




Speech By  
**Hon. Campbell Newman**

**MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE**

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**INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATIONS) AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (5.27 pm): This evening I rise to speak in support of the Industrial Relations (Transparency and Accountability of Industrial Organisations) and Other Acts Amendment Bill. I do not intend to speak for too long, but the things I say will clearly summarise the position that both myself and the government take in relation to this bill. Let me start by saying that I am an enthusiastic supporter of unions—100 per cent—and I am an enthusiastic and wholehearted supporter of people's right to join a union. I am an enthusiastic and unequivocal supporter of people's right, if they choose to do all that, to be involved in collective bargaining for the purpose of getting the best deal. I say that because I have not only been a politician but I have also been a public servant in the Defence Force and I have also been in business. I have seen good things and bad things happen in business and I have seen the need for people to stand up and be counted as a group against—sometimes—poor management, inconsiderate management and incompetent management. People need to have that balancing opportunity in the workplace. I also believe that the unions have done many great things over the years. Many of the great terms and conditions and social reforms that we have seen over the 100 years or so since Federation have been achieved in the workplace through industrial organisations, and I particularly acknowledge the unions.

It is no secret that I have had a very good relationship with a union leader over the years, former union heavyweight Mr Hughie Williams from the Transport Workers Union. I spoke at the 100th anniversary of the TWU at its celebrations in Musgrave Park. I also spoke alongside Anna Bligh when I was Lord Mayor at the launch of Hughie Williams's autobiography at Brisbane City Hall. Again, I acknowledge the battle and the contribution in his life that he had made to the cause of working people against exploitation in the workplace. So I think I have perhaps made the case for why I support unions and their role.

But let me now talk about why this bill is being introduced. I am afraid that over the last couple of years in this country we have seen that the union leadership of many unions is rotten to the core. They misuse their members' money by running causes, by running campaigns that, if they were put to a vote of their members, would not be supported. All we are saying in terms of those provisions is for the membership to have their say—a simple majority vote, of people being able to give the nod to the union leadership. If that is the case, I hope that people will. If there is a cause that the union leadership wishes to put to the membership that should be fought—a workplace health and safety issue or a state or federal political issue—my view is go for your life, but just make sure you get an authority before you spend hundreds of thousands, perhaps even millions of dollars of the rank-and-file members' funds before you go and undertake that expenditure. What is so unreasonable about that?

I heard the Leader of the Opposition talking about it being unconstitutional and 'We are going to have a High Court challenge,' says Mr Battams and company. What are they afraid of?

**Mr Pitt** interjected.

**Mr NEWMAN:** What is the member for Mulgrave, who is interjecting, afraid of? I know. It is about entrenching the status quo. Sadly, unions have been less and less accountable and more and more secretive. What those members opposite do not like, what Mr Battams does not like, is the spotlight of accountability coming onto them. They do not like it, because they are absolutely beholden and tied to the hip of the union movement.

**Mr Bleijie:** Their preselections depend on it.

**Mr NEWMAN:** I take that interjection from the Attorney-General. Their preselections absolutely rely on it—do they not, Mr Deputy Speaker?

Let me move to some other things that will be referred to this evening, such as the issue of expenditure in the day-to-day running of unions and industrial organisations. We believe that organisations should be totally open and accountable. People in Queensland can see my expenses. There is an RTI process and these days we go to great lengths to be open about what the government is doing and the money we are spending. But why not unions? There are many thousands of people who are members of different unions.

**Ms Palaszczuk** interjected.

**Mr NEWMAN:** I will take the interjection. If I am a nurse working at the RBH today, what hope do I ever have of knowing how the union leadership is spending my money? How do I know if Beth Mohle is spending my money properly? How do I know if Beth Mohle is giving me value for money? That is why this bill will, by the time it is passed, contain provisions to ensure that union leaders must make available all their expenditure on credit cards and on Cabcharge. We need to know what they are spending their money on and, more importantly, their members need to know what their money is being spent on.

We know what has happened in the Health Services Union. Very clearly, it is totally and utterly rotten to the core. If there are smoke and flames coming from that one, what is going on in this neck of the woods? We know that there have been long-time union leaders in this state who have been there year after year. Some of them have been there for decade after decade.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr NEWMAN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek your protection against these frightful interjections! They interject, because I start to really get to the point. As I said, right now, today, union members—hardworking men and women who are doing it tough—have to fork out to pay their contributions, yet there are people we know in the union movement in Queensland who are living high on the hog. They are going to conferences and conventions. They are sitting up at the front of the plane. So much for the workers they have left behind in their fluoro vests sitting down at the back of the plane. That is right: the CFMEU leadership is sitting up at the front of the plane. When I was Lord Mayor I used to go interstate for various reasons. As I walked down into economy—to row 13, or 15, or whatever—quite often I would notice the people wearing their CFMEU and AWU logos and the AMWU people and the BLF people sitting up there in business class at the front of the plane. I wonder if the hardworking men and women know that their leadership is having a great time—spending up big on Cabcharge, going out to lunches with Labor politicians and wheeling and dealing, taking those businessclass trips, perhaps even going on overseas junkets to International Labour Organization get-togethers. They can continue to do that—they can continue to have their snouts in the trough, they can continue to spend union members' money on buying houses for people to live in in Sydney in the case of the ETU—but do you know what? They are going to tell their members. That is what this bill is all about. They can do all of these things. That is why this constitutional stuff is a load of hogwash and hot air from those people. The trouble is that they do not like it because they do not want to be accountable. They do not want to be accountable to their card-carrying members.

This is much needed, long overdue reform. It allows unions to effectively lobby for their members' interests. I made it very clear that I back that totally 100 per cent. I have never been afraid of taking on the unions or having them take the fight to me. I did that from March-April 2011 to March 2012 in the electorate of Ashgrove and no doubt I will do that again. That is fine. But what they should be doing is being accountable. It is about time that spotlight of accountability and scrutiny came onto unions—that they were accountable for the money they spent on their campaigns but, more importantly for me, the money they spent on travel, on accommodation, on their personal expenses. It is about time the members had a say and knew what was going on. That is what this bill is all about. Any huffing and puffing from those opposite this evening demonstrates that they have learned absolutely nothing from the events of March last year. This is a great reform and it needs to be supported.