Date: 11/05/2000  
Question No:  

**Question:** Railway - Job Creation  

**Question Date:** 11/05/2000  
**Member:** Ms MARTIN  
**To:** TREASURER  

**Status:** Questions  

**Information:**  
During last year's budget speech you led off with the promise that the railway would commence within the current financial year and would generate 2000 jobs for Territorians in the construction phase. When the project was announced last October the estimate was down to 960 jobs, less than half your budget estimate.  

How do you explain to Territorians your broken promise of 2000 jobs?  

**ANSWER**  

Mr Speaker, I have much more confidence in the railway project in the Northern Territory than does the Leader of the Opposition. She made reference to the $1200m project. It will be the biggest national project, infrastructure project, for decades. Her reference to it was: 'A faded dream'. That is the Leader of the Opposition's vision for the Northern Territory, and that is the hope that she carries to the people of the Northern Territory. That is the hope that she extends to the people of the Northern Territory for more jobs. That is the hope that she extends to the school kids in the gallery - a faded dream. That is the vision of the Leader of the Opposition. This government, on the other hand ...  

Ms Martin: 2000 jobs ...  

Mr REED: Do you want to hear? You are just here for the political nonsense and the parroting of cliches.  

Members interjecting.  

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Let's get on with the answer to the question.  

Mr REED: Precisely, Mr Speaker. This government has extreme confidence in the railway project. Yes, it has taken a longer time for it to be brought to finality, but there have been very complex issues to resolve over the last couple of years. In fact, it was at the 1997 election that we expressed the hope that it would be under construction in 1998. The principal reason it was not was the need to negotiate a resolution to Labor's native title legislation and to overcome a range of like issues that caused some delay. Presently there are delays because with a complex project of this size there will be, understandably, many issues to get together to be able to the project to finality.  

However, that will happen this year. That demonstrates the government's commitment to this project and our confidence in it, and the benefit that it will accrue to Territorians. This month I have written to the Chambers of Commerce in Katherine and Tennant Creek extending an invitation to nominate a couple of representatives from their Chamber to travel with me to have a look at the sleeper manufacturing plant in Townsville. One of these will be established in Tennant Creek and one will be established in Alice Springs. They, as members of the business community in those respective centres, will be able to report back to their business colleagues about the opportunities that will flow from the manufacturer of the 2 300 000 sleepers that are required for the railway.  

They will not be colour coded. There will not be red ones for the PMs and blue ones for the CMs. Premier Olsen will not have green ones. We will not complicate it in the way that you would.
The manufacture of sleepers, the millions of dollars that will be directed to those regional centres across the Northern Territory, and the benefits that will flow to business in the Northern Territory will ensure that there will be jobs - 1000 jobs, 2000 jobs.

That is the confidence that we have in this project. I am getting together the business people of the Northern Territory to travel to Townsville to look at the sleeper plant, to get an assessment as to the types and the quantities of materials that will be required, and the services that will be needed in Tennant Creek and Katherine to be able to maintain it - whether it is hydraulics, whether it is supply of sand, aggregate, reinforcing steel, all of the other things that will be required to keep the manufacturer of 2.3m sleepers on line. That is the confidence that we will share with Territorians. We will develop as many jobs as possible out of the railway project. We will maximise, as a government, the benefits to Territorians that will flow from the railway project and, of course, we have the vision to look beyond the benefits that will accrue in the construction process.

We are looking forward to an operational railway that will see freight costs reduced in the future, having introduced a competitive freight arrangement between road transport and rail transport for future Territorians, and having introduced the opportunity for Great Southern Rail - who are really keen - to establish a passenger service right through to Darwin. They currently bring 50 000 passengers a year into Alice Springs, and it is expected that could grow to 70 000 or 80 000 passengers a year if they extend their service through to Darwin. They would be stopping off at places like Tennant Creek and Katherine. Passengers could go and see things like Katherine Gorge or features around Tennant Creek. What will that create? It is going to create jobs!

I think 2000 jobs is a very conservative estimate. The Labor Party would not support the railway whilst they were in government.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr REED: They are not going to support the railway when they are in opposition. I am sorry I have to shout but they are interjecting. I am going to be heard because this is an important story for Territorians. If they want to be so disruptive, I am sorry, I will shout over them.

The fact is that the Australian Labor Party in the federal parliament never supported the railway project. The only time they moved to support it was when they were in opposition and haven't been able to do anything. That clearly demonstrates where the members opposite are coming from.

From our point of view there will be an enormous number of jobs, not just during the construction of the railway, but in the ...

Ms Martin interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr REED: She is just not interested. I am pleased she keeps interjecting because it demonstrates to the people listening to this broadcast that she asks feeble questions, with no intent other than to be disruptive and negative.

The government has the vision that this project will create jobs in the construction phase. However, more importantly, there will be more jobs forever for Territorians in the freight industry. Benefits will accrue right across the Northern Territory in terms of the railway opening up future development and, of course, more jobs in the tourism industry. We're proud of that. It's a pity that the Leader of the Opposition seems to think it is a failed dream.