



Speech by
Jeff Seeneey

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Hansard Wednesday, 22 August 2007

**NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
REGULATION (NO. 1) 2007**

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.08 pm): As the final speaker in the debate I have to make some comments and put on record just how extraordinary this debate has been tonight—just how extraordinary debate on this motion to disallow the regulation has been in this parliament. In the almost 10 years that I have been here I do not think I have ever seen a debate where nobody from the government except one member has been prepared to speak. Even the member for Fitzroy, who spoke on the government's behalf, supported us. He supported us!

Mr WALLACE: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SEENEY: Oh, the minister is on his feet now!

Mr WALLACE: I rise to a point of order. We have more speakers on the list than just one, but we have let the opposition have a say because it wanted to have a say.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Darling): Minister, there is no point of order.

Mr SEENEY: That is quite clearly wrong, and I table the speaking list.

Tabled paper: During his speech tabled a copy of the speaking list for the debate of the disallowance motion.

Mr WALLACE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I take offence at that. It is not wrong, and I table the speaking list as well which shows the member for Ipswich West as the next speaker and it does not even have the Leader of the Opposition on the list.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister, do you take personal offence? Do you require that to be withdrawn?

Mr SEENEY: I did not refer to him personally, so he cannot. I did not refer to him personally, but I will. He should just hang around. I will refer to him personally in a minute. Because it is usual in these debates for the first thing the government to do is to send the minister in to justify the regulation that is the subject of the disallowance motion. That is the purpose of the debate. That is why there is a provision in this parliament for regulations to be disallowed. I point out to the people who are reading or listening to this debate that regulations are not usually debated in the House. Regulations are usually introduced by the minister and if the opposition believes that the regulations need justification, it moves a disallowance motion. Then the minister comes into the parliament and justifies not just to us but to the people of Queensland through this parliament why the regulation is necessary and why it has been introduced. Tonight, the minister, in his absolute arrogance, has chosen not to do that. He has chosen to sit there—

Mr WALLACE: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SEENEY: And he can object to that.

Mr WALLACE: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SEENEY: I withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, resume your seat and I will listen to the point of order of the minister.

Mr WALLACE: I rise to a point of order. Standing order 59 says that the minister has 20 minutes in reply. He does not start the debate; he replies to the debate.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Again, there is no point of order.

Mr SEENEV: Absolute rubbish. There is no point of order. The minister comes in here and justifies why the regulation is introduced. This is the way it has always been. This minister has chosen not to do that, because this minister simply does not have the competence to do that. He does not have the support in the parliament. He does not have any support among his colleagues to come in here and justify why the regulation needs to be introduced.

That illustrates a couple of things. It illustrates this government's attitude towards natural resources and anything to do with rural and regional Queensland. There has been a parade of incompetent ministers for natural resources through this House since the Beattie government has been in power. First of all, we had the now minister for education. He was an absolute joke as the minister for natural resources. Then we had the minister who now has responsibility for health. He was a step down, if you like, in the scale of competence when it came to issues relating to natural resources. But the current minister takes the prize in terms of any knowledge or understanding of the issues of this portfolio. To the Labor government, natural resources is a joke. To the Labor government, it does not matter. To the Labor government, issues such as stock routes and water charges do not matter. The members opposite think that it is a joke. They have not got a skerrick of interest. No member opposite is prepared to stand up and justify the regulation that the minister has introduced. No member opposite is prepared to stand up here and exhibit any sort of knowledge about these issues—except the member for Fitzroy, and he agreed with us. He agreed with the shadow minister for natural resources, because the shadow minister for natural resources knows what he is talking about.

There is no contrast in this parliament more stark than the contrast between the minister for natural resources and the shadow minister. The shadow minister has forgotten more about natural resources than the minister will ever know. That is the source of some embarrassment here tonight. That is the source of the embarrassment that we saw yesterday in the parliament when the minister was asked the question. That is the embarrassment that we see. Every time my honourable friend is asked a question he squirms in embarrassment, because in the Labor government he got the booby prize. He got the job that nobody wants. He got the job that nobody wants because nobody knows anything about it and nobody cares.

But on this side of the parliament, we have a shadow minister who does know about natural resources and he does care. We have a shadow minister who knows the importance of stock routes and who knows the importance of water charges and who knows the effect that these things have on people's lives. Tonight, speaker after speaker after speaker on this side of the House has stood and illustrated how these things that the members opposite think are insignificant, funny and strange have an impact on people's lives. That is what the members opposite will never understand. Because for them, what is a funny little debate has an impact on people's lives. It has an impact on people who are struggling to maintain their business, their families and everything else that they have. The decisions that the members opposite make, without knowing what they are talking about, have a profound impact on these people. That is the message that has been put forward by speaker after speaker on this side of the House and that is the message that the government has so obviously ridiculed tonight in the parliament.

The members opposite should all hang their heads in shame, as the member for Maryborough is doing at the moment for the record. They should all hang their heads in shame—

Government members interjected.

Mr SEENEV: I am sorry, as the member for Hervey Bay is doing at the moment. He is so insignificant and his contribution is such that nobody knows who he represents in here. Because like so many other nameless government backbenchers, he does not represent anybody but the Labor Party. He does not have any constituent worth talking about; he just represents the Labor Party. That is the sort of approach—

Mr GRAY: I rise to a point of order. I take great offence to that. People on this side of the House very much represent the people of the electorates in which they live. I ask the member to withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Darling): Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition is on his feet. He is attracting a lot of interjections. I remind members that if they continue to interject they must return to their seats.

Mr SEENEV: I appreciate the interjection from the member for Gaven. It gives me an opportunity to point out to the House how little he knows about the privileges of this House, because he cannot rise on a point of order as I never referred to him. He has been here long enough to know the basics, but the people of Gaven will be relieved to know that he still does not know the basics of this place.

I return to the motion before the House, because it seeks to disallow this regulation on a number of grounds that have been well and truly illustrated by speakers on this side of the House. The regulation should be disallowed, because no defence has been offered. No justification has been offered. As I said at the beginning of this contribution, the only member from the government ranks who was prepared to stand and speak actually agreed with us. So if this regulation should be disallowed, it should be disallowed for all of the reasons that were advanced by the shadow minister and that were advanced by other speakers on this side of the House but, most of all, it should be disallowed because it has been introduced by a minister who is too incompetent to understand its effects. It has been introduced by a government that has no idea of the issues that are involved with the application of this regulation on the ground. The regulation should be disallowed because it does not make any sense in reality. It should be disallowed because the charges that are encompassed in this regulation are unfair and unjust.

Stock route charges could never be justified when they were first introduced. The increases that are encompassed in this regulation can no more be justified than the original charges could be justified when they were initially introduced. The water charges that are part of this regulation can no more be justified now than they could have been by the former minister for natural resources when he introduced these water charges in response to what he saw was some sort of personal slight by the major irrigators on the Lower Balonne. Those charges became known as the Cubbie tax, because that was the reason they were introduced. They were a personal hit back from the minister at the time.

This minister does not have a clue about those issues. He does not have a clue about what is encompassed by the regulation and it should be disallowed.

Time expired.