



Speech by

**Hon. P. BRADDY**

**MEMBER FOR KEDRON**

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Hansard 24 March 1999

**SUN METALS DISPUTE; GORDONSTONE MINE DISPUTE**

**Hon. P. J. BRADDY** (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (6.20 p.m.): I rise to second the amendment moved by the Premier. I take up at the point that the Premier finished on in terms of what is occurring and what has occurred today in the compulsory conference in Townsville. One of the things that is most evident in this whole matter is that what is occurring has been done with considerable support from the Premier of Queensland and the Queensland Government. I want to contrast that with the hypocrisy and lack of action by the coalition Opposition both now and when it was in Government.

First of all, we have been attacked and the Premier particularly has been attacked as having done nothing. Prior to this conference occurring today, the Premier and I—and, on occasions, the Deputy Premier—have met with the company representatives; the Premier met with them again in Townsville; we have met with all the union representatives and we have made it clear to them that we believe that this dispute is a very serious matter and must be settled in the national interest, the interests of Queensland and the interests of the people of Townsville. We have made that absolutely clear.

Of course, when the parties reconvene today, they can reconvene in the context that that support has been given to them, where that direction has been given to them by the Premier, the Deputy Premier and me. They know that and they know it is serious. They also know that, if the matter is not settled by them with the help of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, we have a negotiator whom we have ready to come in and give assistance as well. There is absolutely no doubt that the steps taken by the Queensland Premier and the Queensland Government have played a significant part in the improvement which has occurred today. Whether the matter will be settled by tomorrow morning remains to be seen, but a big improvement has been made and it has been done with a Government which has been in there getting involved.

Honourable members should contrast that with what has occurred in Gordonstone. In Gordonstone we have had a Federal Government that has received absolutely no criticism from the Leader of the Opposition or the shadow Minister, Mr Santoro—no criticism whatsoever—of its refusal to get involved. I refer, in fact, to an interview on the Carolyn Tucker program in Brisbane on 25 February with Mr Reith, the Federal Minister, who really does not get involved. Mr Reith said this in relation to Gordonstone—

"The ... Well, the Federal perspective is that employer-employee relations are really the responsibility of the parties themselves."

He went on to say—

"... but, you know, how people get on at work on a day-by-day basis that's, that's their problem, that's their responsibility, that's their accountability."

Has there ever been one syllable of criticism of the Federal Government for not only not getting involved, but for saying as a matter of philosophy that it will not get involved? Not one thing! In fact, it has been quite the opposite. We had the hypocrisy from the shadow Minister, Mr Santoro, on 17 February this year in which he attacked us. What does he say as a coalition member when his own party refuses to do anything on Gordonstone? He said—

"Look I think that what the government should be doing and this is where I think Mr Beattie is failing, is calling on the union movement and calling on the employers to settle this

particular dispute in the forum that it should be settled and that is the Industrial Relations Commission."

He does not criticise the Government that has that responsibility. He says that it is our fault that the Gordonstone dispute is not settled. What absolute hypocrisy! Honourable members should contrast the two: in relation to Sun Metals, we call the parties together, we talk to the company, we talk to the unions and then they go back in the commission and progress is made; in Gordonstone, this hypocritical Opposition has never once encouraged the Federal Government to do anything. When Reith says that he is not going to do anything, he does nothing with the support of Opposition members, and they try to argue that it is our fault!

So what we are seeing now in the Sun Metals dispute is that something is being done, progress is being made. In the Gordonstone dispute, which has gone on for years, nothing positive is happening, Reith says he will do nothing and this coalition Opposition has never criticised him, despite the fact that this dispute has dragged on since 1997. We have here the most hypocritical Opposition in Queensland's history.

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