



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 18 May 2000

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Industrial Relations

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.41 p.m.), by leave: The lines have already been marked out for one of the major battles at the next State election. The battleground will be industrial relations. The coalition parties in this State chose 1 May, Labour Day, to reveal that they are planning to dismantle Queensland's State-based industrial relations system.

The member for Clayfield launched his attack on the workers of Queensland on the very day that celebrates the gains made by working men and women. The member for Clayfield wants to hand back State powers to the Federal Government. The member for Clayfield, that wolf in Reith's clothing, wants to tear down our Industrial Relations Commission, which is independent, fair and balanced. He wants a return to the system that gave us drawn-out disputes, like those we saw on the waterfront and at Gordonstone—the system that gave us dogs and balaclavas. He wants to see workplaces used as political battlegrounds. I also suspect that, given half a chance, the member for Clayfield would repeal the provision for three months' probation, which allows both employer and employee a trial period for the employment. I challenge the member today to spell out whether he supports this legislative three-month probation period—the only legislative period in Australia.

I make this promise to the people of Queensland: my Government and I will fight all the way to the High Court, if necessary, to keep Queensland's State-based system. This system has served Queensland well for around 100 years. There is no reason to change it. There is no reason for the States to give over their responsibility and powers to the Commonwealth. The member for Clayfield wants to change our successful system to conform with his narrow, ideological view of the world. That is his only imperative.

In contrast, my Government seeks industrial harmony through an independent system that has been shown to work. Among our many achievements are these: an independent commission that works, restored WorkCover, improved superannuation for the public sector, and positions on Government boards and task forces for employers and union officials—the tripartite arrangement which the Minister, Paul Braddy, has restored. Under the previous Government, they pulled that away. Industrial relations needs a tripartite approach. My Government is also keen to work with unions to develop new jobs for Queenslanders in smart industries like biotechnology and information technology in the same way that we work with employers.

This is a very serious issue for Queenslanders. It will be an issue in the next State election. Let the sides on this be very clear: the alternative Government, the Opposition, with their spokesman, Santo Santoro, wants to tear out the heart of the State-based industrial relations system and give it to the Commonwealth. My Government will fight to keep the Queensland industrial system for Queenslanders.
