



Speech by

Hon. TOM BARTON

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Hansard 25 November 1999

INCREASE IN CRIME

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (6.16 p.m.): I move following amendment—

"Delete all words after 'Parliament' and insert the following—

'notes the increased police resources made available by the Beattie Labor Government to combat crime; and

'commends the Government's policy of being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime.'"

It is a real tragedy that we have a shadow Minister who cannot count, even with the assistance of the member for Broadwater. In his mind, he still thinks he is the shadow Health Minister. In the false belief that he is still the shadow Minister for Health, he has placed several questions on notice—including some this week—to the Health Minister. He appears to be much more interested in health than he is in policing issues. One Nation members have asked more questions about police and have shown a keener interest in law and order than the shadow Minister, the member for Toowoomba South.

Earlier this week, in commenting on an editorial from the Gladstone Observer of 16 November, I highlighted the hypocrisy of the honourable member for Toowoomba South's interpretation of the crime statistics. However, its front page story makes for even more interesting reading. It nails once and for all the fact that a lot of the increases in crime that are recorded are simply as a result of police being much more proactive under the Beattie Government in terms of making arrests. If they are making arrests and being much more proactive, of course the crime statistics will increase accordingly.

Not everyone in the coalition is 100% behind the shadow Minister in respect of the crime statistics, anyway. The member for Mirani, who I notice is listed to speak in this debate tonight, thinks that the crime statistics for Mackay were great. The Daily Mercury of 16 November stated—

"I am delighted that the number of break and enters and motor vehicle thefts have gone down along with the number of drug offences," Mr Malone said."

Interestingly, tonight he will stand up and back his shadow Minister, yet the shadow Minister is once again misrepresenting the figures. The member for Toowoomba South has attempted to link the rise in crime to more police going into administrative roles—something that is not supported by the facts. The opposite has happened. The proportion of police involved in operational or beat duties has gone from 90.8% in July 1998 to 91.6% in November this year. In two and a half years, the coalition managed an 0.8% improvement in operational police figures, but the Beattie Labor Government has achieved that same improvement in a shorter time, and it will improve further.

Thirty-three police were able to return to the beat last financial year away from desk-bound jobs when they were filled by civilians. This financial year a further 40 positions currently held by sworn police officers will be filled by civilians and we will see that increase in operational police numbers rise yet again by a significant amount. We will leave the coalition's record in the dust. Considering that in January 1990 the proportion of operational police was 77.7%, the Queensland Police Service has come a long way. Not only are there more police; there are also more police in direct operational roles. That is one of the reasons why there has been a large increase in detected crime. For example, prostitution offences

were up by 47% and public soliciting was up by 78%. That was not because there was a marked increase in the number of streetwalkers but because under this Government police are taking a tougher line with prostitution with the full support of the Government.

It is true that the Police budget has gone up by 4% this year, and this is basically a consolidation year for the Queensland Police Service overall. However, there have been large increases from 7% to 16%—

Mr Horan: Consolidation!

Mr BARTON: I take that interjection. The north coast region has had an increase in its operational budget of 16.2%, yet we hear the shadow Minister and also the member for Mooloolah bleating in here, saying that there have been decreases. That just proves once again that they cannot count. No wonder the shadow Minister has not made it to the position of Leader of the Opposition and is languishing on the backbenches as the deputy shadow Minister for Health, which he has a much greater interest in. The shadow Minister could not understand the simple fact that, within an overall 4% budget, we could divert the resources back out to the cutting edge—into the regions where the actual police work is done. It is a fallacy to believe his nonsense that there has been a reduction.

Time expired.
