



Speech by

JEFF SEENEY

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Hansard 2 May 2001

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (4.30 p.m.): I have listened with interest to the debate this afternoon. Because of the way this amendment was introduced into the parliament and because I had some other commitments I was not able to be here to debate the amendment. But I feel that I have to rise this afternoon to support the amendment that has been moved by the Leader of the Opposition to have this lie on the table for four weeks to allow the people of Queensland to look at what is being proposed—four weeks for all of the interest groups to have the consultation that is—

Mr REEVES: I rise to a point of order. I would like some clarification about standing order 141 in relation to tedious repetition. We have heard this in the second reading speech, we have heard it in Committee and now we are hearing it in this motion.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the member.

Mr REEVES: Standing order 141 deals with repetition by a member or other members of the same points. That is all we heard in the second reading, in Committee and now at this stage of the debate. There has been repetition by every single speaker from the opposition.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will watch that matter. I see some valid points in what the member is saying, but I will watch it and see whether we have complete repetition or just a few words being repeated.

Mr SEENEY: That foolish point of order from the honourable member is so typical of the approach being taken by this government to this whole issue.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members are allowed to take points of order. That is part of the democratic processes of this place.

Mr SEENEY: I accept that they are able to make points of order. I am making a comment on the relevance of the point of order as part of this debate. As I was saying—

Mr REEVES: I rise to a point of order. I find the comments about the relevance of my point of order offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Callide will withdraw.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, I withdraw. Since I have been in this place I have seen some pathetic attempts at labelling things as offensive and asking that they be withdrawn. That would have to rate as one of the worst.

Mr REEVES: I rise to a point of order. I find the statements by the member for Callide offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Callide will withdraw. But would he then address the motion. He is not addressing the motion by remarking on what the member for Mansfield is saying. What he is supposed to be doing now is addressing the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition. The member will withdraw and carry on with his contribution.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, with respect, I do not think the comment I made was directed at the member for Mansfield. But if you instruct me to withdraw and for the sake of the House getting on with business I will withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! And continue with your contribution to the amendment.

Mr SEENEY: Yes, I will return to the amendment moved by the member for Toowoomba South. It is an amendment that has a lot of credibility and makes a lot of sense, that is, that this proposition lie on the table of the House for four weeks to allow the people of Queensland time to examine it and to allow me time to examine it. As I said, I had other commitments this afternoon, and I did not have time. It was introduced by the minister after the shadow minister had made his speech. I have listened at a distance to the comments made by the minister about why this amendment was necessary. Might I say that those comments were very brief and lacked any real attempt to explain it. To explain this amendment as some sort of an administrative necessity is a cop-out. And my good friend the minister knew that when he delivered those attempted explanations. The minister knew that that was a very shallow attempt at an explanation. The honourable minister knew that he had been sold a hospital pass and, the good character that he is, was embarrassed by the situation that he was put into. He was embarrassed by the situation that Bill Ludwig, the Premier and the Treasurer put him in by forcing him to amend this piece of legislation, which the shadow minister correctly referred to as goodwill legislation that we were prepared to support, and turn it into something completely different. That is why it should lie on the table for four weeks.

I would like to direct my comments to the new members of parliament. The other reason that it should lie on the table is to give some meaning and integrity to the comments that all of those members made in their maiden speeches—all of those hand on your heart, self-righteous, play the violin speeches. All of that sort of stuff is turned into an enormous mockery. It reduces every one of you. It turns every one of you into a hypocrite if you, so early in the term of this parliament, come in here and vote for something that is a misuse of this place. It is a travesty of democracy to change a piece of legislation to the extent that this one has been changed and force it through with no consultation. None of you has consulted with the people you represent. None of you has had a chance to do that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Callide will address the Chair.

Mr SEENEY: If you support this amendment moved by the member for Toowoomba South you will have the chance to do that. You will have the chance to live up to the fine-sounding rhetoric that one after another you came into this House and poured forth in terms of how you were going to represent the people who elected you, how you were going to do the right thing and how you were proud to be part of this democratic institution. And so you should be. But if you support this today you belittle yourselves, you turn yourselves into cheap hypocrites and you make a complete mockery of the things that you stand for.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Callide! The member will address the Chair and will also return to the amendment. That is my final warning.

Mr SEENEY: The other point that I would like to make about why it is important that this proposition lie on the table for four weeks relates to what the Premier has continually said in this House and the points that he has made, quite correctly I might add, about raising the standards of parliament and the degree of public respect for it. The Premier has made those types of statements in this House and in the media ad infinitum. I think he deserves support from every honourable member in that endeavour, if he was genuine. If it was a genuine endeavour, he deserves support from every member here. This vote this afternoon will determine just how genuine he is in that endeavour. Every morning in question time we see an act in here about improving the standards in parliament, improving the standards of accountability and about consulting with the electorate.

With this amendment we will have a test of how serious this government is about improving those standards. We will have a test this afternoon when we vote on the amendment moved by the member for Toowoomba South of how serious this government is about consultation and about all of those things that the TV cameras love. Isn't it a shame that there is no media coverage for this debate? There is plenty of media coverage for 10 seconds out of question time with people saying, 'You're a fool,' and, 'No, you're a fool.' That is the stuff that gets on television. The vote that we are going to take in a few minutes' time will test the integrity of this government, the integrity of the Premier and Treasurer—the blokes who got their riding instructions this morning from Bill Ludwig. It will test the integrity of all of the new members of parliament who came in here and made wonderful, fine-sounding speeches with violins and all the rest of it. But there will not be anyone in the gallery, there will not be any television cameras; the people at home in their lounge rooms tonight will be treated to a 10-second grab from question time this morning. The real test of this government will be in a few minutes time. That test will illustrate to the people who follow the democratic processes here just how serious this government is and just how serious the Premier's clown acts—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have been very, very lenient with the member's repetition. He is now repeating himself continually. Unless he has something further to say, I ask him to resume his seat.

Mr SEENEY: I regret that I was not able to be here earlier this afternoon to debate the amendment.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member has already said that.

Mr SEENEY: I am just summarising, Mr Speaker. I regret that I was not able to be here. That I was not able to be here illustrates why this amendment should be agreed to. I urge the committee to support the amendment moved by the member for Toowoomba South. Members will do that if they are interested in preserving their own integrity.
