



Speech by

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard 10 March 1999

BEATTIE LABOR GOVERNMENT

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (6 p.m.): I move—

"That this House condemns the Beattie Labor Government as a can't do Government which is placing jobs growth at risk and diminishing potential for future employment expansion by—

1. Pursuing regressive anti-employment and anti-employer policies that will harm small business, including forcing unfair dismissal laws on firms with 15 or fewer employees.
2. Damaging Queensland's international reputation by failing to condemn the aggressive, illegal and disruptive activities of the CFMEU at Gordonstone and Sun Metals at Townsville, or to intervene in these disputes.
3. Cancelling or failing to pursue major job creation infrastructure projects which would have generated tens of thousands of jobs.
4. Wholesale abandonment of major water infrastructure projects including Flinders Dam, Finch Hatton Dam, St Helens Creek Dam; and dithering over Nathan Dam and Paradise Dam.
5. Presiding over a can't do administration which has proved itself incapable of delivering major investment projects for Queensland."

Over the last eight months Queenslanders have been able to see the performance of this Government and they are starting to realise that the Labor Government of Mr Beattie is a collective of can't dos led by a Cabinet of character assassins. What we have in this State is a Government that is a puppet of the trade union movement—a movement that most Queenslanders left behind and consigned to old 1950s Labor. What Queenslanders are beginning to see is that we have a "them" and "us" Government whose leader describes major international investors as being cigar smoking, port swilling industrialists; who accuses falsely Opposition members of Parliament of theft; whose Health Minister accuses hospital patients of being drunk; and whose Fair Trading Minister accuses developers of being crooks. We have a Government that fosters divisions within society that modern Queensland left behind well over a generation ago—a Government of yesterday, not of tomorrow.

It is a can't do Government in respect of the particular concerns of the Opposition raised in the industrial relations legislation, namely, the industrial relations changes foreshadowed by the Beattie Labor Government and the total surrender of the Parliament to the unions that bankrolled Labor's election campaign last year. We are about to see the payback: the industrial relations changes that Mr Beattie promised Mr Wellington he would not introduce into this Parliament.

We are about to see under this Labor Government the reintroduction of compulsory trade unionism despite the fact that most Queenslanders do not want compulsory trade unionism. We are about to see under this Labor Government the reintroduction of union preference when most Queenslanders have rejected trade union preference. We are about to see under this Labor Government the reintroduction of State-based unfair dismissal laws when we see major surveys from bodies such as the Queensland Confederation of Industry and the Queensland Chamber of Commerce have increasingly shown that major employers in this State and small businesses in this State regard unfair dismissal laws as a major impediment to taking on staff.

We have seen this Government doing the bidding of the CFMEU. We have seen the debacle at Gordonstone. We have seen the defence of the striking picketers—the professional strikers—at Gordonstone. We have heard the incredible comment in the Parliament today by the Minister for Industrial Relations that the Sun Metals dispute was a Federal issue—a State Industrial Relations Minister who does not even know that that dispute is before the State Industrial Relations Commission, not the Federal Industrial Relations Commission. We have seen a situation where the member for Fitzroy has been made a deity under this Government, compared with the likes of Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. We have seen a licence given to the unions of this State to break the law "if you want to because it's okay".

We are seeing this new bout of industrial recklessness and unrest in this State because the Premier and his Government say it is okay. They have given a licence to the unions because we have a Government in this State that is about to repay by way of changes to the law the incredible financial support that the trade union movement provided to this Government in the State election last year.

We have seen a loss of major projects. We have seen the bungled attempt to cancel Callide C. We have seen the new power station in Townsville that is going to be half the size of what was committed under the previous coalition Government. We have seen the loss of the World Garden Exhibition. We have seen the loss of Expo 2002. We have seen the debacle over Briztram. We have seen the loss of commitment by this Government in respect of major water infrastructure projects. We have seen a Capital Works Program introduced by this Government that is \$25m less than the Capital Works Program that the previous coalition Government brought to this place in our last Budget. We have seen the work of the Water Infrastructure Task Force being ignored. We have seen the hijacking of the Department of Natural Resources in this State by the Green police, by the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency, which is the pay-off to the Greens for preferences that they gave to the Labor Party at the last election.

We have the loss of major projects. I ask the question: what major projects have come to fruition under this Government that were not in the pipeline under the previous coalition Government? None! Nothing that this Government has been able to manage and steer through and progress is a project that was not committed to by the previous National/Liberal coalition in this State.

The same Labor leader who accused us of not delivering on Chevron has not delivered on Chevron. The same Labor leader who accused us of not delivering on Comalco has not delivered on Comalco despite the fact that the previous coalition Government signed off on the State assistance package to Comalco in February or March last year—over 12 months ago.

This is not a Government; it is an accident scene. This is a Government that inherited the strongest economy in Australia. This is a Government that inherited the strongest jobs growth in Australia. This is a Government that inherited the strongest economic performance where the previous coalition Government had returned Queensland to a position of pre-eminence.

What are we seeing under this can't do Premier and this can't do Government? We are seeing a return to mediocrity so that this great State of Queensland is dropping back to the middle of the pack. We are seeing it time and time again. The big issues will not be tackled by this Government because it is not prepared to tackle them. We have an Industrial Relations Minister—and apparently a Premier—who does not even know that the Sun Metals dispute is before the State Industrial Relations Commission, not the Federal Industrial Relations Commission.

We have a Government that unashamedly has sided with a handful of law-breakers at Gordonstone in order to stop lawful, law-abiding Queenslanders going to and from their place of work. We have seen a massive water infrastructure program put in place by the previous Government grinding to a halt. We are seeing dams cancelled. We are seeing a total lack of commitment. In terms of the Department of State Development, I suggest that it be renamed DUD, because that is what it is—a department that is delivering nothing to this State at a cost considerably above that of its predecessor in the coalition Government.

The simple fact is that Labor, eight months into its term of office, can show nothing for being there. The Government has not delivered any major projects. It has not delivered improved services for Queenslanders. Now we are going back to the future in terms of old-fashioned 1950s industrial relations in this State—industrial relations policies that were rejected by the people of Queensland and rejected by a large number of trade unionists. What we are seeing is the total capitulation of the sovereignty of this State to organisations such as the CFMEU.

Time expired.
