



Speech by

Hon. T. McGRADY

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

Hansard 15 September 1999

BURNETT REGION

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (6.31 p.m.): This debate is all about truth and there has been very little truth coming from the other side of the House tonight. It is time that I gave members opposite a little history lesson.

Prior to the last State election, a Cabinet meeting was held in the South Burnett. What happened? The then Premier came out and announced that there was going to be an expansion program at the Tarong Power Station. However, he forgot to consult the board of that power station, because it knew nothing at all about it. It was a gimmick. It was a ploy to defeat the efforts of the One Nation candidate. Of course, it failed. All it did was to deal a very cruel blow to the people of Kingaroy, Tarong and such places. He led them up the garden path. He told those people that he was going to spend \$1 billion on an extension to the power station. What happened? We had to come in and see what we could do.

I was in the South Burnett just a few weeks ago. I addressed a lunch meeting of 150 people. I was told that they were disappointed—indeed, they were disgusted—with the National Party, and this was a Tory town. This was the heart of the National Party and that party betrayed them. In the 32 years that members opposite were in office, the area had the highest unemployment rate in the State. The National Party betrayed those people, so all the nonsense that members opposite are coming out with tonight is wrong. We referred the matter of the Tarong Power Station to the board. The board assessed the situation and endorsed a proposal which it sent to the two shareholding Ministers.

As I said a moment ago and as I said this morning, this is a \$1 billion project and it will be financed by the taxpayers of Queensland. There has been much—

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr McGRADY: The member would not have a clue. Today much has been said about Entergy. When Entergy pulled out—

Mr Cooper: Who?

Mr McGRADY: As I said, the member would not have a clue. When Entergy pulled out, it was simply looking at its international investments. Of course, when the Opposition talks about somebody saying that the Queensland Government was slow, that person remains quite anonymous.

In today's Courier-Mail there happens to be a little advertisement that states, "Application for Generation Authority by Tarong Energy Corporation Limited." This is an application to the regulator for a permit to generate. This follows the meeting that was held between the Premier, Deputy Premier and me, which I have already mentioned today. There is a due process to go through and we will go through the process and a decision will be made.

All we hear day after day after day about Tarong is humbug. The member for Crows Nest was a member of the Cabinet that misled the people. In the next 12 months, \$25m will be spent on the maintenance and upgrading of the Tarong Power Station. I use the word "maintenance" because when those opposite were in power they did not have a clue what maintenance was. In this financial year, \$25m is going to be spent.

Tonight I ask the Parliament to treat this motion with the absolute disgust and disdain that it deserves. As I said in my opening remarks, this debate is about truth. No truth whatsoever is

forthcoming from the other side of the House. Members opposite tell untruths day after day after day. The decision of the former Cabinet to go ahead with an expansion of the Tarong Power Station had not even been discussed with the board. It was simply a cheap attempt to keep the One Nation candidate out of this Parliament.
