



Speech by

Peter Lawlor

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Hansard Thursday, 30 March 2006

GOLD COAST CITY COUNCIL

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (10.27 am): In recent times various groups and individuals have demanded the sacking of the Gold Coast City Council—I have been in two minds on the issue—and various allegations have been the subject of a CMC inquiry. However, recently I have been presented with the best reason for the sacking of the council—that is, the absolute contempt the council has shown for its 3,500 workers in enterprise bargaining negotiations. It has not negotiated in good faith, and union officials representing the workers have been met with a brick wall. Obviously, the council negotiators have delayed and sandbagged until the introduction of the Howard IR legislation, which became effective on Monday—the Americanisation of the Australian workforce.

Unions offered the council a simple option to transfer the contents of the awards into an agreement that would comply with the legislation. The council is not interested and intends to reduce and remove allowances and conditions that have been fought for and won over decades. The message to those loyal workers will be: if you don't like it, leave. Australian workers will be able to see how they will be treated under the new WorkChoices legislation by simply watching how the Gold Coast City Council treats its workers. It will not be pretty.

Councillors, many of whom are friends of mine, should demand a report from their CEO and other negotiators as to why conditions and allowances will be reduced or removed. It is ironic that recently the CEO and departmental heads were granted a pay rise of about \$50,000 a year. That is more than most of the workers that the council has declared war on earn in a year. There was no drama or delay with that. Councillors should not accept the sanitised and self-serving explanation offered by the Gold Coast City Council officers. They should seek the views of the union officials as to how the negotiations were progressed or, more appropriately, were not progressed by the council.

The council should be sacked for the despicable way it has treated its workers and the fact that there are two rules: one for the council management and one for council workers. Nothing demonstrates the dysfunction of this council more than the way it treats its workers. There will be no tears shed should the council get what it rightly deserves—the sack.

Time expired.