



Speech by

Dr DAVID WATSON

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Hansard 24 March 1999

SUN METALS DISPUTE; GORDONSTONE MINE DISPUTE

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (6.10 p.m.): I rise to second the motion. No issue better sums up this can't do Premier than the situation with respect to Sun Metals. Let me simplify the Sun Metals dispute by using a railway analogy. I have chosen a railway analogy, because it is something that the Premier, as a former State Secretary of the Queensland Railway Station Officers Union, ought to understand.

A Government member: A good union.

Dr WATSON: It may have been a good union back then.

We had a locomotive called Sun Metals powering along, creating over a thousand jobs and creating a new industry for north Queensland. Three carriages were hitched up to this locomotive. Those carriages were called the AWU, the AMWU and the CEPU. For two years this train just powered on. In fact, in those two years the train was stopped for only half a day. That is right; in two years at the Sun Metals site only half a day was lost through industrial trouble.

The train was powering along so well that some other carriages that were not going anywhere got very jealous. Those carriages were called the CFMEU and the BLF. They decided they had to be part of this gravy train. But the courts ruled—twice in fact—that they could not be part of this gravy train. So what did the two jealous carriages do? They derailed the whole train. In the process, they derailed Queensland's reputation and they may well have derailed our future. Even if Sun Metals decides to stay in Townsville, the damage has been done. A powerful message has been sent to overseas investors: in Queensland the unions are above the law.

This morning in the House we saw a disgraceful performance by the Premier. He tried to make out that the reason the Sun Metals dispute could not be resolved was that the independent umpire did not have enough power. As Ron "Rodeo" would say, bull, bull, bull. This dispute is not the fault of the independent umpire. Twice the independent umpire has told the CFMEU and the BLF to play on another track. Purely and simply, this dispute is about jealous unions that will do anything to widen their power base.

For the sake of Queensland, I call on the Premier to have the courage to shunt the CFMEU and the BLF out of this. If he does not have the courage to do that, he should at least make sure the laws of this State are upheld. What is he going to say when he jets off to the boardrooms of Korea or Japan? What is he going to say when they ask, "Mr Beattie, can you uphold the laws of your land?" They won't even bother to ask him whether he can keep the unions under control, because they know that he cannot even keep his backbenchers under control. At Gordonstone we had "Mahatma" Pearce breaking the law. At Sun Metals we have Lindy Nelson-Carr supporting the illegal picketers. What will Labor christen her? Mother Teresa!

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Dr WATSON: The honourable member should listen to this.

The people of Queensland should know what sorts of people are running the Sun Metals picket line. I understand that 500 T-shirts have been printed for sale on the picket line. On the front of those T-shirts is printed "Townsville Zinc Workers United Picket Line 1999". I cannot read all of the words printed on the back, because that would be unparliamentary. However, I will read all but one of them. It

reads "We run amok, don't give a"—expletive deleted—"because there's not a boss we can't toss!" Those T-shirts are made in China. If Sun Metals is derailed, a lot more things will be made in China, because precious little will be made in Queensland. There will be precious little investment in Queensland and, therefore, precious little job creation.

I call on the Premier to have the courage to save Queensland's reputation. He should have the courage to save Townsville's future. He should have the courage to tell the CFMEU and the BLF to get out of town before Sun Metals decides to get out of Townsville. I warn the Premier: no Sun Metals means no base load power station for Townsville. No base load power station for Townsville means no Chevron gas pipeline. No Chevron gas pipeline means no alumina refinery at Gladstone. And that means no chance at all of ever getting within a bull's roar of his 5% unemployment target.
