



Speech by

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard 24 March 1999

SUN METALS DISPUTE; GORDONSTONE MINE DISPUTE

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

"That this House notes and shares the grave concern of business, industry, and the general public over the threat to jobs, investment, and well being of the Queensland community as a result of the comprehensive "can't do" record of the Beattie Labor Government, particularly its failure to deal appropriately with illegal industrial action at the Sun Metals project and the Gordonstone coal mine."

There is no more damning evidence of the can't do style of this Government than the way in which it is allowing the Left Wing of the Labor movement, notably the CFMEU, to run rampant in this State, putting vast investments and many thousands of jobs at very grave risk and with barely a whimper. It has been a disgraceful, destructive, inactive and impotent performance, particularly in relation to the two major industrial actions that are under way in this State, despite the fact that both are now illegal.

The very best that we have had from the Premier in relation to the Sun Metals dispute is some photo opportunity advice on picket line etiquette—another effort to appear to be doing something when he is actually doing nothing—coupled with an observation that at midnight tonight he will import yesterday's Labor hero to do the work that Queenslanders expect today's Premier to be doing. In relation to Gordonstone, we have simply heard heavy praise for a member of his Government for getting himself arrested on the CFMEU picket line.

The sordid ground to this incompetence and toadying to the extreme Left Wing of the industrial movement is this, and it is time that it was spelt out: during the life of the last Labor Government in this State, a major battle waged between the Left Wing and the Right Wing of the industrial Labor movement. Bill Ludwig of the totally dominant AWU faction made a major effort to enhance the influence of his union, and he succeeded. At the expense of Left Wing unions like the CFMEU—indeed, particularly the CFMEU—he carved out enhanced supremacy for the AWU. Mr Ludwig fronted up to workplaces throughout the State and signed off on enterprise agreements left, right and centre, so long as he got exclusive coverage of the site and so long as he could muscle the likes of the CFMEU aside. For most of the Goss period, the Left copped it because the Ludwig and Goss control of the party was unassailable.

However, the resentment finally boiled over in 1994 when we saw the full acrimony of that battle come to the surface via the likes of leftists like Ian McLean and Jimmy O'Donnell from the Clerks Union who finally said that enough was enough. It was then that the Left Wing of the Labor Party in this State vowed that it would never again allow itself to be duded by any dominant clique, and particularly by the AWU or by any Labor Premier. The next time round, it was going to demand a big piece of the action. We see the evidence of that everywhere in the performance of this Government today, which is covering in acquiescence to the determination of the Left. We have a Premier who is essentially powerless. The tail now wags the dog.

The member for Brisbane Central cannot control the party and he cannot control the Government, because he cannot knock the Left. At the same time, his support from the Right is a mere fraction of the base his predecessor enjoyed, so he is in double jeopardy. He can only play media games to give the impression that he is tough. He will attack the picketers at Sun Metals for sexist

language and bad behaviour, but he will not actually do anything substantive; he cannot because he is not allowed to. He is a hostage to the CFMEU and the Left Wing of the Labor movement in this State.

That is what is really going on in relation to this Government's management, mismanagement or lack of management of the current industrial turmoil in Queensland. That is why we are not getting action. That is why workers at Gordonstone are being held to ransom by professional picketers who are being flown in on fully loaded DC3s. That is why picketers on that site feel that they can thumb their noses at the Supreme Court. That is why the Premier is impotent in the face of what is happening at Sun Metals, where the strikers have been ordered back to work by the Industrial Commission. We have had anti-jobs variations to the workers compensation scheme, because the Left wanted them. Changes are being made to the building industry, because the Left wanted them. There is the row over the privatisation of the TAB, because the Left does not want it. That is why the regional forest agreement process under this Government is a farce. That is why we will get legislation in this House that will take industrial relations in the State back to the 1950s.

The price to the State of the Premier's lack of authority within the Labor movement will ultimately be massive. There is a domino effect at work here. For example, Gordonstone is owned by a Rio Tinto company. Another Rio Tinto company is considering building what could ultimately become a \$4 billion-plus alumina refinery at Gladstone, which will be the biggest single industrial investment in the history of our State. It will not do that if it cannot have a productive industrial relations format. Yet this Government has praised one of its own for being on the picket line at Gordonstone, supporting the same action that Justice Moynihan condemned in his judgment in the Supreme Court yesterday and protesting against the sort of industrial arrangements that the company that wants to invest \$4 billion in this State reckons it needs—indeed, must have—to deliver the goods and get the bottom line.

Then we have the incredible situation where, rather than using the influence and the power of his office, the Premier is now going to import Bob Hawke from down south, allegedly to try to fix a problem that the Premier and his Government have the power to deal with if they wanted to. If we want to talk about leadership, did we not see Premier Beattie shown up today? He was shown up by "Rodeo Ron" at Townsville. I pay tribute to that individual who works at the Sun Metals construction site. He is a former rodeo star turned carpenter. He is determined to cross the picket line tomorrow and he is encouraging others to do so. He has said, "Everybody who wants to work and who wants to go on site, meet me out there at 6 o'clock because I'm going through." More power to "Rodeo Ron"! I hope he is successful, because he is showing the sort of leadership that has been abysmally missing in this State and in the Labor Party.

Mr Reynolds interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: Does the Premier's Parliamentary Secretary from Townsville back "Rodeo Ron"? Does he back Korea Zinc? There is silence, because he knows that he is on the nose for the way that he has abandoned this project and the people of Townsville in order to pay his union dues. He took an oath of office as a Parliamentary Secretary, but he has betrayed that oath of office and he has betrayed Townsville. Is it not a pity that he did not show a little of the leadership that his successor, Tony Mooney, has shown by supporting Sun Metals and the Korea Zinc project?

On this issue, we see an abysmal lack of leadership. We see a Premier and a Government that is held hostage by the CFMEU. We see the member for Fitzroy determining Government policy, whether it is Gordonstone or whether it is Sun Metals. We have a situation which I see the member apparently finds humorous, that if Sun Metals is mothballed and if we do not see a Stage 2, we will not see a base load power station at Townsville, we will not see a Chevron gas pipeline and we will not see an alumina smelter at Gladstone. Whose fault will that be? It will be the fault of a Government that betrayed its trust and its responsibility to the people of Queensland. It is a can't do Government in a can-do State, and it can only do anything at all for its union mates. It is all very easy and simple for the Premier to say, "Naughty boy, shouldn't do that", but what has he done? Has he called in the CFMEU? Has he spoken to the unions?

Mr Reynolds: Division and hatred—that's what you want.

Mr BORBIDGE: Has he taken a proactive role in making sure that the laws of the State of Queensland will be enforced? He has not! He has rolled over to the likes of the honourable members down the back who interject. Then we hear these porkies from the member for Brisbane Central, ignoring the fact that the Sun Metals agreement was signed under the industrial relations laws of the previous Goss Government of which he was a member—industrial relations laws passed through this Parliament by the current Attorney-General.

Time expired.
