



Speech by

HARRY BLACK

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

Hansard 20 October 1998

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

Mr BLACK (Whitsunday—ONP) (4.54 p.m.): I rise to express my concern about the threat that this Bill poses to ravage the accumulated funds of Queensland building workers.

Mr Nuttall: Who wrote this for you? Why don't you say what you think?

Mr BLACK: The member should not worry about that. This is what I think.

Mr Nuttall interjected.

Mr BLACK: Why don't you shut up and listen for a while!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! That remark is unparliamentary. I remind the member that he should speak through the Chair.

Mr BLACK: I apologise.

The BCI Portable Long Service Leave Authority currently holds sufficient funds to be self-funding on a continuing basis. With this Bill, the Government seeks to use this fund underhandedly as a vehicle to introduce its training levy via the back door. The money in this fund belongs to the Queensland building and construction industry workers. It does not belong to the Beattie minority Government.

I am not sure how the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations managed to pull this confidence trick on the building workers union—how he has apparently obtained their agreement to get his hand into their cookie jar. The Portable Long Service Leave Fund of Queensland building and construction industry workers is, quite rightly, a sacred cow. It is vital to the futures of these workers and their families. It represents for them the same benefits as those enjoyed by workers in other industries and forms an integral part of their employment arrangements. It must not be tampered with in any way. If the Government wants a training levy, I am sure that employers would be prepared to contribute to such a levy, provided that the current one was discontinued and the accumulated funds were preserved.

Let us see some honesty and transparency here. Let us rule off on the existing long service levy and protect it for the benefit of those who have contributed to it. For the benefit of honourable members opposite, I am referring to the group when they claim to represent but have forgotten, that is, the workers. Let us implement a new levy at a lower rate and let us call it what it is: a training levy. In that way, with a reduced levy, employers will have a greater incentive to employ more people, the workers' benefits will be preserved under the existing self-funding accumulated fund, and the Government will be more honest and open.

We can only assume that the proposed strategy is designed to circumvent the Premier's undertaking to the Independent member for Nicklin that there will be no new taxes. A tax under any other name is still a tax. One Nation will not be party to a confidence trick to attempt to hoodwink the interested parties in this Parliament. One Nation recommends honesty and openness. We suggest that the Government should try it some time. We cannot support the rape of a fund which belongs to Queensland workers, and we will not support a Bill which seeks to achieve certain ends by dishonest means.
