



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 20 June 2000

FUEL SUBSIDY SCHEME

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (6.19 p.m.): I rise to second the amendment. In doing so, let us be very clear. This debate is about whether members are on the side of the rorters or on the side of the motorists. My Government is on the side of the motorists. There are a number of members who want to argue an apologetic line for the oil companies and the rorters. Let them do it. For them there will be a day of reckoning from the electorate and the community. Let it be clearly understood: we stand on the side of honesty, integrity and on the side of ending the rorts.

It is important to acknowledge that both the former Premier and the former Treasurer knew from the start that the system was flawed and they both accepted that. The former Premier indicated that prices rose 8c in Surfers Paradise. The former Treasurer raised issues about 4c in Caloundra. It was happening right under their noses, in their electorates, and they knew there was a rort. In addition to that, immediately after they introduced legislation former Treasurer Sheldon recognised the need to stop the cross-border piracy, costing \$2m a week or \$104m a year. That is the history under the previous Government. Even last week the current Liberal Leader admitted in his own media release—

"The current subsidy arrangement does not guarantee that our prices will be cheaper than in New South Wales or Western Australia or the Northern Territory or anywhere else."

That statement can be found in his news release. So what is the point of a subsidy? What sort of an Einstein remark is that? At the end of the day, the member for Moggill is in fact saying in his news release that the 8.35c is not being passed on to the motorist. What is the point of a subsidy? What a nonsense!

Dr Watson: It is 9.6c on average.

Mr BEATTIE: I see. So now the Leader of the Liberal Party is on the side of the oil companies. Now he does not believe that the subsidy should be passed on. What a nonsense! The Liberal Leader stated—

"The current subsidy arrangement does not guarantee that our prices will be cheaper than in New South Wales or Western Australia or the Northern Territory or anywhere else."

If that is the Liberal Party view, we do not agree with it.

When the Treasurer and I met with the stakeholders yesterday we set three principles. Firstly, the 8.35c a litre should be passed on; secondly, it should be done at the bowser; and, thirdly, the \$100m rort should end. I would have thought the other side of politics would agree.

Those opposite also raised some complaints about our public information campaign. They have been running around in this Chamber and outside of this House complaining about the information campaign. What a lot of hypocrites! I bring theirs to the attention of the House. I have here a full-page ad run in the newspaper of Monday, 1 September 1997. It deals with the tax arrangements for liquor, tobacco and petroleum. The previous Government ran full-page ads. I table that ad for the information of the House.

What a lot of hypocrites! They have been criticising our information campaign, yet they had one of their own. Not only that, I am reminded that those opposite spent over \$6m on promotion and advertising. Our pathetic \$300,000 pales into insignificance. I am happy to go through the document that outlines that expenditure, but I table it for the information of the House.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Those opposite are not consistent. When the Treasurer and I sat down with the oil companies they said to us that there is a cross-border trade worth \$60m. These are the people to whom those opposite paid—

Mr Borbidge: You said 100. It is 60 now, is it?

Mr BEATTIE: Gee, you are a clown. This is what they said to us.

Mr Borbidge: You said they told you it was 100.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, do I have to put up with this all night? As I was about to say, when the Treasurer and I sat down with the oil companies they said that there was a cross-border trade worth \$60m. Who are these people? These are the people to whom the Leader of the Opposition paid the subsidy. They say that there is a rort going on.

The Leader of the Opposition asks, "Where is the rort?" The people the Leader of the Opposition paid the subsidy to say that there is a rort worth \$60m. We went back to Treasury and asked how much. It came up with \$100m. Oil companies say that it is \$60m and Treasury says that it is \$100m, but there is no argument about whether there is a rort. They all agree that there is a rort. So the people the Leader of the National Party says the money should be paid to under his scheme say that there is a rort—a \$60m rort. Does the Opposition Leader want evidence? The people those opposite paid the money to tell us so.

Under those circumstances, let there be no argument that all we get from the other side is an apology for the oil companies. The whingers and moaners come in here and stand on the side of the rorters. Let me make it clear: my Government will end the rort. We will not be intimidated by the oil companies, as the Leader of the Opposition was when he gave them the money. They tell us that there is a \$60m rort. We will stand firm.

Time expired.
