



Speech by

**BRUCE DAVIDSON**

**MEMBER FOR NOOSA**

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Hansard 14 March 2000

**BORAL MILL, COOROY**

**Mr DAVIDSON** (Noosa—LP) (7.05 p.m.): In the last session of this Parliament during the debate on tree-clearing guidelines, the Deputy Premier, in commenting on coalition members, stated—

"And they walk away from their responsibilities, in terms of the RFA, because they are cowards and they are playing politics on it. They are cowards and they are deserting their constituency on it."

Talk about the pot calling the kettle black. Here we have the head kicker of the 49th Parliament calling members on this side of the House cowards not once but twice, when neither he nor his leader, the great saviour of Green votes, can find the backbone to travel just 175 kilometres up the Bruce Highway to personally confront the timberworkers of the Boral mill at Cooroy whom they are about to put out of work. Such a trip is obviously not a preferred junket.

In a show of cowardice unprecedented in this House not only will the Deputy Premier Jim Elder and Premier Peter Beattie not meet personally with these workers and their families, they will not even reply to the AWU representations on behalf of these families. I can understand but not forgive their previous show of cowardice on this matter—

**Mr ELDER:** I rise to a point of order. We have replied. The honourable member for Noosa is misleading the House. I find it offensive, and I ask that it be withdrawn.

**Mr DAVIDSON:** I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

I can understand but not forgive their previous show of cowardice on this matter when I have raised these facts in the House and challenged them to table guarantees and the existence of real jobs for these workers, which of course never eventuated. I can understand their exhibition of cowardice in these matters when I wrote to them about these matters—letters and submissions which to this very day neither the Premier nor his deputy have ever acknowledged, let alone acted upon.

Whilst I understand that they are doing just what they accuse everyone else of doing—playing politics in the matter of the RFA—I find it absolutely appalling, contemptuous and cowardly when they refuse to listen to the pleas of their union member brothers when it comes to the life and death matter of jobs and livelihoods for these timberworkers and their families. The major media outlets in this State consider the RFA and its consequences, especially the 80 Cooroy families who have to bear the brunt of this catastrophe with no jobs and no future after September, as a done deal of no consequence. Let me tell the House and the media why it is not a done deal and why it will not go away. As expressed in the Sunshine Coast Daily on Monday of this week—

"Angry timber workers will meet in Cooroy today to protest the Beattie Government's failure to come up with redundancy packages they claim were promised last year."

Mr Greg Davis, a Boral supervisor, said—

"We've been given different timetables and every day those dates have gone by and nothing has been finalised. At Christmas we were told everything was all right. After Christmas we were told everything was still all right. And after that we were told everything was still all right."

In the typical fashion of this clown in clover, the Minister for State Development opposite, all that these workers have got from this Government so far is a plethora of hot air, bombast and no action, the epitome of Labor promises and the stock in trade of the Minister for Trade, the member for Capalaba.

The Sunshine Coast Daily story further highlights this Minister's total non-performance in this matter—

"The men's frustration with the State Government is matched by members of the community working group, battling to pull Cooroy out of the economic hole dug by the RFA. Working group members, local solicitor Paul Bone and prominent businessman Greg Dinsey are fed up with the inaction and alleged misinformation by the Department of State Development."

Mr Dinsey said—

"The Government hasn't responded to us in the slightest. We're just wasting our time."

**Mr ELDER:** I rise to a point of order. I find that remark offensive. I have met them. I ask that it be withdrawn.

**Mr DAVIDSON:** I withdraw. Mr Dinsey went on to say—

"Our fear here is that, once the closure date of 1 October comes and goes, you have 80 people who haven't got a job."

After Monday's meeting, the best the AWU and Minister Elder could come up with for those forgotten timberworkers was the promise of the "Minister for Disaster", Mr Elder, that on Friday he would act, that he would have something on redundancy packages that were promised before Christmas. Friday is St Patrick's Day. Was it not St Patrick who is reputed to have rid Ireland of snakes in the grass? On Friday the workers of Boral in Cooroy may have need of St Patrick again. Let us hear no more about cowards from the Minister responsible for this farce—this abomination of deceit of his fellow union members' future wellbeing. Let us hear no more about jobs for 471 people.

**Mr ELDER:** I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive, and I ask the honourable member to withdraw. The only one playing politics here is the member for Noosa.

**Mr DAVIDSON:** I withdraw. I am talking about 80 men and their families in Cooroy. I am talking about the Labor Party and the AWU which have not catered for or facilitated the finding of work for these men. I am talking about blokes whom the Labor Party has refused to meet with. I am talking about a union representative who has met with those people and who has put the view that they have not made a decision—

**Mr ELDER:** I rise to a point of order. I find the remarks offensive. I ask that they be withdrawn.

**Mr DAVIDSON:** I withdraw. I am talking about a working group which has absolutely no faith and confidence in those opposite—a working group which knows that they are not going to do anything for the people in Cooroy. I am talking about their wives, families and children. I am talking about real people who have lost their jobs as a result of Labor's decision on the RFA. I am talking about blokes who have no hope and no confidence in the Minister ensuring that they receive redundancy packages.

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