



Speech by

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard 11 June 1999

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BILL

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (3.22 p.m.): The Opposition opposes the motion moved by the Leader of the House. There are 747 clauses in this Bill and the vast majority of those clauses can change the way that most Queensland businesses operate until such time as there is a return to conservative Government in this State.

What we see in this place today is a travesty of the democratic process, a betrayal of the commitments given by the member for Brisbane Central to the member for Nicklin when the member for Nicklin was conned into providing his support and his vote for the Labor minority Government after the last State election. What we see in this place today is government by the mates of the mates for the mates. What we see is not public policy being dictated by what is in the best interests of the people of Queensland; what we see is public policy and legislation being dictated by the Premier, dependent on the sleazy backroom deals that he can do with the various union leaders that slink into his office in the dark hours of the night in the days preceding the Labor Party State conference.

Every member of this place should remember that, when the coalition Government dramatically changed the workplace relations laws of this State following the Mundingburra by-election, the gag was not applied. We called a special session of the Parliament—a special meeting of the Parliament—so that each and every Labor member could debate to their heart's content the changes that the then coalition Government was proposing.

Mr BRADDY: I rise to a point of order. The former Premier has a very poor memory and is misleading the Parliament. The arrangement that was made at that time was that the debate would have to take place over three days and, in fact, it did. There was not unlimited time and, in fact, I had not finished all that I had to say on that particular matter. We accepted——

Mr BORBIDGE: There is no point of order, Mr Speaker. The gag was not applied——

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BORBIDGE:—and the then Opposition agreed to those arrangements.

Mr BRADDY: I rise to a point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE: It was a gentlemen's arrangement and the difference is that this Minister is not a gentleman.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BRADDY: The point of order that I was still making before I was rudely interrupted by the Leader of the Opposition——

Mr BORBIDGE: What point of order, Mr Speaker? Under what Standing Order is the Minister rising? Under what Standing Order is he taking a point of order?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask members to resume their seats.

Mr BRADDY: The point of order is that——

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. What Standing Order is the Minister——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to resume his seat. I warn him now. He will cease his frivolous interjecting.

Mr BRADDY: The point of order is that the Leader of the Opposition has misled the Parliament, because there was a special time arranged—three days—and I ask that the misleading comment that he made be withdrawn.

Mr BEANLAND: I rise to a point of order. This is part of a debate. That is not a point of order. The Minister is debating the issue.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will make that ruling, not the honourable member. The Minister has asked that it be withdrawn.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I rise to a point of order. I was involved in the negotiations for the debate on the coalition's Bill. Quite justifiably, the debate on the coalition's Workplace Relations Bill was withheld for six weeks over the Christmas period to enable the Labor Party to have time to understand the Bill. The request was justifiable, but the agreement that was voluntarily made was that the debate would be finalised in that week. There was no coercion. There was no gagging of the debate. It was a mutually agreed process.

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We can go on all day. I will just rule on this. There is no point of order. Now we will continue with the debate.

Mr BORBIDGE: As the member for Gladstone quite rightly points out, there was an agreement—a gentlemen's agreement— between the Government and the Opposition in respect of the conduct of that particular debate. The guillotine and the gag were not applied. The Opposition agreed. It signed off. It was an agreement by both sides of the House in respect of the time allocated to that debate. We did not seek to impose a guillotine or a gag, as this sleazy servant of the trade unions now seeks to do.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those words are unparliamentary.

Mr BRADDY: I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks untrue and offensive, particularly in the context in which the guillotine was applied in advance by the debate being restricted to three days. I find the remarks untrue and offensive, and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: The words are also unparliamentary, so I will ask the Opposition Leader to withdraw them.

Mr BORBIDGE: If the Honourable Minister, who stifles parliamentary debate in this place, is so sensitive after being caught out lying by the honourable member for Gladstone—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have asked the member to withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE:—I will withdraw the remark.

Mr BRADDY: I rise to a point of order. Again, I find those remarks untrue and offensive. The guillotine was effectively applied in advance by allowing only three days for the debate.

Mr BORBIDGE: That is not true.

Mr BRADDY: I ask that the remarks be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has asked that those remarks be withdrawn.

Mr BORBIDGE: Which remarks, Mr Speaker?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Are we going to get pedantic about this?

Mr BORBIDGE: Which remarks? I withdraw the remarks that the honourable member finds offensive, although I note for the Hansard record that the member for Gladstone has confirmed in this place the accuracy of what I have said and the inaccuracy of what the Minister has said in this place today.

What we have seen in this Parliament over the past few days has been an absolute disgrace. We have seen the Premier accusing doctors who save lives at the Gold Coast Hospital of being Nazis. We see the imposition in this place of restrictions on the Opposition day in, day out. We are seeing insults against the Jewish people. We have seen a Minister of the Crown today—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE:—threatening one of my members with physical assault.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks untrue and offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn. I made no such aspersions against the Jewish community, which can be attested to.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member has asked the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE: I did not refer to the honourable member by name. I do recall the Honourable Minister apologising in this House. If the cap fits, he should wear it.

What we are seeing today is the total abdication of accountability in this State by the Labor Party, which is so concerned about the factional rat fight this weekend that it is prepared to destroy the proper processes of accountability. This industrial relations legislation is all about doing deals for mates. It is all about the subversion of the proper democratic process in this State to unions such as the CFMEU and the BLF, who are now certified law-breakers in the State of Queensland.

We have before us 747 clauses in legislation in relation to which we will not have the opportunity to apply to the Minister the proper scrutiny that he demanded and received when the coalition introduced its version of workplace reform in this State. We are now seeing the excesses of Labor since it won Mulgrave. It is a fair bet that Labor would not have played out this trick if the honourable member for Nicklin still had the balance of power.

We have a trade union Government in this State. The legislative program is determined by the trade unions. The legislative program is determined by the State Labor Party conference. The legislative program and the laws of this State are now determined by people who represent less than 30% of the work force in Queensland. We have from this Minister legislation that will plunge Queensland back into the industrial dark ages—legislation that will reverse the laws that gave Queensland a declining level of trade union membership and the lowest level of industrial disputation in this State since 1913.

This motion is a disgrace. I challenge the member for Brisbane Central—I challenge the plastic lackey of the trade union movement—to come into the Chamber, to enter this debate and to justify to the small businesses of Queensland and the 70% of Queensland employees who will not have a bar of the trade union movement why he has initiated and is overseeing this travesty of the democratic process in Queensland today.

This Government is on the nose. This Government deserves to be on the nose. Today the Government of the member for Brisbane Central is betraying one of the basic principles and one of the basic commitments it gave to the honourable member for Nicklin in exchange for his vote to form a commission to form Government in Queensland. The member for Brisbane Central has defrauded the member for Nicklin. He has defrauded the Queensland people. He has shown that he is not a leader or a Premier for all Queenslanders. He is the leader of a pack of Labor mates.

As the Leader of the House moves this motion, let it be on the public record that the Premier does not have the guts to enter the Chamber and to defend this travesty of the democratic process so that consideration of this legislation can fit in with the timetable and the schedule of the ALP State conference.

We know the tensions that are going on over on the Government side. We have seen the comings and goings. We have seen the BLF——

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: Come on in, Peter. Come on in. We have seen the BLF, the CFMEU and all the unions come into this place, doing their sleazy backroom deals with the member for Brisbane Central as he prepares to embark on a course of action that will make Queensland the laughing stock of the Commonwealth of Australia.

I say to the member for Brisbane Central: today he sows the seeds of his own undoing. Today he is perpetuating in legislation the sort of mentality that means that we will not see Stage 2 of Sun Metals under this Labor Government, under this industrial relations legislation. We are seeing a pay-off, a political bribe, an act of corruption to those unions that, by a decision of the Industrial Court of Queensland, are law-breakers. They have broken the law: they have engaged in sexual harassment against women workers and have stopped law-abiding Queenslanders going to and from their places of work. Let it be on the public record: these are the people whose cause the member for Brisbane Central has championed.

The Premier has turned his back on the productive wealth of this State, on small business in this State, by the reintroduction of unfair dismissal laws, by the reintroduction of all that is bad in this legislation. For the member for Brisbane Central to ever again claim to be a Premier for all Queenslanders, someone who has the best interests of this State at heart, would be one of the greatest prostitutions of the English language that could ever be claimed, because this man is a Premier for the BLF. He is a Premier for the Left Wing unions. He is a Premier for the law-breakers at Gordonstone. He is a Premier for the law-breakers at Sun Metals. He is a Premier of the mates, by the mates, for the mates—and for no-one else.