



Speech by

Hon. P. BRADDY

MEMBER FOR KEDRON

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BEATTIE LABOR GOVERNMENT

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (6.40 p.m.): One of the things that should be apparent to the people of Queensland is that this Opposition is about gloom and doom. We heard some more of it tonight from the former Premier in his speech about compulsory trade unionism, which we are supposedly bringing in—although he has not seen our industrial laws yet—and the like. Prior to making our policy announcements in relation to WorkCover, we also saw the Opposition and its supporters coming out and saying that what we were going to do in relation to WorkCover would inevitably lead immediately to a rise in premium rates. In fact, it was proved so wrong that it was laughable.

First of all, we were able to bring in changes that we are announcing in relation to definitions of "employee", "worker" and "injury" and at the same time, on the recommendation of and working with the WorkCover board, drop the surcharge 18 months in advance. So the gloom and doom has already been proved wrong. I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that the gloom and doom that they pronounce in relation to our industrial laws will similarly be proved wrong.

The Leader of the Opposition has been attacking me here tonight. He is the master of the half-truth, as I christened him long ago, and still is, only this time it was not even a half-truth—it did not reach even that. He said that I did not know that Sun Metals in Townsville was under Queensland awards and legislation. Of course I did. I have been talking to people in relation to the matter and holding discussions. What I did say is that three out of the four disputes—and Sun Metals was the exception in this State—were under Federal laws, and that is the situation. But again he comes in here without any proof. There has been nothing in the Parliament to say that. He is just a person who repeats untruths time and time again in the hope and belief that he will elevate that to a standard that will be believed.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I think I have been reasonably tolerant after about 20 minutes of personal abuse, but I do find those remarks offensive. I do not really think the member is reflecting the Premier's so-called standards, not that he has much after today.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is not the time for debate. Is the member asking for a withdrawal?

Mr BORBIDGE: Yes, please, Mr Speaker.

Mr BRADDY: I repeat what he said in here tonight. I withdraw. I repeat, however, this: what he said in here tonight about my not knowing about Sun Metals being under Queensland law is wrong. That has no basis in truth. He has no proof of that. It is absolutely wrong. He has misled the Parliament in saying so.

I talk not only apprenticeships constantly, and I will continue to do so. Whether the honourable member for Clayfield likes it or not, the facts of the matter are that in February of last year there were a little over 7,000 apprentices in this State. There are now over 10,000. There has been an increase of 3,256 in the 12 months to the end of February this year, an increase of 46%. In the same 12-month period the year before, the number of apprentices fell by over 5%, and the year before that, the number fell by over 6%. They are the facts supplied by the department and the member opposite cannot gainsay it.

In relation to promoting employment, we have provided incentives to private enterprise. Between 1 October 1998 and 9 March this year, nearly 1,000 Queensland employers took up our offer

of incentive payments for employing additional apprentices. As a result of that—which was preached again by the Opposition—over 1,500 additional apprentices and trainees have been taken on in areas of skill shortages. Members opposite said it could not be done. That is one of the reasons why the unemployment rate is falling, as it did in the latter part of last year—not due to the member for Clayfield, who claims credit for it.

What do small businesspeople say when surveys are conducted in relation to unfair dismissals? They say that the main reason for concern about lack of full-time jobs is that there is not sufficient work, not sufficient incentives—not the ability to be exempt from unfair dismissal laws.

Time expired.
