



Speech by

Mr DOUG SLACK

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard 18 November 1998

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY (PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (4.44 p.m.), continuing: In the few minutes I have left to me I will reiterate some of the points I made previously and raise another issue that has been raised with me since I last spoke. I reiterate that the Opposition recognises the very important role that the construction industry has played and will continue to play in the economies of Queensland and Australia. Certainly, we support apprenticeships and traineeships attached to the construction industry.

I reiterate that by the third quarter of 1997 there were more apprentices and trainees in the building tradespersons category than there were in 1990—a 13% increase. It is wrong of Government members to imply that the Opposition is not serious about supporting traineeships and apprenticeships within the building and construction industry in Queensland. In his second-reading speech the Minister stated—

"This will also avoid the necessity to import skilled labour from overseas".

My understanding is that we actually export labour and expertise from the construction industry. During the period I was Minister for Economic Development and Trade it was my pleasure to visit exhibitions overseas, particularly in Japan, and to visit companies in those areas—Queensland construction and building companies that were exporting overseas. Those companies were doing that for two reasons. Firstly, obviously they wanted to make a profit. Secondly, they wanted to level out the cyclical nature of the building and construction industry. In other words, they wanted to protect themselves against the downturns. They are to be commended for that.

I would expect that the Government would support these companies all the way for doing this. Certainly it is the aim of the Opposition, and no doubt it is the aim of the Government, to even out the hills and the hollows that occur within the construction industry. That would allow for more secure job opportunities for those people who do gain traineeships and apprenticeships within the industry. We need to make every effort to ensure that that happens. One of the ways we can ensure that it happens is through the export of our expertise in that area. We can compete very successfully against other countries because we are recognised as having the necessary skills base.

I bring to the attention of the Minister the Bill introduced by One Nation this morning in relation to the problems subcontractors can have. It was raised with me only recently that we need to pay more attention to training young people in business skills, because the current trainees and apprentices in the construction industry will be the business leaders within the construction industry in the future. Quite often, these are the people who become the subcontractors who run into problems. One of the ways in which we can avert those problems is to ensure that these people are trained in the skills of doing business within the industry. Many of the problems subcontractors get into result from a lack of business skills and a lack of due diligence in checking out the bone fides of employers to ensure that, at the end of the day, they have to capacity to pay them for the subcontracting work they perform.

Time expired.
