



Speech by

Mr SANTO SANTORO

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT; UNION ENCOURAGEMENT PROVISIONS

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (10.26 a.m.): Today, I would like to talk about the union encouragement provisions within the Beattie Labor Government's Industrial Relations Act. The Minister's second-reading speech on the Bill was noticeably silent on this issue. But Queenslanders—and in particular small business—are finding out the hard way what union encouragement clauses actually mean.

Currently, there are applications by the Australia Workers Union and the Queensland Council of Unions for across-the-board award variations for union encouragement. What the applications are seeking is not just the warm inner glow of encouragement; the applications are seeking the following: that all existing and potential employees be encouraged to join the union; that the employer provides application forms; that the employer will encourage the employees to partake in union meetings and to vote at union meetings; that the employer will arrange for introductions to the union representative; that the employer shall provide time and facilities for the union delegate to conduct union business; and that the employer shall provide payroll deductions for union dues.

These provisions are being sought by either a general ruling, in that they will apply to every employer under the State system, or a statement of policy, which provides that awards include such provisions. The end result is that it is clearly the intention of the unions that every employer in Queensland will be required to undertake these exercises in order to encourage and maintain union membership. This means that even the corner store will be required to do it. Even the pie van, with a casual in the summer holiday season, will be required to do it.

This union action represents a massive jobs disincentive for Queensland. The matter is before the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission,

and I understand that it has been adjourned. I believe it is appropriate that the Minister and his Government declare where they stand in relation to these applications. Did the Minister and the Government intend that union encouragement would mean that all the activities I have noted will form part of union encouragement? Did the Government intend that this would be arbitrated on unconsenting employers, or was it something that was to be only an agreement between employers and employees?

If the Minister is fair dinkum in terms of accountability, he should declare himself. If he is fair dinkum in terms of his philosophy, let him say yes, and let employers, and particularly small business, hear that message loud and clear.
