



Speech by

JOHN MICKEL

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

Hansard 22 October 1998

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

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (5.29 p.m.): The Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Amendment Bill 1998 has to be supported. The figures provided in the second-reading speech show that between 1993 and 1996 spending on training in the industry fell from 1.63% to 1.38% of gross payroll nationally. This amounted to \$14m. This represented a fall of approximately 30% in investment in training by employers. The worrying thing is that Queensland accounted for \$8m of that national decline, or 56%. Those figures are sobering, and I am glad to see the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and the Government taking positive action. The funds will be available through moneys that are surplus to the requirements of the Portable Long Service Leave Fund. This is a good scheme which has industry support, and it deserves our support.

Yesterday, when referring to Breaking the Unemployment Cycle, I think it was the Premier who alerted us to the shortage of boilermakers, requiring people to be brought in from, I think, Korea. That is a shameful situation. As I have pointed out previously, my electorate has the second-lowest percentage of people with skills. By "skills" I do not mean a university degree; I mean a trade qualification. Anything that can be done to improve that situation and to provide opportunities to gain skills for those young people and young families in my electorate will have my total support.

I also refer to the TAFE system. I know that the Minister is taking a great interest in the repair of TAFE. When he was the shadow Minister he came down to the Logan TAFE—I had the pleasure of accompanying him on that day—and he encountered quite a disgraceful situation. We found that the acting TAFE director in Logan was muzzled that day. She was not able to speak freely at all because the then Minister, the member for Clayfield, had told her that she was not to speak to the then shadow Minister. That was a shameful muzzling of the Public Service.

The person sent to preside over this meeting was a very respected public servant, Stan Sielaff. What was his reward for presiding over this? After the then Premier gave an undertaking that no more public servants would be sacked, Mr Sielaff was one of the ones sacked by the then Minister. That was his reward for going to the Logan TAFE college to help brief the then shadow Minister and me about the situation there. The Goss Government inherited the lowest per capita funding for TAFE of any Australian State.

Mr SANTORO: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The comments made by the honourable member for Logan that I sacked the former executive director of TAFE are false. I find them offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr MICKEL: If he finds the words offensive, of course I withdraw any offensive words. That does not alter the fact that Labor inherited the lowest per capita funding for TAFE in Australia when it came to power in 1989. That also meant that Queensland had some of the lowest intakes per head of population. Young people in Queensland were disadvantaged by the low level of funding and the low level of intake. Lack of training meant that Queenslanders were being further left behind.

As I said, under the Goss Government, through this Minister, the TAFE system was brought back to national average in funding. We gave people in Logan—those people seeking apprenticeships, those people seeking training—a bit of a go at it. In two and a half years this situation was virtually destroyed by the member for Clayfield. To try to ingratiate himself with the Federal Government and

Minister Kemp, he tried to concertina into one year a process that had been taking three years in other States and virtually privatise it, leaving teachers out of the system and leaving courses almost abandoned.

I recognise that the Minister has an important challenge in trying to rectify that situation at the Logan TAFE, and he has my full support. I know that Carol Haase is doing her level best to try to provide training for those people. Importantly, she is trying to rectify for the people of the Logan West suburbs the situation brought about by the complete neglect that went on for two and a half years.

I also congratulate the new Director-General, Mr Bob Marshman, for altering what had been two and a half years of bureaucratic neglect at that senior level in relation to the people of Logan. It has taken only a couple of months. I have had Bob Marshman out in the area with some senior people from the department to see what sort of extension services can be provided. I know that the member for Crows Nest is deeply interested in this, because he knows that if we can get training there will be training for people such as the folks in Crows Nest. Once we get that training going and give them hope, both in Logan and Crows Nest, people's ability to obtain and retain a job is enhanced. I know that the member for Crows Nest would not support the member for Clayfield; he is just being dragged along with him.

I also congratulate another group interested in training, wanting to help out wherever it can. I refer to the Greenbank RSL. It has 51,000 members. I declare my pecuniary interest by saying that I am one of them. As a result of its recent extension, Greenbank RSL has taken on 50 people. It is seeking to set up traineeships so that it can train people in the hospitality industry. The RSL employs many locals in the Logan West suburbs and I congratulate it on wanting to participate in the scheme set up by the director-general of the department. Another person taking an interest in trying to provide that extension service is David Jack from the Logan West Community Centre. Anything we can do to improve the accessibility of training in Logan West is something that I know the Minister supports and it is something that I, as the local member, support.

I know that the traineeship program being offered in Salisbury has been touched on, because it is in the electorate of the member for Archerfield. There is \$3m in this budget for that program. It is a very good scheme. I am hoping that the students in my electorate can access it. As I have told the House before, the problem in my electorate is one of a lack of transport to access those services. The Brisbane City Council, through the Labor administration of course, has set up a bus service that goes from the Grand Plaza in Browns Plains. It will now take students all the way to the Salisbury traineeship scheme. That will be a big asset in trying to overcome the tyranny of distance that people in those outer metropolitan areas face.

The other service I am trying to secure, along with my colleague the member for Springwood, is one that makes sure students can access the Logan TAFE college from east to west. I congratulate the member for Springwood on the energy he is showing in relation to that and for the representations he has made to the Minister for Transport in that regard.

I note from the Minister's second-reading speech that Government departments will promote traineeships. I refer particularly to the efforts being made by the Public Works Department. Maybe I will get into trouble with the Government for saying this, but so be it. I really want that maintenance money given to the Department of Education put back in with the Public Works Department. The reason for that is very straightforward. In my view, it should never have been taken over there. It was a mistake. I think it was a mistake by the previous Government under the Leading Schools program, by which this responsibility was to be devolved to school principals.

I believe that a school principal should be interested in the welfare of the school community and the educational curriculum opportunities. It should not be the principal's role to have to work out what maintenance money the school needs or what maintenance program is needed. The Public Works Department provides a very important maintenance program in regional rural Queensland. I notice that the member for Burnett is in the Chamber. The program that the department provides in Bundaberg is first rate for all those small schools. That responsibility should never have been given to the Department of Education.

The Department of Public Works employs the greatest number of apprentices in the building program. It is very sad, when I attend P & C meetings, to find that some of those attending believe that Public Works should be done away with so that they can employ a contractor.

Mr Sullivan: And they want to get rid of Q-Build.

Mr MICKEL: That is what I have said. I am behind the times. It does not matter. I would rather be right than consistent. The point is this: the department employs the apprentices; a contractor would not do that, because they have to get the lowest price. So if we want to stick with apprentices, we have to stick with Q-Build. I make no apology for saying that. Members can distribute these remarks around my electorate. I would be happy to defend apprentices any day of the week.

Mr Pearce: Quality of work.

Mr MICKEL: Their quality of work is outstanding.

I also want to touch on another issue. We are employing contractors now—and I notice that Suncorp is starting to do it—in the motor trades and the vehicle repair industry. They are trying to squeeze the margins for those vehicle repair operators. I believe that means that many of those small businesses will go to the wall. As well, it will reduce the ability of that repair industry to take on apprentices. That is something that we all have to guard against. They are trying to reduce the margins. And Suncorp has been just as guilty of this as anyone else. I encourage the Minister to have a close look at that, because it is an issue that I want to return to at a later date when I have a bit more time.

Yesterday, I was disappointed—I was shocked, actually—that the One Nation Party wanted to attack the setting up of the dairy processing industry in my electorate. Although that would create jobs for Queenslanders and jobs for Logan, that joker over there wants to oppose it. We get a humble firm in my electorate, and that cackle over there want to oppose it.

Dr Prenzler interjected.

Mr MICKEL: Did the member say that he opposes the jobs going to Logan? I will remember that, and when I next do a report to the people of Logan I will let them know that the One Nation Party opposed that factory and those jobs opportunities—120 jobs.

Dr PRENZLER: I rise to a point of order. I did not say that we oppose jobs going to Logan at all.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! There is no point of order.

Dr PRENZLER: That is what the member said that I said, but I did not say that at all. I ask him to withdraw that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member did not say that the remark was offensive. There is no point of order. If he did not say those words, there is no point of order.

Mr MICKEL: If it satisfies the member, I will withdraw it. I just noted that members of the One Nation Party oppose that industry and those jobs going to Logan. The member for Tablelands opposed it yesterday. I know what they are all about: no more job opportunities for Logan. Did members see the pathetic performance from the member for Whitsunday when he opposed it? Pauline Hanson said that kids could leave school at 14 or 15 and get apprenticeships. She loses, goes out of sight, and so does One Nation's policy.

I support the Bill. Of course, I want the Minister to make sure that those people in Logan get every opportunity to gain those apprenticeships, which we consider to be absolutely vital for their future.
