



Speech by

Mr R. QUINN

MEMBER FOR MERRIMAC

Hansard 13 April 2000

**CENSURE OF BEATTIE GOVERNMENT AND MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MINISTER FOR
MAIN ROADS**

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (6.10 p.m.) I rise to second the motion moved by the member for Gregory. In doing so, I think we need to look back at the origins of these types of actions by industrial organisations in Queensland. We had the illegal picket at Gordonstone in central Queensland, the demarcation dispute at Sun Metals in Townsville and the last illegal rail strike in February this year. On each of these occasions they were illegal strikes and, at the end of the day, no penalty whatsoever was visited upon the unions.

So over a period of time the unions have learnt they have got the measure of this Government. They can call a wildcat strike; they expect no punishment—nothing to be visited upon them whatsoever. So naturally when it comes to pressing their claims again, as they did last night, they pull another wildcat strike. What does the Government do? Nothing at all! All the tough talk, but no action. The first thing the Premier does is call a press conference. What does he say? "I am disappointed. I am angry." But that is as far as it goes. The unions are shaking in their boots! What does the Transport Minister say? He says, "I am concerned." Again, the unions are shaking in their boots. Not a penalty on the horizon! Not a penalty anywhere!

So the unions know they have got this Government over a barrel. Any time they want to press their claim all they do is call a wildcat strike. What does the Government do? It steals away quietly in the night to try to do some sort of back-room deal that appeases the unions and enables it to come out the next morning and say, "We have solved the issue." But it does not address the principle involved. That is, Government members cannot prevent the wildcat strikes because they really have no idea how to manage industrial relations in this State.

The member for Clayfield says that significant penalties can be imposed on wildcat strikers, but tonight on the news we had the Premier admitting, "No, we cannot do anything at all." If he is right, what we have in this State is a series of industrial laws which are neutered, which have no penalties at all for any union—any industrial organisation—that wants to take the law into its own hands. If that is true, what do we have? We have the worst industrial relations laws in this country. They are not the best, as the Premier says, they are the worst industrial laws because they promote—encourage—illegal activity at the expense of the Queensland economy and hundreds of thousands of commuters in this State. That is the sort of industrial relations regime we have in this State, if the Premier is right—and we on this side contend he is not right. If the member for Clayfield is right and significant penalties can be imposed on unions, then why is action not being taken? Why is action not being taken to prevent these wildcat strikes? Either way it is the Government that is in the gun barrel here. Either the Government has useless industrial relations laws or it itself is useless. Members can take their pick.

These wildcat strikes are costing the Queensland economy millions of dollars. They are tarnishing our reputation. They are putting massive numbers of people all over the State to inconvenience which they really should not be subjected to. All over the State the ramifications are quite clear for those who want to see them. We have had three rail strikes in the past decade, all of them under Labor Governments. So members opposite should tell me whose industrial relations laws are not working. Who has the worst industrial relations laws? The coalition when we were here or the Labor Party? I think the jury would take five minutes to make up its mind on that question. They would

go into the jury room and come straight back out again. Where does the fault lie? With the Labor Government again!

The remedy is quite clear. If there are penalties involved within the IR legislation, enforce the law; prevent these wildcat strikes from going ahead. If the Premier is right and there are no penalties, do something about it. Do not call a press conference. Do not sit there wringing your hands saying, "I am concerned. I am angry. I am disappointed." From their actions now, I can see the trade union blokes in town laughing at members opposite. They are laughing at the Premier calling a press conference, taking off his glasses and saying, "I am concerned." They can see how much concern there is.

Time expired.
