




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BILL

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (5.38 pm): It is a very hard act to follow the shadow minister when he has so adequately covered this bill, the Industrial Relations Bill, before the House this evening. As members in the House would know, the non-government members believed that, 'after careful deliberation and intense scrutiny', the bill is 'flawed in its construction' and 'damaging in its outcomes' and recommended that the bill be 'returned to the Department for repair, reconstitution and proper consultation'. I rise to speak on another flawed and damaging bill proposed by the Palaszczuk Labor government. It is just another example of the Palaszczuk Labor government's inability to legislate to benefit all Queenslanders and not just their union puppeteers. The genesis for this bill started at the election of 2012. As a senior Labor ex-politician and person of great stature within the party reflected to me the other day—

A government member: Who?

Mr STEVENS: I take the interjection. I certainly do not give up my sources within the Labor Party. He reflected to me that the paucity of talent in relation to the current government members is a direct response to the enormous change in the parliament when the former Bligh government was kicked out. Labor went from 78 members to seven members who could all fit into a Tarago. This then turned around at the 2015 election. The decimated Tarago members of the Labor Party—plus two by then—required a lot of candidates to stand for election in 2015, and I am told it was very hard to find quality candidates for the 2015 parliament. This obviously meant that the union movement had to support the provision of 'quality members' to come forward as potential representatives at the 2015 election. The union members put them forward. As we know, the unions spent literally millions across-the-board and provided thousands of helpers. Bundaberg springs to mind. In some cases they were paid helpers to constantly drive the union message home at the 2015 election.

Guess what? It worked. By a very slim majority, we ended up with a minority Labor government. 'Thank you very much,' government members would be saying to their union masters. If we had union bosses and members all along the balcony here in parliament, they could hang their strings over and jiggle their wooden apparatus to make sure the puppets that they have down here dance in the right direction. The bottom line is that this bill before the House is a direct result of this government owing its present status in this House to their union masters.

Mrs Lauga interjected.

Mr STEVENS: I heard 'true' and I heard—

Mrs LAUGA: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I said 'not true'.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! There is no point of order. I call the member for Mermaid Beach.

Mr STEVENS: What we have as a result in this House today with this Industrial Relations Bill is no more than a front by the union controlled Palaszczuk Labor government to support an increased union presence in the workplace in an attempt to reverse ever-decreasing union membership figures. I think 12 per cent rings a bell. That is what union membership is down to. This means they cannot afford as many expensive lunches or big salaries for senior union operatives. We have seen them famously splashing out cash in brothels, on extravagant lunches and cars and all the other things that go with wonderful union ownership at the senior level that they all aspire to and they dance to in terms of owing their positions in this parliament. That is why this legislation is flawed. Unfortunately, this will negatively impact on not only the state's finances but also Queensland's economic impetus. The biased consultation process from the start is why we have not got an IR bill before the House which any sane parliamentarian who did not have a pecuniary interest in terms of their masters would agree to.

This side of the House has put forward a workable operative in terms of the QIRC—totally independent, as the shadow minister referred to, and providing an excellent opportunity for workplaces to be protected, fair and equitable. Unfortunately, this union dominated consultation process—and who is going to deny that?—came out with 68 recommendations, as I recall, that were heavily biased towards protecting their interests, promoting union membership in the longer term and making it very difficult for workers not to be part of a union. There was no regard whatsoever to the economic imposts or, more importantly, the loss of jobs throughout the state because of this ridiculous bill which we have before the House.

The Palaszczuk Labor government has been yelling and screaming about how wonderful they are at consultation and that consultation forms a big part of their government. We have had almost 100 consultative groups that they have talked to about matters. They have talked about plans to have a plan to have a plan, but where was the consultation when they said, 'We are going to have a holiday on Easter Sunday?' The member for Logan has previously said to me that it is a wonderful thing to respect Easter Sunday. We should have a holiday on Easter Sunday so that he can respect Easter Sunday. If the member for Logan does not want to work on a Sunday and wants to show respect in whichever way he wants, that is fine, but the bottom line is that it is a major economic impost. It is a cost of \$53 million alone, not to mention the productivity costs. As the shadow minister mentioned, it might increase to \$80 million just by the flick of a switch with the minister saying, 'Let's have an extra holiday on Easter Sunday.'

There was no mention of moving the Easter Saturday public holiday. I am not sure of the religious significance of Easter Saturday, and I am a good Christian boy, but Easter Saturday for a long time has been a public holiday. Instead of moving Easter Saturday to Easter Sunday so the member for Logan could pay due respect to his religious beliefs, they said, 'No, we will have an extra public holiday and put it back on business without consulting business.' Is that fair—I ask all members of the House—for no consultation to be undertaken with the community that will be affected by this decision? I would love the minister to explain why she did not consult at any time, in any manner or form with the business community through the Chamber of Commerce & Industry as to why they had to wear this impost. There was no consultation. That, in itself, is hubris from the government. That is just one issue that I felt was an absolute abomination in this piece of legislation. These changes come at a significant cost to business. Most fair-minded Queenslanders would hope to see some kind of consultation with those affected before a major decision was made.

This defective legislation is not directed at supporting hardworking Queenslanders; it is about driving union membership at every opportunity through an industrial regime designed purely to benefit highly paid union executives and the union fraternity. As the shadow minister pointed out, they are now hiding the expenses and the salaries of senior union executives—I hate to use the word 'executives'; 'operatives' would be a better word.

Miss Barton interjected.

Mr STEVENS: I cannot say thugs. I take the interjection from the member for Broadwater. To be honest, in the long term, that will be bad for the union movement because there will be a repeat of what happened with that fellow in Melbourne. What was his name? Was it Craig Williams?

An honourable member: Thomson.

Mr STEVENS: It was Craig Thomson. Craig Williams is a very well known jockey. He is a great jockey, I can assure you. I am sorry, Craig Williams. I meant Craig Thomson.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr STEVENS: He is a great jockey. I am sorry, Craig Williams. There will be a repeat of what happened with Craig Thomson and his like and that nefarious activity that they used union membership money for. The more those opposite hide it through this legislation—and the members on the other side are responsible for hiding these executive salaries and executive expense accounts—the more it will come back and bite them at a later date.

I can understand why they want to hide what their top union operatives are getting in terms of salaries. I can understand why union workers are very upset that hundreds of thousands of dollars are being paid to these union operatives from their pay cheques every week. I can understand why those opposite want to hide that, but in terms of the expenses it will come back to bite you, mark my words. The Palaszczuk government started with jobs, jobs, jobs. They moved to jobs for mates, and now they are putting legislation before this parliament that is simply job destroying.

A very respected member from the Local Government Association—and I will get this name right; it was Mr Greg Hoffman—presented to the committee on the estimated cost. I think the four- or five-year figure, if I remember correctly, was a \$100 million impost on local government. Do members on the other side care about that impost? I will tell members what happened when I asked him whether that would mean higher rates to pay for that—

Mr Power interjected.

Mr STEVENS: It is pretty simple maths, although I know that it has to be very simple for some members on the other side to understand. That \$100 million has to be found from the ratepayers. They pay the taxes that pay the employees—in case the members did not know that. This means that either the rates go up or some people get sacked. The \$100 million must come from somewhere.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): I warn the member for Logan under standing order 253A.

Mr STEVENS: That means the ratepayers of these areas that are affected will have to pay for this extra burden of \$100 million. It is beyond belief that this erroneous bill still has more damage in this union-promoting measure of multi-award classifications, which the LGAQ have rejected completely. Yet again it is being foisted on them by this government that is only interested in one sector in terms of keeping its jobs—that is, the union sector.

When we were talking about how we would pay for these things, a member of the union said, 'It's just like serving coffees on Sunday. You put the cost up 15 per cent and it will pay for it.' Yes, Mr Union Member, that will pay for it, but the fact is that someone has to pay the dollars. Either the ratepayers will pay for it or there will be job losses, and this is from a government that is supposedly promoting jobs. The only jobs they are trying to look after are their own jobs and the jobs of their union mates.

It is almost depressing to relate that this flawed and badly written legislation is unable to get it right in relation to the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 with the touting of people with no legal expertise to be possible adjudicators of Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland matters by moving them to the QIRC. The commissioner's representatives were at those meetings saying that they had not been consulted about the matter. They were just told, 'We're going to move these matters over and they won't have to be people with legal representation.' That is ridiculous, Minister. These are highly technical matters. There may be mates that the minister would like to put on those boards and commissions, but the fact is that the Anti-Discrimination Commission people require at least five years experience to deal with the problems that may arise in that particular area.

This bill is a farcical attempt at governing our great state of Queensland. It highlights the Palaszczuk Labor government's true passion of creating jobs for their union mates and destroying not only our economic hopes but real jobs for everyday Queenslanders not employed by this government.