



Speech by

Dr DAVID WATSON

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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GORDONSTONE MINE DISPUTE; MEMBER FOR FITZROY

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (6.36 p.m.): It is an insult and a disgrace that the name of Jim Pearce is to be mentioned in the same sentence as Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi. Nelson and Gandhi improved the lot of their people. But the member for Fitzroy is not improving the lot of his people. In fact, Jim Pearce is condemning his people to unemployment. As I said earlier tonight, he is condemning his people—his constituents—to poverty.

The member for Fitzroy might win a few votes from his militant miner mates for breaking the law and getting arrested, but his actions are more likely to lose a few votes in boardrooms around the world. And those few votes could ultimately cost Queensland thousands of jobs. Once upon a time, we could perhaps say to investors with the utmost confidence that Queensland had a stable and democratic Government. But for how long will we have a stable and democratic Government if the people we entrust to make the laws break our laws? We all want to create jobs for Queensland. But before we can create jobs, we have to create confidence.

Mr Fouras interjected.

Dr WATSON: The member ought to know that. The actions of Jim Pearce and the endorsement of those actions by the Premier and the other Labor Ministers, all of whom ought to know better, do not create confidence for people looking at investing in Queensland. If we cannot provide certainty of supply, certainty of quality and certainty that we have law-abiding companies, then those investors are going to go elsewhere. The simple reality is this—

Mr Fouras interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ashgrove must not interject from other than his correct seat.

Dr WATSON: The reality is this: Queensland is not the only place in the world with coal in the ground. If Labor wants to mention Jim Pearce in the same breath as Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi, perhaps we should look at the example of the coal situation in those two countries. Official figures from the World Coal Institute show that both of those countries already produce more coal than Australia does. In fact, India produces 271 million metric tonnes, and South Africa 208 million metric tonnes, compared with Australia's 195 million metric tonnes. Granted, Australia exports more coal than either of those two nations. But how long will it be before countries such as India and South Africa increase their exports and join a crowded supply market which includes the United States of America, Canada, Indonesia, Russia and Poland?

Mr Littleproud: China.

Dr WATSON: And China.

Coalmines might have been gold mines in the past, but not any more. Mining is suffering its worst slump in 15 years. No mine in India, South Africa, Kentucky or Queensland can afford to have unproductive staff or practices. There is no doubt that there is much room for improvement in productivity in the Queensland coalmining industry.

I know that most members have this information because they also had a briefing. Let us consider MIM, one of Rio Tinto's competitors. It has made substantial productivity gains in its Queensland coalmining operations since changing to enterprise agreements. Let us consider the

figures. I do not know where the Minister for Mines and Energy has taken off to, but he ought to know these. Productivity at Collinsville is up 250%. Productivity at Oakey Creek is up 90%. Productivity at Newlands is up 60%. Productivity at Abbot Point is up 100%. MIM states that it introduced certified agreements to remove restrictive management and work practices to allow employees to achieve the productivity improvements necessary to be competitive. Unless Queensland is competitive, there will be no Gordonstone, and there will be no jobs.

I assume everybody in this House knows that coal is formed from the remains of trees and plants that died about the same time as the dinosaurs. The simple truth of the matter is this: unless Labor can control its dinosaurs, such as the honourable member for Fitzroy and the mining division of the CFMEU, then the Queensland coal industry itself will die. That is what they will have to explain to their constituents and to their mining mates.
