



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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NATURE CONSERVATION [FOREST RESERVES] REGULATION 2000

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (5.34 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker, can I say that the speech that we have heard from the member for Kawana is so very typical of the Labor government's approach to the whole RFA debate. Time and time again in this House we have seen Labor stooges come in here, stand up and read speeches that they do not understand. They cannot pronounce the words. When it comes to forest management, they have not got a clue what they are talking about. The former minister was a classic example. He would come in here and read speeches that had been written by the department. We have seen the same thing here today.

Mr WELFORD: I rise to a point of order. I did not recite speeches written by the department, but I had much more courtesy to the House than this—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr SEENEY: Of course there is no point of order. The former minister is now in a portfolio area to which his talents are probably a whole lot more suited. He was classically unsuited to the portfolio area that he held before.

What we have heard tonight, especially from the last speaker, is just so typical of this whole government's approach. They do not understand what they are doing. They do not understand the extent to which the so-called regional forestry agreement is a total waste of time. It is totally unnecessary to destroy the forest industries and the communities that depend on them. It is so totally unnecessary in the pursuit of ideological nonsense. Tragically, it is doomed to fail. We on this side have pointed that out every time this issue has been debated in this House. We have seen a series of members who know and understand the bush—who know and understand the natural ecosystem of the bush, who have worked with it all their lives and who live in that environment—come in here and speak about things that they know. That is the classic difference between those on this side of the House and the government.

The matter that I want to talk about tonight is another point that I think illustrates the government's approach to this whole issue. This regulation seeks to change the titles. It seeks to rush to lock up these particular forest areas. Regrettably, there is no rush on the part of the government to deal with the social effects of its agreement. There is no rush on the part of the government to deal with the effect it will have on the communities that are going to be destroyed. Instead, we have this almost indecent haste to turn these areas into national parks in waiting, which is what this regulation does. There is no rush to do anything about communities that have felt the brunt of this ridiculous agreement.

I raised with the member who spoke before the issue of the workers at Cooroy. There is absolutely no compassion being shown to the workers who lost their jobs in the timber industry, despite the fact that we have a party in government that is supposed to be concerned about the workers and their future. There was no effort made to protect those workers. In the small town of Eidsvold, which I represent, 24 people were employed at the timber mill. It is the economic basis of the whole community. The Eidsvold mill was part of the infamous Boral deal—the deal that was negotiated by the former Deputy Premier, whom I used to clash with in this parliament every time this issue was raised. The deal that was negotiated by the former Deputy Premier was for the government to buy the Eidsvold mill and the Theodore mill. The idea was then for the government to on-sell them to another operator. In the last 12 to 18 months we have relentlessly pursued the former Deputy Premier and the

government to try to establish some details of that infamous Boral deal. We have been able to achieve absolutely nothing in terms of establishing some security for the people who work in the Eidsvold sawmill, thereby establishing some security for the entire Eidsvold community.

I say to the new members of this parliament who stand in this place and read fine-sounding ideology that has obviously been written by somebody else: in this place you need to deal with reality. In Eidsvold, the reality is that if the mill closes and 24 people lose their jobs a whole community collapses. That is the reality of the situation. That is the reality that nobody on the government side has been prepared to deal with. That is the reality that I have to deal with as a local member. That is the reality that the former member for Noosa had to deal with in relation to the mill at Cooroy.

Let us get fair dinkum in relation to what we are talking about. We are talking about people. In the case of Eidsvold, we are talking about 24 jobs, 24 families and a community. Members opposite just waste this parliament's time when they come in here and read things that they do not understand. They have not got a clue what they are talking about. In so doing, they fail the people they represent. They fail those people who depend on them to put forward their points of view.

The Eidsvold and Theodore mills need some security. The people of Eidsvold and Theodore need to know that their communities have a future. They need to know that the commitments that were given in this parliament time and time again by the former Deputy Premier will be honoured by this new government. Up until now, we have not been able to achieve that. We have not been able to get any assurances about the crown allocation that will be available to those mills. We have not been able to get any assurances about whether that crown allocation will remain specific to those mills. We have not been able to get any assurances at all about whether those mills are continuing to ensure that they have private timber supplies available, because they need supplies of private timber as well as crown allocation. That is the detail that people opposite refuse to acknowledge. That is the detail that they refuse to understand and that is the detail that is so important to make the fine-sounding rhetoric even have a chance of working.

The communities of Eidsvold and Theodore and all of the people in the timber industry need some reality. They need some reaction to the reality that they face. They do not need the meaningless rhetoric that is constantly served up by a range of Labor stooges who read speeches that are obviously written by public servants in some departmental office somewhere.

The other point that I raise—and we have raised it consistently in this debate during the two years that it has gone on—is the nonsense that plantations will replace the native forests as a source of timber. The point of debate has always been the 25-year figure that has been bandied around as a time frame in which plantations are going to take over from native forests as a source of supply. Even now not one significant area of plantation is being established by the government. I concede that some private plantations are being established, but they have been established by private operations. Not one significant area has been established by the government.

Once again we see an example of blatant dishonesty. We see the Minister for Primary Industries and other ministers, when questioned about this, stand and read briefing notes about plantations being established at Monto and elsewhere. Do members know that the plantation at Monto is about half an acre, yet on the briefing note it is added to the list of plantations: Monto, Mungindi, Eidsvold. What bunkum! That is an absolute nonsense. It is an absolute fraud. There are not enough trees in those plantations to keep the Eidsvold mill running for half a day, even if all of the trees did grow to maturity. That is the sort of nonsense that is constantly served up in this parliament.

The situation that is occurring with plantations is illustrated by the fact that we are debating this regulation tonight. There is a rush to change the regulation. There is a rush to make it a national park, but there is no rush to establish the plantations. Even though that has been the contentious issue from the start, there is no rush to get the trees in the ground and give them half a chance of meeting the 25-year deadline. That illustrates just how fair dinkum the government has been. It illustrates just how fair dinkum this government is about maintaining a timber industry. It illustrates just how serious it is about maintaining jobs for people in those communities. It is not serious at all. It is a fraud and you should all be ashamed of yourselves.
