



Speech by

Tony ELLIOTT

MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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FORESTRY AMENDMENT BILL

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (9.51 p.m.): As a member representing a country area which also contains forestry, I wish to make a few points about the cypress pine industry. Around Cecil Plains and various other areas, a large number of people are involved in the cypress pine industry, as are the member for Crows Nest and the member for Western Downs. Large numbers of people are involved in that industry. Regrettably, very little is known amongst the general public about the cypress pine industry. People who understand the industry and have had a fair bit to do with it tend to find that, over the years, cypress pine grows very much like a weed. In no time flat, areas that have been logged are able to be logged again.

I believe that there is very little understanding of the cypress pine industry amongst those in the conservation movement. They do not really go into those areas. They seem to be able to hug the trees closer to the coast where the climate is kinder to them. They can walk around in the Cooloola National Park and various other forestry areas, they can look at those trees and ooh and aah and goo and carry on. But we do not see many conservationists in areas where it is 110 in the shade and the goannas need to take a cut lunch to survive in the middle of that country. We never see them in those areas. It is a great pity that we do not take them out there, give them a compass and a couple of dry old corned beef sandwiches, let them loose and see just how far they get. That way they would see exactly what is out there—the types of eucalypts and other trees that are there.

In common with the member for Maryborough, I challenge the various Ministers—not so much Mr Palaszczuk, but Mr Welford, the Deputy Premier and the Premier; I challenge them in particular. I would like them to let the cat out of the bag and tell us what really went on. I have seen clear evidence in writing that the Queensland Timber Board's general manager recommended that a court challenge be taken up in relation to this whole exercise. But somewhere along the line someone got at those people. Who got at them? What did they use as a lever to convince those people that they should not go ahead with a court challenge and that they should back down?

In fact, it was resolved to challenge the pricing review in court, if implemented, and the Queensland Timber Board was concerned that the pricing policy was coming directly from the conservation movement. The Minister's adviser, A. J. Brown, advised that the State Government wished to review the RFA objectives. Both the Federal Government and the industry walked out of the meeting at that stage. One could say that perhaps the Government will try to have us believe that there was a signing off, if you like, on the whole process at that stage, but that is not correct. The task force agreed to the way in which it was to be done—in other words, the way in which they were to arrive at the end result—but they had not signed off on it at all. There was very definitely a decision taken to take it on in the court, if necessary. But somewhere along the line those people were got at. That is the only way in which that could have changed. I have seen that in writing.

The DNR Minister's adviser indicated that, from 1 October 1998, the allocation would be reduced by 40%. There was no justification for that whatsoever. In the beginning, there was a lot of goodwill and common ground in respect to some of the things that were being suggested. But the Government let the conservation movement take over the whole process. They then stuck their bib in, the Government caved in to them, and then the Federal Government and the industry walked out of the meeting. Somewhere along the line, this Government got something over those people and was able to make them cave in.

The timber industry in my electorate is very important, although it is not huge compared to the cotton or the grain industries. However, it employs many people, including a lot of small businesspeople and subcontractors who bring the timber back. It employs the millers who work in the sawmills at Cecil

Plains and various other places. The whole fibre and structure of all those little towns and communities throughout Queensland—and there are many of them—is dependent upon that timber industry.

The Government cannot allow the conservation movement to get at it and screw everyone into the ground. No-one is more interested in the conservation of this State than I am. I was responsible for the extension of the Cooloola National Park, which was probably directly against the forestry industry at that time. So members should not think that my philosophy is: if you can stand on it, plough it, and if it stands, chop it down. That is not the case at all. We must be practical. We must have a balanced view. And quite frankly, this outcome is not balanced. Therefore, I do not support this legislation.
