



Speech by

Mr S. SANTORO

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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BEATTIE LABOR GOVERNMENT

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (6.35 p.m.): The Premier's amendment to the motion is an exercise in intellectual dishonesty and in claiming credit where it is not due. Briefly, I wish to go through the various elements of the Labor Party's amendment and show to the House, and to anybody else who cares to listen, the hypocrisy and intellectual dishonesty of members opposite.

Any self-respecting economist would acknowledge that before the impact of economic policies becomes manifest there is a timelag. This Government has only been in office for nine months. It has been implementing policies for even less time than that. Any self-respecting economist who says that there is no timelag between the implementation of the Labor Party Budget—our Budget; and we take the credit for the good things that flow from that Budget—is being intellectually dishonest.

In the first part of his motion, the Premier claims that unemployment is at a nine-year record low. The Premier did not mention that in February and March last year we claimed that unemployment was at an eight-year record low and that those years included six hard years of Labor. When the Premier talks about a low rate of unemployment, he is speaking about our achievements. We brought down the rate in spite of the hurdle that the Goss Labor Party left in our way. When he lays claim to record job creation figures of 1,800 a month, we will take a good deal of the credit for that achievement.

Today in question time I heard the Minister for Employment and the Premier, as did the Treasurer tonight, claim credit for the increase in the number of apprenticeships. I will tell honourable members what the document titled "Matters for the Minister's Attention" for the week after we left office right up to the time that I got it under FOI shows. This is what happened for the year 16 June 1997 to 15 June 1998—two days

after we lost the election. There was a 5.8% increase in new apprenticeships approved over the 12 months. In the building industry, the figure was up 25.6%. From 2 September 1997 to 2 September 1998, the increase in apprenticeships was 21.1%. The increase in the number of building industry apprenticeships was 34.9%. That is what the Minister's briefing notes told him. For the Premier and the Treasurer to claim credit for that increase because of the building industry fund, which was only implemented on 1 January, is intellectually dishonest. They know that, yet they keep claiming the credit for that increase.

The fourth point in the motion mentions reforming industrial relations by reforming the Industrial Relations Commission for dispute resolution purposes. They intend to centralise dispute resolution and come up with one-size-fits-all solutions. They will move away from the enterprise focus, and that will destroy business incentive. What they will also be doing is increasing the rights of unions to enter workplaces in an unrestricted manner, and they will be giving unions the automatic right to intervene before the commission regardless of whether the case before the commission involves union representation or not. What will that do? They also intend to abolish the coalition's unfair dismissal laws.

The Government is returning to the policies of Goss, Warburton, Vaughan and those sorts of Ministers. We are warning the Government about this, because we are genuinely concerned that it will have a detrimental impact on employment. Politically, it is good for us. As the cycle takes shape, in two to three years' time it will be politically good for us. But in the interests of the unemployed we are telling the Government that what it is doing is bad, because it will increase unemployment.

The fifth point mentions transforming the building and construction industry in this State. I have just told honourable members that approvals were skyrocketing in the last 12 months under the previous Government, yet Government members now take the credit. The Government speaks of delivering major infrastructure projects, including the Airtrain Citylink and the Brisbane Light Rail Project. Airtrain Citylink was our project. It is now being delivered 12 months late by the Labor Party. The Brisbane Light Rail Project was yet again our project, to be delivered with Federal Government support.

Those are the points on which the Premier hangs his argument. He is being intellectually dishonest by falsely claiming credit for coalition achievements. Day after day Government members come in here and falsely claim credit for the achievements that are still flowing through into the Queensland economy as a result of our two and a half years of diligent coalition economic and industrial stewardship of the State. If that is all the Government has to hang its case on, as I said, it suits us fine politically. However, the Government is indulging in economic vandalism of the worst kind and condemning generations of Queenslanders to the unemployment scrap heap.

Time expired.
