



Speech by

VAUGHAN JOHNSON

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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NATIVE TITLE RESOLUTION BILL

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (12.18 p.m.): It is somewhat coincidental that I should rise to speak to the Native Title Resolution Bill immediately following the contribution of the member for Mount Isa, the Minister for Mines and Energy, the Honourable Tony McGrady. All honourable members are aware that Mr McGrady represents an electorate similar to mine in area, disadvantage and remoteness. However, it boasts perhaps the greatest mineral deposit in Australia, if not the world.

We have seen what has happened in the mining industry over the past few years all because of native title. We have seen a complete shutdown. I hope that that word "resolution" is to have some meaning in the legislation under debate, the Native Title Resolution Bill. I have just heard what the Honourable Minister has had to say and the rhetoric—

Mr Foley: A good speech, too.

Mr JOHNSON: I take on board what the Honourable Attorney-General has said. The Minister has made a speech, and I hung on every word he said. But the point I am making is that the Minister has now said that we are going to see some action, that the rhetoric is over and the action is going to start. I am hanging on that.

I have had two deputations with the Honourable the Premier and I have had one with the Premier and the Minister for Mines and Energy in relation to the small opal mining areas and also the gem mining industry within my electorate. Three parts of western Queensland in my electorate—the Winton Shire, the Barcoo Shire and the Quilpie shire, as well as the Boulia Shire and the Paroo Shire—rely a lot on the small opal mining industry. The Minister knows full well the importance of the opal mining industry to regional western Queensland and of its similarities with the gem mining industry around Emerald, which is in the eastern end of my electorate. We know how the procrastination that has occurred over a long period has hindered those two small mining industries.

In relation to the gem mining industry I cannot see any differentiation at all between the small miners and the big multinational miners. Those people all have to live by the same set of rules; they have to go through the same due and proper process. Again, it comes down to one thing: if this is a let-down, the Socialist Left faction in this State has to wear total responsibility for it. I say to Steve Bredhauer, Anna Bligh and Judy Spence in this Queensland Cabinet—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! If the member is going to refer to those Ministers, he will refer to them by their correct titles.

Mr JOHNSON: It is the Honourable Minister for Transport, the Honourable Minister for Families and the Honourable Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Fair Trading, as well as the wife of the Minister for Transport, the Socialist Left senator for Queensland, the honourable Jan McLucas—who is a member of the Socialist Left faction and who has determined, along with her Labor colleagues in the Senate, the outcome of this legislation—and their colleagues in the Socialist Left who are responsible for the business and social agenda programs in this State today.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: That is right, it is the partnership.

If we see a further shutdown of the mining industry in this State, the Socialist Left and the other members of the Labor Government can take full responsibility for it. I am going to give this legislation the benefit of the doubt. I am going to be watching very, very closely to see how many of those 1,189 exploration permits are going to be processed in the near future.

Mr Braddy: Are you going to give it the benefit of the doubt and vote for it?

Mr JOHNSON: No, I am going to vote with the coalition. I will give it the benefit of the doubt afterwards and we will see what happens.

Mr Braddy interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: The Minister for Industrial Relations should listen for one half of one minute. He is laughing. I am a bit surprised that a man of his intellect and his ability is laughing at something that has caused so much heartache and concern to so many people for a long period. We are not talking about just the small miners here, we are not just talking about the opal mining industry or the gem mining industry; we are talking about the multinationals who have shut down, who have gone offshore, because Labor Governments have procrastinated over the issue of native title.

We have heard here today that small mining is not high-impact exploration. The low-impact exploration miners have to get informed consent and then have compensation claims brought against them. It is the same situation with high-impact exploration; they can claim extreme concessions, but have no right of veto. This is applicable to both sides of the industry—the big miners and the small miners.

In western Queensland we see people such as James Evert, one of the leaders in the opal mining industry of western Queensland, who followed his late father, Vince Evert, into that industry. We see the great work that people such as Vince Evert and the late Des Burton did in bringing to reality the opal mining industry of western Queensland. Many other great families out there—private individuals—have not only given credence to this industry in the west but have given some purpose and another form of income to some of those western communities that have suffered because of low commodity prices and ongoing drought over the past 10, 15 or 20 years. Although the small mining industry has been shut down, those people put gem mining in Australia on the international stage and they sell their products not just in Australia, Asia and America, but all over the world, in places such as Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States and Japan. They are up amongst the big players in the world. They have put this country on the map.

I say to the Minister for Mines and Energy and to the Premier that when people such as Bruce Collins, the Mayor of Winton Shire, who is a no-holds barred operator, come to Brisbane to try to get some purpose and determination for those people in the opal and gem mining industries, they certainly want some results. I say to those on the other side of the House that we cannot have any more impediments put in the path of those mining companies, whether they be the big players or the small players.

I know that the Aboriginals have an integral and very important part to play in this State. However, we are one people, one State, one nation, trying to pursue a common cause together as we go into the 21st century. If this legislation that we are debating here today is not going to resolve the situation before Christmas, the backlog of claims will grow and some of these EPs, mining leases and mining claims are going to be doomed to failure. I hope and pray that the industry is not doomed to failure.

I urge everybody on the Government side of the House today to make absolutely certain that they work beyond all limits to make sure that those claims and EPs are processed so that our gem mining industries and our big mining operations can get back into full swing so that, as the member for Burnett said here today, we can take full advantage of the potential flow-on benefits and gains from these great industries of which Queensland has been proud and about which we have been boasting for so long on the international stage.
