



Speech by

Hon. T. McGRADY

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

Hansard 29 April 1999

PERFORMANCE OF MINISTERS

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (6.45 p.m.): I am delighted to participate in this debate. Firstly, I congratulate the member for Hinchinbrook on his elevation to a very high office in this Parliament. I also thank the Leader of the Opposition for making that appointment.

It is the height of hypocrisy for the members opposite to talk about responsibility in the mining and electricity industries. Let us look at some of their records in those very important areas. I turn to a few of the issues raised by the member for Hinchinbrook in his new role as Opposition spokesman for Mines and Energy. There are a lot more issues that we have to look at tonight.

In various press and radio interviews, the honourable member has raised the plight of small miners and referred to problems brought about by native title legislation. Should I have to remind those opposite that when they were in Government they tried to bury their heads in the sand over native title? They tried to ignore it in the hope that it would go away. Of course it did not go away. They lost the plot. They placed a freeze right across the mining industry. What happened? No leases or permits were issued and mining companies had to close down. Union Mining in the north of this State closed its doors and threw its workers onto the scrap heap. Members opposite will never be allowed to forget that.

The very first piece of legislation that the Beattie Labor Government introduced into the Parliament was aimed at resolving the native title issue. The only hold-up now is with the Opposition's Tory mates in Canberra, because they will not agree to the legislation that we have put forward.

The member for Hinchinbrook criticised what the Government is doing in the electricity industry. This man criticised the appointment of Keith De Lacy, which he referred to as "jobs for the boys". When one reads the list of appointments that were made under the coalition Government, it is like reading the Who's Who of the coalition, with the Martin Tennis, the Mrs Nelsons and so on. I say to the member: Keith De Lacy's appointment has been received with great enthusiasm not just in Cairns but right across regional Queensland.

Considering all the errors and mistakes that the members of the coalition made during their two and a half years in power—it wrecked the Queensland electricity industry; it ripped over three quarters of a billion dollars out of the industry and sent men and women onto the unemployment scrap heap—they have a hide to say that we will cause job losses in the electricity industry. If there had not been a change of Government, members opposite would have sacked 3,000 people from the Queensland electricity industry, and the former Minister has admitted that. I say this: the work that we have done to date in the electricity industry will stand us in good stead in the years ahead.

One of the first things we established was that, under the coalition regime, no work had been done in relation to power stations. The first thing we did was set up a task force. We sent in the team. It has come up with recommendations. We now have an implementation unit. Last year this State was on the verge of blackouts 17 times, all because of the policies of the former coalition Government. Opposition members have a hide supporting a motion condemning five Labor Ministers in this place. What I am saying tonight is that we understand the problems in the industry. The actions that we have taken to date will resolve many of them. We do not need the member opposite ranting and raving about retrenchments up and down the State. The honourable member would not have a clue about how the electricity industry in this State works.

Time expired.