I am glad he has come back. I saw a few gestures; I know what they mean. The member for Callide had better come back to his seat because he will want to interject. The point about this is—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! I remind the member to speak through the Chair.

Dr CLARK: The member for Crows Nest and the member for Callide should know that it is standard practice with DPI to have a 40 centimetre minimum girth. That is not reducing it to 40 centimetres—

Mr Seeney: That is not true.

Dr CLARK: It is absolutely true.

Mr Seeney: It is not.

Dr CLARK: It is true.

Mr Seeney: It is not. How many timber cutters do you know?

Dr CLARK: I challenge you to table information to show that I am wrong.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member to speak through the Chair and to refer to people by their correct titles.

Dr CLARK: If the member for Callide can produce some evidence from DPI to show that I am wrong, I will apologise.

Mr Seeney: Done!

Dr CLARK: Done!

Mr Mickel: You will wait in vain.

Dr CLARK: I think I will. A majority of small logs will be taken, but we have not reduced the minimum size. That was the basis of the agreement. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that, if one is going to have a reserve area, what is left will be logged more intensively. That is understood. It is not a matter of coming here and trying to dupe anybody about anything.

Mr Cooper: That is stupidity.

Dr CLARK: No, it is not stupidity at all.

In the time that I have left, I turn to the question of hardwood plantations. Just as the Opposition did not want to know the details of how the industry was going to be supplied with timber for 25 years, it claims that there is no way that the hardwood plantations will be available in time for the transition. I think that it is interesting to refer to the quote—

"Hardwood plantations are a new initiative of the Government to support future expansion of the native forest industry."

I wonder who said that? Was it the Minister for Primary Industries? Was it the Minister for Natural Resources? Will the real author please stand up, because he is sitting opposite? Those are the words of the member for Hinchinbrook.

Mr Rowell: I agree.

Dr CLARK: He did not before. It seems as though, during this debate tonight, he has changed his mind.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order!

Dr CLARK: I am just making the point—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Barron River will speak through the Chair. It would probably suit everybody if the member spoke through the Chair rather than look for interjections.

Dr CLARK: I want to make the point that the Opposition members were fully supportive of hardwood plantations. They talked about DPI Forestry looking to expand the plantation base with hardwood species that they know to be viable, including Gympie messmate, spotted gum, blackbutt and tallowwood. So there is no doubt that those sorts of plantations can succeed. As we have heard tonight, through this agreement this Government is moving down that track by planting 10 million trees over five years as part of an \$80m softwood and hardwood plantation program and establishing a hardwood timber research and extension program. Yes, we do know where they are going to be planted. The strategy is based on four broad regions for new plantations in south-east Queensland, Miram Vale, Boonah/Beaudesert, Caboolture/Bundaberg, Kilcoy, Lockyer and the Brisbane Valley. Those are the places where those plantations can be grown.

Just last week, the Minister for Primary Industries came into this House and told us about expressions of interest that had been called for for the planting of half a million hardwood seedlings on an area of 1,000 hectares. We are getting on with the job. I say to the member for Crows Nest: have some faith. We believe in what we are doing. We would not be selling out our rural industries. We would not be selling out the timber industry. So the member should also have some faith, and we will see.
