



Speech by

JOHN MICKEL

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

Hansard 19 November 1998

TARIFF PROTECTION, SUGAR INDUSTRY

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (6.13 p.m.): It is a delight to second the amendment moved by the Minister because this debate is about the old Australian historical thing of the enlargers versus the minimisers. The minimisers are all sitting up the back of the opposite side of the Chamber. They are the ones who have no faith in the Queensland sugar industry—no faith at all. The newspaper that I take a lot of notice of—in fact, I read nothing else every week—Queensland Country Life, today said that we have got a \$2 billion sugar industry. How did we get that and why must we be so proud of it? Because over 80% of sugar is exported! That is, it has already found its way onto world markets. These jokers over here want to minimise the whole industry and deny those work opportunities.

Why we are in favour of single desk selling is that we are right in the corner of the sugar industry, because the industry signed off on it. The entire sugar industry signed off on single desk selling in exchange for tariff reductions.

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order. At no stage has One Nation ever said anything against single desk selling. I have no idea of the relevance.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr MICKEL: The member for Burdekin said, "We have gained nothing out of it." I ask the old fellow: has he ever heard of the Burdekin Dam? He should get his mind around it. What has happened over the past eight years? Does he know what all of that green stuff is growing in the fields? That is called sugarcane. Sugarcane production has gone from 400,000 hectares to 500,000 hectares in just eight years. I refer to the raw sugar production in the Burdekin. In 1989, it was 3.6 million tonnes. In 1996, it was 5.1 million tonnes. We have to forgive the member for Burdekin: he is as strong as an ox but the trouble is that he is half as smart.

Mr Knuth: What is it at the moment?

Mr MICKEL: Banjo Paterson had them right, "Their heads were flat, their eyes were dull, they had no brains at all."

The fact of the matter is that this is the industry with the jobs effect. This is industry with the linkage effect. That great City of Bundaberg, well represented in this House by the member for Bundaberg, has a value-added industry second to none. It has a sugar refinery, a mill, a distillery, a molasses company, a soft drinks company, a bag company—all of those jobs dependent upon—

Mr Knuth: You wouldn't know what is happening in the Burdekin right now.

Mr MICKEL: See, One Nation is not interested in the welfare of the City of Bundaberg. That is why they ran second in the election and that is why next time they will run third.

I am delighted to be visiting this weekend the great City of Maryborough. One of the things that I will be doing in Maryborough is having a look at the sugar mill and the great jobs that come from that. What is this all about? One Nation selling out that great City of Maryborough because it disagrees with the sugarcane farmers up there. Those trucks that export sugar from the sugar mill in Maryborough find their way to that great port in Bundaberg. The member for Tablelands has not had a look up there and seen that new mill—

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order. I take offence at being lectured about my electorate. I think that I would know it a hell of a lot more than the member for Logan. He is talking a load of rubbish, an absolute load of rubbish.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr MICKEL: The honourable gentleman fancies himself as a brainwave. The trouble is——

Mr NELSON: I find the language used by the member for Logan just then highly unparliamentary and offensive, and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Logan will withdraw.

Mr MICKEL: Very well, I understand that he has no brains at all.

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order. I cannot reconcile the behaviour of the member for Logan with any directive put forward by the Premier. I find it highly offensive and highly unparliamentary. I ask for it to be withdrawn and I ask that the member stop this personal attack on me.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Logan will withdraw.

Mr MICKEL: I withdraw and ask the honourable gentleman to take a Valium.

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order. I find that highly offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: The member will withdraw.

Mr MICKEL: I withdraw. The fact of the matter is that single desk selling gives sugarcane farmers, our great farmers out there, a premium price for quality sugar. It has made sure that our sugar prices this year——

Time expired.
