



Speech by

Mr S. SANTORO

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (11.30 a.m.): Today I wish to talk about change that is occurring right across the Public Service. I will instance this by looking specifically at the sort of change that is happening within the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and within the associated areas of policy development and implementation under the jurisdiction of that department.

All honourable members would appreciate that I am not against change, because when I was Minister for the department of which the member for Kedron now has responsibility I initiated much change. I am very proud of that change, but I am not proud of the change that is occurring under the administration of the new Minister. I think it is also fair to say that when I as Minister introduced change, very few groups within the community, apart from the sectional interests that used to dominate my area of portfolio responsibility, such as the union movement, raised any complaint. In fact, apart from the union movement and some interests that enjoyed entrenched monopoly through provisions within the then Labor Party legislation, very few people complained about the changes introduced by me and by my department.

I am very much against the change that is occurring in the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations because it is occurring in a non-consultative and undemocratic manner, and it is union dominated. It is also occurring in a way which is seeing many election promises broken. In my view, change is being introduced with unseemly haste and in total disregard for the commitment to stability that was put to the Public Service, mouthed by the then Beattie Labor Opposition. Stability is certainly not being practised today, when Labor is in Government and able to demonstrate a true commitment to its promises.

We have seen many sackings and dismissals. Certainly, the serving Director-General of the department was not appointed, and that was expected. A commitment was broken with the immediate sacking of the Deputy Director-General—a practice which was repeated right across the Public Service, despite a commitment to not sack people below the level of director-general. That was a very firm commitment which was quickly broken by the Labor Government.

I turn to look at the various boards and advisory committees. Frank Haly was sacked as chairman of WorkCover. He was one of the most successful chairmen of any statutory authority in the history of Queensland. He was sacked with little notice and little dignity. Dr Jane Wilson, a very eminent medical representative on the WorkCover board, was also summarily dismissed, despite the much-mouthed commitment by the Labor Government to having women on major boards. She was sacked without much notice, let alone a good reason. The regional perspective was represented very effectively by Terry Bolger, one of the outstanding appointments of the previous Government in that regard. He was also sacked. By whom were these people replaced? They were replaced by departmental people, former departmental people and, of course, two union heavyweights—Bill Ludwig and John Thompson.

I am not against representation by unions. In fact, during my time as Minister I appointed many union representatives to various boards and committees, but I sought to seek out people, including people from the union movement, who were able to bring merit to their appointments. The unions came on in a real hurry in this instance. That is in total contrast to the methods I adopted when I became Minister. When I became Minister I actually left in place the boards of the previous Government while we consulted,

while we looked at the legislation and while we then implemented the reforms to the legislation, including the total rewrite of the WorkCover Act.

There are many lessons to be learnt, not only in Opposition but also in Government. I suppose that in Opposition I am learning of the precedent that has been set by the new Beattie Labor Government. When we are back in Government we will undoubtedly remember the fine detail of the way it is implementing its reform process.

I have been told that the round tables will not have much of a function under the new Minister's training regime. That initiative was meant to include a regional perspective in the provision of advice on training to the Minister and, particularly, to the bureaucracy. I am told that the role of the round tables, if it is not going to be downplayed, will be totally abolished. That is not a good thing for regional communities to contemplate. Those members in this place who have a regional perspective—it is not meant to be a bureaucratic dominated perspective—should look very closely at what happens at the TAFE advisory councils and also at the regional round tables that were in fact meant to bring a regional perspective into the area of training.

Let us look at what has happened in terms of other major restructuring in the department. There has been not only the termination of the Director-General and the Deputy Director-General but also the appointment of Kim Bannikoff, a former departmental employee, as an independent consultant to lead the TAFE task force.

We now have a Government dominated—in fact run—by task force. It will be interesting for one of us on this side of the House to add up all the task forces that have been implemented by the new Government. Read for "task force" inquiries and more wasted time and wasted opportunity for this Government to actually do something that is reasonable. One task force after another will be implemented. This Government tries to hide the fact that it is another committee, another inquiry, but we will add them up and talk about that at a later time.

I mention the abolition of the TAFE head office and the strategic centre within the department and their replacement with an ill-defined network; the abolition of the office of the boards a week after it was stated that that office would in fact remain; and the return of the department to a divided and fragmented client service structure where the silos that were demolished by the previous Government have been again erected, depriving business of a corporate approach to the provision of advice by a department that is essential to the wellbeing of business.

I could keep talking about the enormous amount of change that is occurring, and undoubtedly in the future I will. All of this change is occurring with union approval and

acquiescence. When we sought to introduce only a fraction of that change under the very real guidance of a consultative *modus operandi*, the unions opposed us time after time—every inch of the way. I was committed to genuine consultation with the union movement, with managers in the department and with the employees directly. That change was stridently opposed by the union movement.

Of course, the union movement has rolled over. It has uttered not a single word of protest, not a single complaint. It has not stood up for employees and for the managers that it so fiercely fought for when a non-Labor Government was in power. The union movement is an accomplice to the massive change, to the massive amount of instability that has been created within the Public Service, including my former department. I think that is a disgrace. When we are back in Government we will remember the silence and the acquiescence of the union movement in relation to this particular sad part of Queensland's history as far as the bureaucracy is concerned.

This will be a union-dominated Government. Premier Beattie told the world of the very successful meeting he had with employer representatives a few days after he was elected to Government. What he did not tell of with the same gay abandon was the meeting he had with over 40 unionists on the 13th floor on Friday, 3 July. He did not want to invite the cameras in for that meeting as he did with the employers because, unlike the meeting with employers, he wanted to keep it quiet so that the majestic symbolism of just how much under the thumb of the union movement this Government will be did not become manifest to all Queenslanders.

There can be no greater expression of union arrogance and union domination than the quote in today's Courier-Mail by the State secretary of the ACTU. In relation to the changes to legislation proposed yesterday by the Honourable the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, he said—

"The Queensland Chamber of Commerce campaigned heavily against Labor—I guess the spoils go to the victors."

There can be no more arrogant expression of power and dominance over a Government than that particular statement. That statement will be quoted by people on this side time after time, including undoubtedly during the debate which will see the now Government try to change the very good industrial relations laws of Queensland—industrial relations laws which, as I said the other day during the confidence debate, led to the creation of record employment in the regions within this State. Again, we will talk about the record of this Government in terms of regional employment during further debates.

Much change has been brought about with unseemly haste by a union-dominated Government which will do nothing to serve and achieve its objective—jobs, jobs, jobs. It will lead to a disincentive for business, particularly small business, the engineroom of employment creation, to create jobs.

Time expired.
