



Speech by

SHAUN NELSON

MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS

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FUEL PRICES

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (12.11 p.m.): There are quite a few amendments before the House; I support the original motion before the House. I also support the Opposition amendment. By virtue of the fact that I support those, I support the third amendment also. Therefore, I support all of them. However, I do not understand what the problem is. When I talk to farmers and people in the street in my electorate, they all say that the fact they are paying too much for petrol is upsetting them. They are paying \$1 a litre, 97c a litre or \$1.06 a litre depending on the day of the week, while people in Brisbane and the Gold Coast pay 79c and 80c a litre. These price differences have always existed, but when petrol reached the \$1 a litre barrier it started to hurt, especially in north Queensland where one has to drive long distances to get anywhere. It is 75 kilometres of steep roads from my home to Cairns. It takes more fuel to get up the Gillies Highway than it does to drive on 75 kilometres of flat land. Everybody knows that. The operators of trucks carrying produce to and from the tablelands have to pay for fuel as well.

Therefore, fuel prices are the key issue for people in north Queensland, regardless of whom I speak to and regardless of their political colour. I speak to diehard Labor voters. I speak to greenies. I speak to those who vote for the National Party. The simple fact is that they are all saying the same thing: we are paying far too much for fuel even though we take oil from our own reserves. Something like 60% of the fuel used in this country is taken from our own reserves, yet under the world parity pricing scheme we are paying world prices for it.

I have heard all the arguments from both sides of the Chamber, but it is absolutely ridiculous that we are debating this motion today. My family, all the families living in my street in Malanda and all the families living in the area I grew up in have always voted for the Nationals. From the day I could vote I, too, voted for the National Party. When I was in Victoria and there was no National Party, I voted for the Liberal Party. I have been a conservative voter all my life.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr NELSON: I have not just been let down; I have been devastatingly let down. The first thing that let me down was firearms laws, and this is relevant because it gets to the heart of this matter. I am not a gun nut, but I get as much pleasure from shooting as the next person.

Mr Knuth: They support firearms—

Mr NELSON: The member for Burdekin raises a valid point. It was not so much the fact that firearms were taken away but the fact that we could be betrayed in such a manner by a party which has represented us for so long. No matter how much I am glared at by members on this side of the House, the issue which will come home to roost at the next election is fuel pricing. People who have voted National all their lives are saying that, if a conservative Government can do this, what will a socialist Government do? However, it is bad enough that a conservative Government is doing this to us. It is bad enough that the Prime Minister was not happy with screwing the bush twice, but now he wants to do it a third time with petrol prices.

Mr Knuth: We need an alternative.

Mr NELSON: We certainly need an alternative.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): Order! I have been tolerant of the member for Tablelands. I know he is trying to make a point, but I think he should get back to the motion before the House.

Mr NELSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, in deference to you, I will come to the point, but everything I have said so far has related to fuel prices. Fuel prices drive everything. How much people pay for fuel relates to how much they will pay for a gun, food and so on. Everything comes down to how much people pay for fuel. The cost of moving things around the State all comes down to the price of fuel. That is the main reason for price hikes in items like bread, milk and food. Every single facet of our day-to-day lives is affected by fuel prices. The reason for these problems is that we are paying far too much for a commodity. For example, countries like Indonesia pay less than half the price we pay for fuel.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr NELSON: That occurs regardless of what the member for Hinchinbrook wants to say.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr NELSON: I am not talking about England; I am talking about countries in South-East Asia. England is on the other side of the world. The problem with people like the member for Hinchinbrook is that they say one thing in north Queensland but say a completely different thing here.

Mr ROWELL: I rise to a point of order. I ask for that statement to be withdrawn. It is totally incorrect.

Mr NELSON: I withdraw.

Mr ROWELL: I will be going up to his electorate next week to make sure that he is well aware of what I am saying there.

Mr NELSON: That is a perfect example of people like the member for Hinchinbrook and National Party candidates running around my electorate saying that they are going to do all these wonderful things. What happened when the National Party had a Minister up there? He could not deliver jack. He got voted out because he could not deliver jack. That is why he got voted out, and the member knows it. It is no good telling the people that the National Party will stick up for them when he knows it damn well cannot. That is why we do not have Tully/Millstream and that is why he got voted out at the last election. The member damn well knows it and has not changed his colours yet.

The Nationals should have come in here, supported this motion and stuffed the Liberals out the door like they were supposed to, which is what people like me voted the National Party in to do. It has not done it. The simple fact is that people like me who have voted for the National Party all their lives will never vote for it again. I will die before I vote for the National Party again. People can only be sold out once. I would rather vote for the devil than vote for the Nationals, and members know that.

There are many people in my electorate who feel exactly the same way. Regardless of how many people here get returned at the next election, regardless of how many Federal members get returned, regardless of the fact that the party I was voted in for is now defunct, the simple fact is that the feeling that brought that party about still remains. People can only be sold out once. This made me so angry that it is why I am here today. It is the only reason I am here.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr NELSON: I would have been quite happy to stay in my previous employment for the rest of my life—

Mr Seeney: You sold her out.

Mr NELSON: This scumbag here is probably the prime cause for the hatred, because this man is the ultimate politician. He does not care less about anything except for his parliamentary pay packet.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The word that the member used was unparliamentary and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr NELSON: I withdraw.

If nothing else can be a wake-up call to this Parliament, it should be the fact that people where I come from are speaking out on this matter. It is not just people where I come from but people throughout Australia. We have seen the Western Australian Government say something about this and a Western Australian Liberal do something about it.

The fact of the matter is that this hurts the Queensland conservatives more than anything else, because in this State we have a proud tradition of having a National Party dominated Government under people like Sir Joh. I tell you right now that on my wall in my office I have a picture of Sir Joh, because he was a man who understood these sorts of issues, regardless of what Labor Party members say and regardless of what some of the National Party members who sold him out say. He was a man who came into this Parliament without education, without degrees in economics and all that sort of stuff. Regardless of what people think of what he did, he ran this State like a well-oiled machine for 32 years. This State was one of the richest States in the Federation. Regardless of politics, people must

admit that under Sir Joh this was one of the richest States in the Federation and was capable of great things. It could outclass States like Victoria and New South Wales simply because it had a strong mining background, a strong agricultural background and the cheapest fuel in the country. You could drive from one end of this country to the other, but in Queensland you would pay the cheapest fuel prices.

Mr Kaiser: You still can.

Mr NELSON: I know that.

Mr Seeney: Thanks to the National Party.

Mr NELSON: No—and this is where the member for Callide has to think long and hard about what he says—thanks to the old National Party, because as soon as Mike Ahern got in here, things changed dramatically, and they did not change for the better. As I said, regardless of whether I or any of the people around me are re-elected—because everyone has seen what sorts of dirty tricks can be played in terms of preference deals and all that sort of stuff—a message has been sent.

Mr McGrady: Would you give me your preferences?

Mr NELSON: Vote 1, and that is the way it should be. Nothing should illustrate that more than what is occurring in America at the moment. I do not want any preferences; I am not interested. Don't even bother. Just going off the point for a second, my message now is: don't even bother coming near me. I am not interested. Do what you like.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): The member should not allow interjections to waylay him from his speech. We are talking about fuel.

Mr NELSON: Those rogues!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will protect the member from that.

Mr NELSON: My overwhelming anger on this subject could be no further highlighted than the fact that, from time to time, I am basically forced to vote with the Government. I must remind members that I am not a National Party member; I am not a Liberal Party member; I am not a member of the ALP. I am not a member of anything any more, because the party I supported left me. I did not leave it; it left me because of problems it had. Being a person of my word, being the person that I am, I had to do what I had to do, and I have been justified in the decisions that I made earlier in my term, regardless of what these people think. If they think for a second—

Mr Seeney: Pauline got you the job and you were the first out the door.

Mr NELSON: Pauline did not get me anything. My hard work and the hard work of those parliamentary members from my former party got me elected. If what the honourable member suggests were the case, we would have 89 members of One Nation in this Parliament. If the member seriously believes that—

Mr Seeney: You wouldn't have even got the vote without her.

Mr NELSON: Sir Joh got the member for Callide where he is. He certainly did not get himself there, because he is a joke. That fact can be highlighted no better than when we stood out the front of this Parliament in support of the dairy farmers. This joke to my right would not support the dairy farmers. He knew he wanted to, but he could not support them. The member for Callide left it up to me and the member for Barambah because he could not support them because his party would not let him. He was shut up, nailed to the floor and told to behave himself.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I now ask the member to return to the debate. I know some members are enjoying this contribution, but I ask the member to return to the subject of the debate.

Mr NELSON: I will come back to the point. The point of the matter is that when you are a member of a political party that you know is going down the wrong track, sometimes you speak out. Fuel prices is one such important issue, and we have seen certain members say things about fuel prices because they come from country areas; they know exactly what they are talking about when they are representing their constituents in the bush, and that is why they will continue to get the support of the people in the bush, because they are trying their hardest to represent them.

When you are a member of a party that you know is going down the wrong track on a subject like fuel prices, and when that frustration is palpable and you want to say something about it but you know you cannot because you are affiliated to the party that you know is hurtling down the wrong track on this subject, you get frustrated and you come out and say things, and that is why day in, day out we hear points being raised about certain members saying this and certain members saying that. The Federal member for Dawson is one of them; the Federal member for Kennedy is another. You know these people are frustrated; you know these people are angry; you know these people can see their party hurtling down the wrong track; you know that deep down inside they feel exactly the same way as you do, but through loyalty you do not speak out.

There is nothing wrong at all with loyalty; in fact, it should be encouraged. But there is nothing more poisonous to this world than misplaced loyalty, and there is nothing more dangerous to society than following people like our hopelessly inept Prime Minister down the path of destruction for no apparent reason other than that you signed up and joined some wonderful political institution that can no longer help itself but blindly follow a coalition that is no good for the country, that is driving it into the deck.

I stood at a meeting in Mareeba and watched the 2IC of our nation, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Anderson, tell farmers a whole heap of things. Many questions were asked about the problems we are having as a society. But I watched him stand there and basically snub off those people. The member for Hinchinbrook was there; he will know full well what the Deputy Prime Minister did and did not say. He snubbed them off. He said things like, "We need only 30,000 farmers in real terms." The Deputy Prime Minister, the Leader of the Federal National Party, said those things. I then stood up and asked the Deputy Prime Minister, "As the 2IC of this nation, if you can't be held accountable for our problems, who can? Your party has been there for six years. If you can't be held accountable for our problems such as fuel, if we can't come to you as the Deputy Prime Minister and say that there is a problem with fuel, who can we come to? You were elected to represent the rural parts of Australia. If we can't come to you, who can we come to? What do you want us to do?" We have a proud tradition in this nation—

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr NELSON: I expect that from the Labor Party; that is why I do not hold it against them. They are my opposition. I am a conservative; they are socialists. Marxism killed 30,000 people in China in three years. I expect it of them.

The point is that we have a proud tradition in this nation of finishing wars but not starting them. We have a proud tradition in this nation of not resorting to violence and not resorting to any other method but democracy in voting to solve our problems. But this is a problem that is not going away. You can destroy what was, at the last State election, 25% of the people by undermining, by fighting, by doing all sorts of things, but when you drive people underground; when you give them no further choice; when you give them no recourse for their actions because you will not change your ways regardless of how the people scream, regardless of what the people want; when you go to central party meeting after central party meeting and hear people saying exactly the same thing; when you walk up and down the streets of the country towns in this State like Atherton, Mareeba, Ayr, Home Hill and Rockhampton; when you walk around this State, like members of the National Party used to, and hear this time and time again, eventually one day you have to do something, because if you don't and if you continue to go down the path that we are currently following; if you continue to make people pay \$1 a litre for fuel; if you continue to drive—

Mr Johnson: Our fault again?

Mr NELSON: I am not blaming the National Party entirely, and I said that right at the start. But as a voter, as a conservative, who else can I vote for? What am I supposed to do when we are let down on subjects like that? What are we supposed to do?

I watched my uncle and my father go off to party meetings when Gilmore was the Minister. Nine times out of 10 he would not turn up, and National Party members know it is the truth. What were they supposed to do? They turned around and said, "Well, we have to get somebody to do something about this", and I am referring to the Tully/Millstream situation. You cannot do this to people. Eventually, one day, you have to stand up and fight for them.

To get to the point: to me, this motion presented a chance for the National Party to say, "Yep, why not? Let's give John Howard a slap. Can't hurt. It's what the people want." Regardless of what the member for Callide thinks, it is exactly what the people want. As I said, I will support the amendment because I think that there has to be something said. No-one has got clean hands on this issue, but here is a chance for us to do something. Let us not pussyfoot around with amendment after amendment after amendment. Let us get it done and let us as a State put some pressure on the Federal Government like we used to. Queensland has always been a State that has been able to put pressure on the Federal Government and make it bend. That is the sort of State we have always been. Let us stick to that and do it here, because this man who calls himself our Prime Minister is driving us into the deck and he has not even tried to hide it. Do not get me wrong, we need funding for our roads, but he has not even tried to cover up the fact that he has taken the money away to spend it to try to get himself re-elected at the next election.

I welcome the road funding, but I fear that the Prime Minister is not listening. I fear that the Prime Minister might get re-elected because he built a two-lane highway between Atherton and Mareeba, but he has not listened to the main point. He has forgotten. Coalition members ignore that at their peril because I know thousands of people like me— and there must be thousands more out

there—who are hurting. I beg the coalition parties—Mr Borbidge, Mr Beanland and Dr Watson—to get on the phone to the Prime Minister and tell him that this is not acceptable.

Time expired.
