




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2016

MOTION

Trade Unions

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (6.21 pm): I rise to support the amended motion. When it comes to their choice of subject tonight for this debate, it is the same old broken record. The LNP has nothing else to debate in this House other than a really good dose of union bashing. That is all it is, because the donations that the member for Kawana just read out are all legally paid and declared donations. The problem is that they cannot stand the idea of openness and transparency and that we are part of a fine union movement in this state and we are proud of it. If it were not for the union movement, let me tell those opposite that workers would not have the benefits that they have today, and we are proud of everything that we have delivered on behalf of workers.

Earlier on tonight we heard the member for Nanango stand up for the workers, yet when they were in power the first thing they did was take away their common law rights—an absolute disgrace. Then what did they do? They said to the workers out there, ‘You have nothing to fear.’ Campbell Newman went to the election in 2012 and said to the workers in the public sector, ‘You have nothing to fear.’ What did they do? They proceeded to sack 14,000 public servants—14,000 of them.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Minister, I cannot hear you. We will wait. I call the minister.

Ms GRACE: They come into this House declaring themselves the bastions of the working class. They are not kidding anybody. They are not fooling anyone but themselves. It is a disgrace that we have an ex-industrial relations minister in the Newman government opposite who does not understand the fundamentals of industrial relations or of workers compensation because in the debate tonight—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members! We will wait. I call the minister.

Ms GRACE: In the debate tonight it was clear that there was a lack of understanding in regard to a very significant issue. Once again we see their complete lack of understanding of how industrial relations and bargaining actually works. Their motion also demonstrates a failure to understand how a good Westminster system government should work—of course, they got their degree from the Bjelke-Petersen days, as they had no idea about the separation of powers—admittedly, a concept their side of politics in Queensland has had trouble with over many years.

Their motion refers to the ‘longstanding ministerial powers that protect jobs and prevent significant damage to the Queensland economy’. That depends on how you define ‘longstanding’, because it only came in when they were in government. That is the only time it came in—when they

were in government. Other than that, the provision that a minister has the power to unilaterally terminate an industrial agreement is what they gave themselves. In effect, what this provision did was set the minister up as both employer and judge on the same matter. That is what it did. The industrial relations system in this state, following the hostile takeover of the Howard government of industrial relations, only covers the public sector and local government. They gave themselves the power to be both judge and jury. That completely and utterly withdraws the independence of the Industrial Relations Commission. This side of the House will restore the independence of the Industrial Relations Commission. That is what we went to the people with, to restore fairness, balance and independence of the commission where they can take anything into consideration in coming to their decision.

Mr Bleijie: You took the Local Government Association to court.

Ms GRACE: I hear the member for Kawana rattling on. What I suggest he does is listen a bit because tonight he moved the wrong amendment to the bill we just passed. He opposed the wrong clause. I think the member for Kawana should sit and listen because there was an error made tonight. There was a complete misunderstanding of industrial relations in this state because they opposed clause 5 instead of clause 31. That is what we are getting from the member opposite, who does not even know anything in regard to industrial relations.

The McGowan review was a fundamental review of industrial relations in this state. It confirmed the essence of collective bargaining and that the responsibility for resolving disputes is in the hands of the Industrial Relations Commission, which is where it should lie, not in the hands of the minister. The shadow minister has no understanding because in estimates he questioned the deputy director-general ad nauseam about how to interpret sections 423 and 424. He had been briefed and he still did not understand.

(Time expired)