



Speech by

Hon. K. LINGARD

MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT

Hansard 3 April 2001

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (3.48 p.m.): Firstly, I convey my allegiance and the allegiance of my electorate to Her Majesty. I am now the last of the 1983 group that came into this Parliament. Only two members have been here longer than I have. I felt a lot of ecstasy when I came into this place in 1983, as the new people on the government side undoubtedly feel now. I have seen many things and formed many good friendships on both sides of the House. I could certainly tell many stories to show that your friends are not necessarily always on your side of politics. Some people on your side will undermine you much quicker than people from the other side. I hope that, when I finish in this Parliament, I can go out with a real smile on my face over some of the things that have happened to me here.

I have seen some great characters. I have had to referee fights between former Premier Bjelke-Petersen and people on the other side, such as Nev Warburton and Tommy Burns. It has been a real experience. I hope that I do enjoy being a member of parliament once again and that I can work with you, Mr Speaker.

The last election was obviously a very difficult one and a tough campaign for non-government members. Obviously, I thank my electorate for its continued support. I had coming from the Gold Coast area the force of the ALP, which fortunately stopped at about Mount Tamborine, and then coming from the west the force of the One Nation Party from the Lockyer and Boonah areas, which hopefully stopped at the Beaudesert area as well. Therefore, I am caught right in the middle and am now the only National Party member in south-east Queensland to as far north as Maroochydore and as far west as Toowoomba. There is a little bit of work to do.

An honourable member: Next time.

Mr LINGARD: We will wait for the next time. Many people have said, 'Wait till the next time.'

I would like to make special mention of my campaign manager, Mr Ralph Schwartz, who has been my campaign manager for seven successful elections. Ralph recently contracted motor neurone disease and, unfortunately, passed away on 17 March, which was the Saturday before we came into this House. Unfortunately, his funeral was on the following Thursday—the 22nd—which was the first full day of this parliament. That is when it really hurts you as a member of parliament, when you cannot go to very special funerals, as that one was. But that is what happens when you are a member of parliament. That is what happens many times with family. Unfortunately, sometimes you cannot go to a kid's birthday party and it is very hard to explain to family why you just cannot do those things, either. The higher you rise, whether it be to a ministerial position or another position, unfortunately the more you seem to have to go through those very hurtful things.

I also make special acknowledgment of four other people I lost in my campaign, who all passed away around the time of the election: Roy Hern from Boonah; Harold Klan, a real legend from Peak Crossing; Leo Kelly from Beaudesert; and Kevin Kane, who was the editor of the *Mount Tamborine Times*.

The Beaudesert corridor will be fortunate in the future because of the population growth of the Brisbane-Gold Coast corridor. This demographic growth will require the expansion of infrastructure such as schools, shops, hospitals and small businesses. That is why it is very important that the Beaudesert people have the government push through with the upgrade of the Mount Lindesay Highway.

I was always very disappointed with Wayne Goss when he was Premier and represented the Logan electorate. I say this for the benefit of the current member for Logan, Mr Mickel. I am sure that Wayne Goss adopted the attitude that he did not really want to push too hard for things in the Logan electorate because he was always concerned that he had rubbished Joh Bjelke-Petersen for some of the things that had occurred in his electorate a long time before. So growth in the Logan electorate—things such as the Browns Plains overpass—was always very, very slow. People who know that southern area will know that, until those areas in the north of the Beaudesert electorate have all of their bridges and highways made into four lanes, areas such as Beaudesert will suffer. So it is very important that electorates such as Logan get going with their four-lane highway because, until that work is done, unfortunately the four-lane highways cannot go on down towards Beaudesert.

There is no doubt in my mind that in the future the eight-lane highway that has just been constructed towards the Gold Coast will not be sufficient for the large population of the Gold Coast area. That means that the national highway will continue to try to deviate around the Gold Coast area. There is no doubt that in the future people from Sydney will get to Coffs Harbour and then will come north through the Palen Creek area, Rathdowney, Beaudesert, up the Mount Lindesay Highway, link onto the northern corridor and then bypass Brisbane that way. Therefore Beaudesert is in this great demographic area which will grow and grow very rapidly once the four-lane highway comes down into the area. Coming with it will obviously be social infrastructure, such as schools, to cater for that growth.

It is an unusual area which, therefore, would not need industry to bring population growth to the area. As the population growth comes, people will commute from that area to the Gold Coast and to Brisbane, but they will bring with them small industry. People should remember that my electorate used to go right up to Springwood and even included parts of Springwood. It used to go from Cunningham's Gap right through Woodridge-Kingston—I did not win many votes in the Woodridge-Kingston area—through Mabel Park and up to Springwood. Gradually I lost those northern areas to Wayne Goss and Tom Barton. Then I lost Boonah, but now Boonah has come back into my electorate. Similarly with Boonah, the Cunningham Highway needs to be developed south of Ipswich. When that is developed, the population growth will move towards Boonah. That is what I see as the lifeblood of areas such as Boonah and Beaudesert.

I make special reference to the wine industry, which is starting to take off in the Mount Tamborine and Beaudesert area. People who have travelled around Albert River Wines, which is now at Tamborine House, would know about the massive developments at Tamborine House in bringing the old Auchenflower House down from Early Street. Albert River Wines has really made a significant difference to the area. Coming in behind that are Mount Tamborine Wines, the Heritage Wines up there and now, of course, the Canungra wines. I believe that this is going to be a massively great area for visitors to the Gold Coast who wish to take one day to travel around the wine areas of Mount Tamborine, Canungra and Beaudesert.

I also believe that some of the federation funding which has been granted recently has been absolutely fantastic. The Beaudesert area was probably one of the first to receive federation funding in January. Some of the projects have been excellent. I certainly make reference to what Beaudesert rail has done for historical rail, the equestrian centre for which funding has been provided and the old tunnel at Canungra. Anyone who travels through Canungra would know that one of the best little trips is to stop beside the site of the old timber mills and to go and see the historical 95-yard long sandstone tunnel. I congratulate those responsible for federation funding, because there have been some excellent projects.

Two issues were very significant during the last state election. The first was the problem being experienced by dairy farmers caused by the process of deregulation. I have heard what the member for Nicklin has said, but I am not going to go into whether deregulation is good or bad because, as most of my farmers say, deregulation has occurred, deregulation is here and we have now got to work with it. I see little purpose in trying to say we should turn back from deregulation. Deregulation is here and somehow or other we have to work with it.

There is no doubt that people who have paid massive prices for quotas need some sort of compensation. I think that anyone who went into the taxi industry, for example, and paid an inflated price in a regulated industry, such as for a taxi licence, would be concerned that with the stroke of a pen a government was able to wipe away the value of that licence. Therefore, there is a need for some sort of compensation. Similarly, the people in the milk industry who have paid high prices for quota have seen, with the stroke of a pen, that quota price disappear completely but yet have received no compensation. I say to government members that I do not think many people realise that there were quotas in only three states: Western Australia, New South Wales and Queensland. At least dairy farmers in Western Australia were paid \$38 million of the national competition policy money for some of the quotas; that was of assistance to people. But there has been no assistance in New South Wales or Queensland. I believe that is one thing that the government has to look at.

The other thing is the farm gate price. Surely we as parliamentarians have to be concerned when we see the processors of the milk setting the price of milk at whatever they want and letting tenders at that price. We should also be concerned to see the three big retailers—or any retailers—putting the retail price up but the dairy farmer at the farm gate not receiving a sufficient amount of money to compensate him for his work. Surely we as parliamentarians can say, 'This is the price that a dairy farmer requires if he is to continue. This is the price that he cannot go below. This is the price that we as a government have to guarantee him.' If the processor wants to set a tender price, that is okay. If the retailers want to put up the price, then let them answer to consumers, but the dairy farmer is completely dominated by the processors and the retailers.

I know that legally we as parliamentarians must accept that the federal government cannot do it. The law does not allow us to do it. It has to be an agreement between all states and the federal government if we are to stipulate a farm gate price, but we cannot continue to sit here as parliamentarians and say, 'It has happened. Therefore, the dairy farmer is hurting, but we cannot do anything about it; it is law.' We as parliamentarians have to be able to do something to guarantee to dairy farmers that at the farm gate they will get a certain amount of money.

The second big issue in my area relates to school buses, which I alluded to this morning. People have to realise that different areas have special problems. I refer in particular to the 20 kilometre to 30 kilometre stretch between Jimboomba and Beaudesert where buses travel in a 100 kilometre per hour zone. Big buses like banana buses can have up to 120 students travelling on them, and it is amazing to watch what seems to be an endless stream of kids getting off those buses. At least 30 or 40 kids are officially allowed to stand on a banana bus. It is amazing that legislation allows for this to happen. Bus proprietors can say that they are doing the right thing by having 120 kids on a banana bus with 30 to 40 of them standing.

However, these buses are travelling in areas which have 100 kilometre per hour zones with massive trucks and a single lane each way. Anyone who has travelled between Jimboomba and Beaudesert would know that, once behind a car, only a fool would pass it. After passing that car, you can bet your bottom dollar that within a few kilometres that car will be right behind you or even in front of you. It is one of those roads. Banana buses carrying 120 kids have to travel these highways with 100 kilometre per hour zones as well as massive trucks. It is extremely dangerous.

I do not blame the Bus Action Committee, which started in Jimboomba, and people like Kym Bax and Kym Limberg for being active in bringing media attention to the problem that exists. The Minister for Transport initially tried to fob it off because, as he was able to correctly say, it is being done legally. There is nothing wrong with what is happening. Of course, the minister could also say that the coalition agreed to this legislation which allows a banana bus to travel in that area with 120 kids on board and 30 kids standing. It is dangerous. Initially the matter was fobbed off until it received more publicity. As the election came around, those opposed to this practice became more and more aggressive. The member for Fitzroy agitated on the issue after a bus crash in his electorate in central Queensland. He started to agitate on the issue of kids standing on school buses and the need for seatbelts. The members of the Bus Action Committee from Jimboomba decided that they were going to sit on the steps of the Premier's office before the election.

The coalition came up with a policy to spend \$22.5 million on this issue, not to provide seatbelts for every bus but to at least implement the program. The government came out and quite dishonestly said, 'You can't put seatbelts in buses for \$22.5 million. It's going to cost \$500 million.' No-one was ever going to say, 'We've got to put seatbelts in every bus immediately.' It cannot be done anyhow, because most buses allow two high school kids or three primary school kids to sit on a seat. I agree with bus proprietors; it is not appropriate to put seatbelts in all buses. However, it is appropriate to start to implement a program of putting seatbelts in new school buses.

Seatbelts were not the issue for me; the problem was kids standing on school buses. What was the minister forced to do? A couple of days before the election, because these people were sitting on the steps outside the Premier's office and getting a lot of publicity, he then brought out interim rules. Children could not stand on buses if the distance travelled was greater than 20 kilometres. This was changed to 18 kilometres by the minister, which was just short of Jimboomba. In effect, that means that kids can stand on buses as long as they do not travel more than 18 kilometres. He then introduced the ridiculous rule that buses can only travel at 80 kilometres per hour.

That is an absolutely ridiculous situation, because between Jimboomba and Beaudesert trucks and cars all travel at 100 kilometres an hour and faster. School buses would be doing 80 kilometres per hour on the flat. As they went up a hill, they would be doing 50 kilometres per hour or 40 kilometres per hour. Everyone said that the obvious would happen, that is, sooner or later someone would run into the back of a school bus. Of course, a couple of weekends ago, that happened. Parents in the Beaudesert area cannot be blamed for now saying, 'We told you this was going to happen and you've done absolutely nothing about it.'

The minister took a point of order against me this morning and said that he had never told anyone that the lady I referred to could not contact him, but she has given me a definite statement. She said—

Mr Bredhauer stated that neither he, his office or the entire Transport Department will have any further dealings with me.

This is after a regional meeting and after this lady made certain statements on the John Miller Show. What we have at present is the ridiculous situation of kids still being allowed to stand on school buses, the government hanging out as much as it possibly can and a very forceful group in the Beaudesert area who are saying, 'We will not cop this anymore.'

It is inevitable that the government will have to look at it, because sooner or later there will be a massive accident and all hell will break loose. The government has to do something. It is inevitable that it will happen, but so far it has just been fob, fob, fob from the Minister for Transport and the government on this issue. What should happen is that in designated areas where buses have to travel in 100 kilometre per hour zones no student should be allowed to stand. This has been done in hilly areas like Maleny and Mount Tamborine. In those areas, kids are not permitted to stand on buses going up those sorts of hills. I ask the minister to start implementing a policy whereby in special areas that are designated as dangerous kids will not be permitted to stand on buses. That is going to cost the government money. However, it is the only way out until we implement a program of no kids standing and eventually all kids having to wear seatbelts.

I am disappointed that in order to fob off the issue both the Premier and the Minister for Transport have initiated a task force in which many people who depend on the government for funding have taken a very significant position, including the chairman. Ironically, not one person from the Bus Action Committee and not one person from those who started this action against the government has been appointed to this task force. We cannot blame people from the Bus Action Committee for becoming so upset.
