



Speech By  
**Linus Power**


**MEMBER FOR LOGAN**

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## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **Shearers Strike**

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (1.01 am): Recently I put a question to the Premier about tourism in Western Queensland. It was not just an academic question; I had for months planned to take my family to Barcaldine for the 125th anniversary of the great shearers strike. I wanted them to experience Barcaldine and especially the strong country Labor tradition on our farms and in our country towns. Being the grandson of a sheep farmer I know well how great people of values keep the spirit of Eureka and Barcaldine alive throughout regional areas of Australia.

Before the strike of 1891 the squatters gathered together to smash fair shearing rates and fulfil their goal of killing off the growing union movement in the Queensland colony. Simply put, they, with the power of the police, the military and the conservatives in this parliament, locked up on trumped-up charges 13 Queensland citizens exercising their rights to collectively organise a union—in this case the Australian Workers' Union. Workers recognised that they must organise politically and just a few years later one of the strike organisers was elected to this parliament for the seat that contains Barcaldine.

The weekend was a fantastic fun-filled weekend put on by the Barcaldine events committee and the Barcaldine Shire Council and I was happy to be warmly welcomed by the member for Gregory and his wife and two daughters. The events included the art exhibition 'The Strike', Graeme Connors in concert at the Australian Workers Heritage Centre, the Shearers' Strike story, the Tree of Knowledge Cup Race Meeting, Revfest, goat racing and, of course, the May Day march, which, as it was in 1991, was led by Bob Hawke. An important moment for Labor members was the remembrance service for Kev O'Leary, a Labor member who served 85 years in the Labor Party. He came each year to meet with an old friend and publican of the Globe Hotel, the legendary Pat Ogden. A few tears were shed, but Wayne Swan reminded us that living a life with a commitment to politics is an honourable life worth living.

Between the fun there was a serious historical message that we need to struggle for our rights and liberties against the power of vested interests and monied elites. This is the Australian project. Bob Gleeson of the Australian Workers Heritage Centre was asked what one of the 13 who were locked up would say. He inspired me when he said they would say, 'Stop being complacent, start to empower yourself and understand this is your country and at the end of the day you will be responsible for it.' I give special thanks to Cheryl Thompson and Dave Kerrigan and all those who made me welcome in Barcaldine. As the shearers said, 'freedom without dishonour.'