




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Record of Proceedings, 2 December 2015

SUGAR INDUSTRY (REAL CHOICE IN MARKETING) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.35 pm): I am very pleased to make a contribution this evening on the Sugar Industry (Real Choice in Marketing) Amendment Bill 2015. I speak in opposition to the bill. This morning in the *Courier-Mail* Steven Wardill said that this week ‘always shaped as a weird week in state politics’. Yet the support of the LNP for the broad thrust of this legislation, which effectively will reregulate parts of the sugar industry, is beyond weird. It betrays the whole economic legacy of the Liberal Party. It betrays the actions of John Howard and Peter Costello—people that the members on the other side of the House always hold up as their heroes, always hold up as their champions. It betrays their legacy and, most weirdly of all, it puts the LNP offside with business.

I respect the views of the members of the Katter party in introducing this legislation. I do not agree with those views but I respect them. The reason I respect them is that the member for Mount Isa and the member for Dalrymple are at least consistent in the economic views that they hold. They are consistent when they come into this parliament, and I respect them for it. They are consistent in their overall economic approach. I do not agree with parts of that approach, but at least they have the courage of their convictions and they hold to their convictions in this parliament—which is what members of parliament are expected to do. It is the approach of those city based Liberals—none of whom are on the speaking list for this bill—who in the past have been the champions of free markets and open trade arrangements, which are the most puzzling.

Mrs Frecklington: We have two hours.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection. The member for Nanango says that we have only two hours. Where is the member for Clayfield? He is in the House. I look forward to hearing from the member for Clayfield and the member for Indooroopilly and the member for Caloundra and the member for Surfers Paradise. I look forward to them speaking. I will tell you why every Queenslanders has an interest.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DICK: I will tell you why they have an interest shortly. They are selling out their main supporters for a measure which will turn back the clock to a world which no longer exists. The world in which Australia sheltered behind tariff laws is over, and there was bipartisan support for that—that is, until the LNP saw that they could get some short-term political advantage out of turning their backs on their own economic legacy. About 95 per cent of Australia’s sugar industry is in Queensland, and it is an industry which was tightly regulated by governments for many years.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DICK: But the sugar reform package in 2004, put together by both the federal coalition government of John Howard and the state Labor government of Peter Beattie, gave \$444 million to the sugar industry to restructure itself and eventually open itself to the free market. That is why every

member in this House has a right to speak on this bill, because I know the taxpayers of Woodridge contributed \$444 million. I hear the cries from the members opposite that somehow the taxpayers who contributed quite properly to the restructuring of an industry should not be heard, that somehow city based people, city based electors and city based representatives should not be heard.

I am happy to be heard for the people of Woodridge, the battlers, many of whom are on the average weekly wage or less, who contributed out of their own pocket to restructure the sugar industry because it was the right thing to do for the industry, for the state and for the nation. But we will not hear the city based Liberals stand up for what they believe in. They are deeply compromised and they have sold themselves out to the dead hand of the National Party yet again. The dead hand of the National Party from 1957 to 1989 that held this state back is back in spades running the show.

For the years before 2004 the government acquired the entire sugar crop grown in Queensland and marketed it as a block through Queensland Sugar, a government body. The changes foreshadowed in 2004 meant that Queensland Sugar became a grower owned body and farmers could use that body to market their crop, even if that crop was processed through a mill owned by large companies, many of them owned by companies based outside of Australia. Not surprisingly, overseas companies entered the Australian sugar-milling market as the main company which used to process sugar, CSR, retreated to the US and concentrated on other parts of its business.

There was never any secret about the intentions of companies like Wilmar, the China Oil and Food Company, or the Thailand owned Mitr Phol Sugar and why they came to Australia to invest. All of those companies wanted a steady and constant supply of the world's best sugar grown in Queensland, firstly, for their own value-adding operations back in their home country or, secondly, to sell around the world because it is the best, as they all have sources of raw sugar from growing operations in countries other than Australia. These are large companies which have invested in our state and deserve to be supported by the right structure in our state which will benefit growers, our state and our nation.

As I have said, I can understand and respect the views of the member for Mount Isa and the member for Dalrymple on this matter even though I do not agree with them. What I find staggering is the way that members on the other side such as the member for Clayfield, the member for Indooroopilly and the member for Surfers Paradise have changed from being economic rationalists to agrarian socialists. Someone should tell them what John Howard and Peter Costello did. The member for Clayfield wants to turn Australia back into a closed shop, not open for business, closed for business, everything regulated, with Australia moving away from the 1980 reforms.

The member for Clayfield last night claimed the economic legacy of Hawke and Keating. Remember that? He cannot even claim Costello and Howard, let alone Hawke and Keating. He said that our government eschews reform and abandons the heritage of its great leaders Hawke and Keating. Yet he is the one abandoning the legacy of Howard and Costello. As the *Australian Financial Review* said this morning of the situation in Queensland, 'This is slightly bizarre because the LNP's protectionist policy stance is at odds with federal Liberal Party policies.'

The member for Clayfield was the champion of free trade in 2012. What did he say in a ministerial statement? He said, 'Two-way trade is vital to the Queensland economy.' In August 2012 he told the House, 'Last month I undertook a trade mission to China, Japan and the United States, which among other things aimed to open discussions between Queensland businesses and potential international partners.' In August 2012 he said, 'The trade mission succeeded in its aim to build on existing relationships with our major trading partners to reinforce the state as an attractive investment decision.'

In November 2013 he was banging away again as the minister for trade, and now the shadow minister for trade: 'growing our exports and attracting foreign investment is vital to that process' of creating jobs. That was the past when the member for Clayfield was economically rational. As Treasurer he understood the need for foreign investment in Queensland and promoted that, but when it all got too tough he went to water because we know about the member for Clayfield. When the going gets tough, the member for Clayfield gets going. He does not have the stomach to put up a rational argument within his party. Maybe that is because he is trawling for the numbers to get the dead hand of the National Party to push him up the leadership scale. He is quite prepared to put his party's perceived electoral interests ahead of the Queensland economic interest.

If this legislation is passed, it will send a terrible signal overseas—a signal that Queensland changes the rules if it does not like what is happening. If ever there were a disincentive to foreign investment, that would be it. What this incident shows is that the Liberal Party of 2015 has gone back to being a Liberal Party of the pre 1980s: surrendering to the National Party. The Liberal Party is the surrender monkeys of the LNP, putting its hands up and surrendering to the National Party.

We saw in the last session of parliament how the member for Mansfield, who in the 1980s was a firm and vigorous opponent of the gerrymander, tried to put in place an electoral system which was a return to the bad old days of the gerrymander, and this is the same thing over and over.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr DICK: I will take the interjection: resorting to slurs and personal invective because that is all they have. They do not have a rational argument. That is all they have. Attack the personality and not the policy because they know fundamentally the policy is flawed. They are trying to take us back to a world that no longer exists. Yet again with the LNP it is, as always, forward to the past.