



Speech by

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard 26 October 1999

CENSURE OF MINISTER FOR MINES AND ENERGY

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.59 p.m.): I move—

"That this House censures the Minister for Mines and Energy over his handling of the massive unauthorised pay rise and associated benefits for ENERGEX Chief Executive Officer Mr Brian Blinco, including free power and big bonuses, and for his mismanagement of the Queensland electricity supply industry in general—particularly—

- His lack of transparency in relation to crucial decisions on major power generation projects;
- His lack of transparency on the future of tariff equalisation based community service obligation payments;
- His lack of transparency in relation to the future of billions of dollars in taxpayer funded generation assets; and
- Rampant Labor Party cronyism in regard to appointments to power industry boards."

If I were giving notice of this motion again, I would be tempted to seek to censure not the Minister for Mines and Energy but the Premier because earlier today we witnessed one of the most dishonest political tricks ever perpetrated on this Parliament by a serving Premier.

This morning the Premier tabled GOC CEO salary packages and movements. This afternoon it was confirmed by the Premier's office that, although the CEO of the QIC was listed in this document as having an income of \$385,000, the actual amount approved under this Government is \$577,000. On the document tabled by the Premier in Parliament this morning, in this instance is he \$50,000 out? Is he \$60,000 out? He is \$100,000 out? Is he \$120,000 out? We could keep going. Pick a box! The difference between \$385,000 and \$577,000 is the difference between truth and honesty and deceit.

The Premier has had the entire afternoon to come into this Chamber and correct the notion that he set out to deliberately mislead the Parliament. That is just one of the deceptions in the document tabled by the Premier this morning.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Why should we discriminate against a former coalition director-general?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE: Let the facts speak for themselves. This Government approved a \$577,000 package for the CEO of the QIC, and this morning the Premier tabled information in this Parliament that said the package totalled \$385,000. The document tabled by the Premier is headed "GOC CEO Salary Packages and Movements". What we had was a very deliberate and concerted attempt by the member for Brisbane Central to lie to the Parliament, to mislead the Parliament.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. There is only one liar in this Parliament and that is the Leader of the Opposition. I find that offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has asked for that comment to be withdrawn.

Mr BORBIDGE: I find what the Premier said offensive and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Let us have a double withdrawal.

Mr BEATTIE: Will you withdraw?

Mr BORBIDGE: Yes, I withdraw.

Mr BEATTIE: I withdraw, too.

Mr BORBIDGE: The fact is that the Premier misled the Parliament. He can come in here and laugh and say, "Isn't it funny? I was only \$200,000 out!" If one of these figures is dodgy, if some of the information in this document is dodgy, what else is dodgy? We have a dodgy Premier who has presented a false and fraudulent document to this Parliament.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. There is only one dodgy sod in this Parliament. It is the Leader of the Opposition. He and the truth never mix. I find that offensive. As usual, he is dishonest and I ask for it to be withdrawn. What a naughty man!

Mr BORBIDGE: Isn't it a joke? You can mislead the Parliament—

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BEATTIE: I find that offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have asked the Opposition Leader to withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE: I will withdraw. What a glass jaw the Premier has. He is untruthful and has misled the Parliament. If he was out by \$200,000 on one figure, how much was he out on the others? There are inaccuracies and there are blank spaces right through this document.

Let us look at the first page. In the final months of NORQEB under this Government there was not one but two increases for the chief executive officer—the first applicable from January this year and the second in February—which amounted to a 15.6% increase. His pay went up in two rises—from \$184,000 to \$211,000—and his bonus allocation went up from \$50,000 to \$60,000. In June, NORQEB ceased to exist. Why would there be two increases in the power industry corporation most under the nose of the Minister in its final months of operation?

At South West Power—another of the regional distribution corporations on the way out—there was an increase of \$37,000 for the chief executive in its final year. That represents a rise of 26%. So much for the Premier's claim that under his Government these pay scales have stood still. With the Mackay Electricity Board it is impossible to tell what the message is, because half of the spaces are blank. They are censored. Like some 1950s South American dictator, he does not want the Parliament to know so he leaves it blank or he whites it out. That is precisely what this slippery Premier has done.

At Wide Bay Burnett there was a \$15,000 increase in the final year of operation. At Powerlink, one of the biggies, the umbrella corporation for the distribution sector, the pay for the CEO this year will be \$251,000—a \$49,000 increase—but it could be much more, because the document does not indicate the scale or the extent of the bonuses, despite the claim on the front page that these are identified. They are not. Again, so much for the Premier's claims of accountability. So much for his claims that the pay scales have been static under this Government.

At the Queensland Power Trading Corporation there was an increase under Labor for the CEO of \$26,000. The salary for the CEO of Tarong appears to be static, but the CEO of CS Energy has done very well under Mr Beattie. The increase is \$97,150, making the total package worth \$396,150. But the member for Brisbane Central says, "Don't worry. The pay scales are staying still. Don't worry. Believe me. Here's the document with so much of the key figures missing." The list goes on and on.

This raises very serious questions about the credibility of the Premier. Has he deliberately sought to mislead the Parliament and the people or is he incompetent? If he has made a mistake of \$200,000 in respect of one CEO, what is the extent of the inaccuracies that have not yet been identified in this particular document? The tradition in this place is that if a Minister is aware that he has misled the House he comes in here and corrects it and apologises. The Premier's office can correct it to the media, but it cannot correct it to the Parliament.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition is absolutely right. We have corrected it to the media and, indeed, I will be tabling a full and amended document shortly.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE: The new full and amended document! Stage 2, part 2! His first document did not last the afternoon. How can we believe anything this man says?

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The new document makes him look even worse. I was too kind to him in the first place.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BORBIDGE: Other honourable members will express other areas of concern, but clearly the protection of Labor stooges in the electricity industry is something that is also very close to the Premier's heart. When we look at the make-up of the boards we see that they are peppered with the names of Labor identities. We also know that these positions pay. The bet is that these positions pay very well indeed.

Time expired.
