



Speech by

**Hon. P. BRADDY**

**MEMBER FOR KEDRON**

---

Hansard 2 March 1999

**GORDONSTONE MINE DISPUTE; MEMBER FOR FITZROY**

**Hon. P. J. BRADDY** (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (6.20 p.m.): I rise to second the amendment moved by the Premier and to speak out on behalf of Queensland and Queenslanders for a return to sanity in industrial relations in this country. Certainly it is this Government's intention to introduce legislation to ensure a fair and equitable industrial relations system which will have majority support.

As the Premier said before, I did not say that I could introduce legislation that will settle this dispute, because it is a Federal matter. We can bring in legislation which will set an example and show the way to a return to sanity and to a return to laws which are supported by a large majority of Australians and certainly Queenslanders.

On coming to Government, we immediately asked for a group of people, representative of both unionists and employers, to work with us on where we should go with industrial laws. One thing that was made very clear in the report of that task force was that a large majority of both workers and employers want an industrial commission in this State which will have the power to conciliate and arbitrate in a manner which was traditional in this State and in this country.

Our opponents either know no history or, if they do, refuse to understand it. Firstly, we have a long and honourable history in this country of industrial commissions which have the capacity and the powers to arbitrate, and conciliate where necessary. Secondly, those on the other side do not even know current affairs. How could anyone who watched the events that unfolded in the Patrick dispute not understand how necessary it is to have a fair and competent industrial relations commission? In that dispute we saw the thugs in balaclavas with their dogs stopped not by a fair industrial law, which had been abandoned by the Opposition's counterparts in Canberra, but only by the common law courts—ultimately the Federal Court and the High Court. That was a very expensive process which ultimately led to the collapse of the Reith-inspired attack on trade unionists, the trade union system and a fair industrial relations system in this country. It collapsed and the matter was able to be settled.

Here we see a similar situation in Gordonstone. The Federal Minister, Peter Reith, was here in Queensland recently, proudly saying that he had no intention of intervening in the Gordonstone dispute, which has gone on since 1997. He says that it is a matter for the company and the workers to fight their way out of the problem. This dispute is approaching two years in duration, yet Minister Reith washes his hands of it and walks away.

Peter Reith, the coalition Government in Canberra and the coalition Opposition in Queensland agree on one thing: a totally deregulated market. They want to destroy the trade union system. They want to destroy the system of arbitration and conciliation, which is one of Australia's proud legacies to the whole of the Western World. They want to destroy that. They will let a dispute go on year after year in order to prove that their deregulated system is the way to operate. We reject that. We reject it in our amendment.

We point out that Peter Reith and the Federal Government have abandoned their responsibilities to the Australian people and the Australian economy. We indicate that in our term, within a matter of months, we will bring legislation into this Parliament which will have the support of many employers who will want an industrial commission returned so that in areas of Queensland

jurisdiction—over 55% of Queensland workers—they will have an industrial commission which can intervene, which can arbitrate, which can conciliate and which will not allow situations such as occurred with Patrick and at Gordonstone to develop and get out of hand.

The barrenness of the knowledge and the legislation of the coalition stands exposed for all to see. We saw it in relation to Patrick and we are seeing it now in relation to Gordonstone. The motion is rejected by the Government.

---