



Speech by

Hon. T. McGRADY

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

Hansard 2 March 1999

GORDONSTONE MINE DISPUTE; MEMBER FOR FITZROY

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (6.31 p.m.): Some of the comments that have been made in this Chamber today, when read tomorrow, will demonstrate just how Opposition members have tried to inflame a very delicate situation. Nobody in this Chamber could be happy to see a great resource standing idle, and nobody in this Chamber should be happy to see decent Queenslanders not earning a living by not having a job. Some weeks ago I spoke to Brian Horwood, who is the leader of that coalmining company in this State, and I expressed to him the Government's concern about the situation and offered whatever help we could provide. To date, no request has come back from that company.

This motion is in part about the member for Fitzroy. Every one of us in this Chamber got here in a democratic way. We are entitled to our views, our opinions and our beliefs. Jim Pearce, the member for Fitzroy, was a coalminer. Jim Pearce today has the honour of representing a great percentage of Queensland coalminers. At the time of the lockout, he decided himself that he would go and join some of his colleagues on the picket line. He was entitled to take that position. Whether it was right or wrong is something that Jim Pearce will decide.

I did not take too kindly to the then deputy leader of the coalition calling upon me to remove Jim Pearce from my parliamentary committee. Jim Pearce is one of the few people in this Chamber who understands the coalmining industry. He has, over a long time in this Parliament, played a very significant role in the work of the coalmining industry.

Tonight we are talking about a great part of the Queensland coalmining industry. It is an industry that employs over 20,000 people directly and approximately 60,000 people indirectly. As has been mentioned by the Premier, it is an industry that earns export income of more than \$5 billion a year, yet some members in this Chamber tonight are trying to use this dispute as a political football. Quite honestly, they stand condemned.

People say that one should not hark back to the good old times, but we have seen industrial relations in this State and in this nation go from bad to worse. I have to say that it is my belief that industrial relations have hit an all-time low because of the deliberate actions of conservative Governments.

The member for Gregory mentioned Pat Mackie. In 1964, the Mount Isa mineral field was in chaos. Again, I am not standing here tonight to say who was right and who was wrong. But that mineral field was in total chaos. As a result of that, both sides of industry—the unions and the company—decided that that must never, ever happen again. What they put in place was a system which served that city and that mineral field for about 25 years. We had no industrial disputation. And we had no industrial disputation because the company and the unions sat down and thrashed out their problems. I am proud of my friends who participated in those deliberations, because they provided us with 25 years of industrial peace. All that was broken by the actions of conservative Governments.

Mr Borbidge: You're showing your colours tonight.

Mr McGRADY: I am showing my colours, and I am proud of the colours that I wear. But what I am saying——

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr McGRADY: Heavens! The member for Fitzroy is entitled to take the stand that he took. He will have his day in court. But it is wrong for a motion to come before this Parliament criticising a member for doing what he believes is correct. I believe that Opposition members in this place stand condemned for the way in which they have used this dispute as a political football and the way in which they have inflamed a very, very difficult situation.

Time expired.
