



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Wednesday, 4 August 2010

MOTION: SALE OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (6.02 pm): I oppose the motion before the House. By calling on the members of the Commonwealth parliament to intervene in the sovereign affairs of Queensland, this motion, if passed, would necessarily diminish all of us and the Queenslanders who put us here in the first place. It draws the necessary inference that those proposing this motion have no faith in this parliament and no relevance in its proceedings.

It is for Queenslanders to make decisions about Queensland. If members of this place genuinely believe in a federation, and the authority and integrity of this state parliament, then this is the democratic chamber, this is the democratic body, that we should all respect as having the power to make democratic decisions for Queenslanders—whether as individual members of parliament we ultimately agree with those collective decisions or not. It was a decision of this parliament, by passing authorising legislation, that authorised the government's actions.

The framers of our Constitution, including very distinguished Queenslanders, settled upon a federal model of governance for our nation for very good and sound reasons—as sound and as valid today as they were more than a century ago when our federal Constitution was given life by our nation, including Queenslanders. We would do a great disservice to ourselves and irrevocably diminish ourselves as state MPs, our state's democratic institutions and our state as a whole—as well as those Queenslanders who believe in a federal system of government—if we were to support this motion.

Others who have spoken in this debate tonight have spoken in detail about the tough decisions made by the Bligh government to renew Queensland—decisions the government needed to take in the best interests of all Queenslanders, decisions which were made in this chamber by Queenslanders, for Queenslanders. Labor believes in the dignity of work, and laws made in this place continue to support working Queenslanders and working families across the state.

The way Labor governments have delivered dignity at work is through fair workplace laws and arrangements. That is why we will provide award based workers employed with Forestry Plantations Queensland with three years of employment security as part of the conditions of sale. We are also negotiating similar protections for employees in the Port of Queensland, Queensland Motorways Ltd and QRNational. These are protections made by and for Queenslanders. But, above all, it is through fair and just workplace laws that Queenslanders—Australians—are provided with fairness and dignity at work.

If motions like this are moved in this place then members like the member for Gladstone and those who might support her should be calling on this parliament to stop the return of Work Choices, because it will be workers in places like Gladstone and other places throughout Queensland who will be forever harmed and damaged by Work Choices. Let us look at what Tony Abbott—the person called on to do something and intervene in Queensland affairs—said about Work Choices. On 19 March 2008 he stated—

The Howard Government's industrial legislation, it was good for wages, it was good for jobs, and it was good for workers. And let's never forget that.

In the House of Representatives on 13 August 2009 he stated—

Let me begin my contribution to this debate by reminding members that workplace reform was one of the greatest achievements of the Howard government.

On 12 February 2010 in a speech to the Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry—just this year; just a few months ago—he stated—

You know, at four elections running we had a mandate to take the unfair dismissal monkey off the back of small business and we will once more seek that mandate ... At four elections running we had a mandate to introduce statutory non-union contracts and we will seek to renew that mandate.

That is what he said a few months ago—we will seek to renew that mandate. The grand-daddy of them all is what he wrote in *Battlelines*. On page 87 he stated—

WorkChoices was a political mistake, but it may not have been an economic one.

We know it is true. We know it is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the gospel truth according to Tony Abbott because he wrote it down. He said publicly, 'You can't believe what I say but if I read something out it is true.' He wrote that a year ago. He wrote it when he never thought he would be the leader of the federal Liberal Party, when he never thought he would be the alternative Prime Minister. He wrote it down so we know it is true.

In conclusion, if members of this House call on Tony Abbott to intervene on this issue, they had better be ready for him to intervene on all sorts of matters affecting our state, including workplace laws, in future, that will damage and harm Queensland families. If members of this Queensland parliament support motions like this, they will forever condemn themselves to impotence and irrelevance as members of the state legislature.

Labor opposes Work Choices. We always have. We always will. We do not have to put a three-year time limit on it. Three, 13, 33 years—we will always oppose Work Choices. We stand for dignity at work because dignity at work means dignity in life. Dignity at work is the bedrock of happy families and productive communities. Dignity at work is what Labor has always stood for and what we will always stand for in the future. This motion is wrong, it is wrongheaded and it must be opposed.