



Speech by

STEVEN RODGERS

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Hansard 20 June 2001

CSR

Mr RODGERS (Burdekin—ALP) (11.27 p.m.): I was disgusted with recent actions taken by CSR management to lock out workers in sugarmills in the Burdekin. On Friday, 8 June sugarmill workers rejected the company's enterprise bargaining offer but returned to work to allow talks over the enterprise bargaining agreement to continue. The workers were prepared to work normal hours. They had agreed to leave overtime bans in place until negotiations were recommenced.

That afternoon after the workers returned to work, a notice was put on the noticeboards at the mills stating that if the workers turned up for work on Tuesday and would not lift overtime bans CSR would lock them out. CSR locked out its work force on Tuesday, 12 June. This action was totally unnecessary. All the workers wanted was to continue doing their work, getting the mills ready for the crushing, and to allow negotiations on the EBA to continue. The company's action in regard to this lockout was a disgrace and a matter of serious concern for the welfare of the community. It impacts on workers, farmers and haul-out operators, as well as businesspeople in the community, and their families.

One has to wonder if this company had an ulterior motive in locking out its work force, especially when it is negotiating the sale of the sugar division with various interested bidders, including Canegrowers. It is time CSR's senior management started looking after its workers instead of themselves when it comes to wages and conditions. For far too long workers have seen senior management getting substantial pay rises while their increases have been discounted.

Enough is enough. It is time for the workers to be given a fair reward for their hard work. A point CSR should note is that a large percentage of its employees are major shareholders in the company and they have a right to have a say in its operations. All that workers and others in the sugar industry want is a fair deal. I do not think that is much to ask, as the company's profits exceeded over \$500 million. CSR lifted the lockout of workers at 2 p.m. on Monday, 18 June. Workers agreed to lift overtime bans on the proviso that CSR simultaneously end its lockout.

I look forward to a recommencement of talks. CSR senior management will have to review their stand against the workers if a successful outcome is to be reached. I am sure that their decision will be for the benefit of the mill workers in the industry.

Time expired.
