



Speech by

Hon. STEVE BREDHAUER

MEMBER FOR COOK

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CENSURE OF BEATTIE GOVERNMENT AND MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MINISTER FOR MAIN ROADS

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (6.15 p.m.): The rank hypocrisy of back-door Bob over there is boundless. I rise to oppose the motion and I move the following amendment that has been circulated in the Chamber—

"Delete all words after 'Parliament' and insert the following—

'commends the Beattie Government for the steps it has taken to ensure that QR remains a viable, efficient, publicly owned railway into the 21 st century, providing secure and rewarding employment for thousands of workers throughout Queensland.'"

In this debate, as in most others in the House, members of the Opposition have no credibility. They seek to criticise the Government for its handling of industrial relations in Queensland Rail when it is their record and their legacy that deserves censure. Those opposite are well known for not allowing the facts to stand in the way of their wild and unsupported allegations.

The facts in this matter speak for themselves. First, let me deal with today's industrial action and the 48-hour stoppage which occurred earlier this year. As I indicated this morning, today's industrial action was wildcat strike action taken without regard to the commission recommendation, without regard to the RTBU's earlier agreement to participate in a trial of driver-only operation on the Mount Isa line and without regard to the interests of the people of Queensland.

The basis for the industrial action was alleged safety concerns with the driver-only trial. Those concerns are not well founded. Every action has been taken by QR to ensure that driver-only operation is introduced on the Mount Isa line with proper safety procedures. Some of the measures taken include global positioning system train location displayed in the Townsville control centre; GPS warning to alert driver of approaching limit authority; GPS warning to alert driver of passing limit of authority; ATP "train stop" system to be developed by July 2002; and a number of other initiatives.

Driver-only operation is not a new concept in Queensland or indeed elsewhere. Driver-only operation is already operating in 50% of the freight areas in Queensland. There are already significant freight services operating on a driver-only operation basis without automatic train stop protection. These include most freight services into, out of, and within the Brisbane region. In most instances, driver-only operation has been introduced with the agreement of the RTBU. At the commission's hearing this morning orders were made for a return to work at midday today. I table a transcript of those orders. It is now apparent that the RTBU has complied with those orders and that trains were running as scheduled for this afternoon's peak.

The RTBU's industrial action was regrettable and unnecessary but, far from establishing any defect in the Government's approach, this incident has established beyond doubt the success of the Government's industrial relations laws. In the face of unprecedented wildcat action, the matter has been resolved and train services restored within 24 hours.

Similarly, the 48-hour stoppage earlier this year was a wildcat stoppage. Once again, however, the Government's industrial laws resulted in the resolution of that stoppage. This contrasts with the position which would have existed under the former coalition Government's industrial laws and under the Federal Government's current industrial laws. Under those laws disputes could drag on for months, generally in the courts.

During the previous enterprise bargaining dispute the Queensland commission was able to conciliate an agreement between the unions and QR over pay rises for QR employees. QR employees recently had an opportunity to vote on the proposed pay increases. The results of that vote give the lie to any suggestion of widespread dissatisfaction with the employment conditions in QR under the Beattie Government. Some 14,400 ballot papers were sent to QR employees. Over 7,350 ballot papers were returned, which is in excess of 51% of the total sent out. The result of the vote was 5,515 in favour of the proposed pay increase with only 1,832 against. That is an overwhelming 75% of rail employees demonstrating they were in favour of the Government supported offer to QR employees. Amongst the RTBU members, the result was 2,133 in favour and 737 against; again, that is almost 75% in favour.

This Government stands for a viable, efficient, publicly-owned QR which provides secure and rewarding employment for thousands of workers throughout Queensland. The coalition parties, on the other hand, have done everything they can to undermine QR and to undermine the conditions of ordinary Queensland workers.

The Beattie Government has done all it can to secure a viable future for QR and its employees. Under our Government the Brisbane to Rockhampton tilt train has been launched. We have commenced work on the Brisbane to Cairns tilt train. The GSPE has gone into service. Some 750 fixed-term employees have been made permanent. A \$240m track upgrade between Rockhampton and Townsville has been approved. A record was set last year for coal freight haulage in excess of 100 million tonnes. QR has received full funding for its community service obligations for the first time. The Citytrain agreement has been signed, guaranteeing QR funding for Citytrain services for seven years. CityTrans, an innovative joint venture between QR and Brisbane Transport for integrated public transport, has been announced. QR has successfully won work on overseas contracts generating jobs and export income for Queensland.

Time expired.
