




Speech By
Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2016

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BILL

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.53 pm): There is good that unions do and have done, but there is much that is bad, illegal and immoral which is done in the name of the hardworking union membership. It is done by union bosses, and that is why the changes that we are seeing here tonight which have been introduced by the minister will be opposed by the LNP.

At the outset let us be clear that this is nothing more than a payoff by the Palaszczuk Labor government to the union movement for the support they gave them during the election campaign and ever since. This is a movement led by career union agitators who no longer truly reflect their membership but come from the ranks of those who manipulate the genuine and legitimate needs of their members for their own self-serving purposes—a union plutocracy concentrating on the privileges of the few over the needs of the many.

Nowhere is this more obvious than with the minister who has introduced the Industrial Relations Bill tonight: a former secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions who was parachuted into a safe seat in 2007; who failed to make any impression in the then Labor government from 2007 to 2012; was consigned to the back ranks of this chamber and not given any chance of advancement or moving forward until 2012—

Mr POWER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Is this personal abuse in any way relevant to the bill?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! There is no point of order. I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr NICHOLLS:—until she lost the seat. When she lost, what sinecure did she then find? A home in the Queensland Nurses' Union, which was notoriously silent on Labor's bungled Health payroll and which sold its members short but which never got up and said, 'Get rid of this slack, lazy Bligh Labor government that either pays people too much, too little, pays dead people and cannot organise a system.' It was a government that never accepted responsibility. The former member for Rockhampton, who put it in place, said, 'It wasn't my fault.' The former member for Lytton, who was the health minister, said, 'It wasn't my fault.' The premier in charge of the lot said it was not her fault. We had a Treasurer who knew nothing about what was going on, and we had taxpayers forking out \$1.2 million for the pleasure of—

Mrs LAUGA: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I have to question what relevance Health has to do with this bill. Surely the member needs to be brought back to the relevance of the discussion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr NICHOLLS: The Queensland Nurses' Union is a union that operates under the auspices of the Queensland industrial relations legislation. We are discussing industrial relations legislation here in Queensland, and the member for Whitsunday wonders what the relevance is. Well, that tells you everything you need to know about the member—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am forced to apologise to my good friend, the member for Whitsunday. I have put words into his mouth and I have attributed to him to the worst of motives, when of course I was referring to the member for Keppel. That says everything we need to know about the member for Keppel.

Returning to my point, the Queensland Nurses' Union sat shamefully silent for a year while nurses were not being paid and refused to take up the cudgels for its members. Who was a member of that union? Who slotted into that sinecure after losing Brisbane Central in 2012? Today's Minister for Industrial Relations, the 'minister for 85 amendments'. How many amendments did we have in the racing bill: 200 or 300? This is the 'minister for not getting her legislation right the first time'. After the change of government to the LNP, the Queensland Nurses' Union never stopped complaining, despite securing a three per cent wage rise within three months of the change of government.

Without any argument they got their deal. They saw their members being paid week in and week out and the system was fixed. They saw hospitals being built like the Sunshine Coast University Hospital—a hospital that the Labor government had not delivered year in and year out—that was delivered six months early and was funded and put in place by the LNP. The LNP government returned birthing services to places like Beaudesert and provided double the patient travel subsidy schemes so that people could get to those services after there being no change for 10 years by the Labor Party. That tells you all you need to know about the bloated union plutocracy: they act in their own best interests and not in the interests of their members.

This is a government that is hopelessly compromised by conflicts of interest between union bosses who those over there rely on for their preselection and the duty to act in the best interests of Queensland. This is truly a government of the unions, by the unions, for the unions. There is no greater evidence of that than the fact that at no time during the minister's introductory speech did she mention the taxpayers of Queensland who will be paying the bill for the services that those taxpayers expect. Will there be better services as a result of this? At no stage did the minister mention the ratepayers of the local governments who will be forced to pay the bill, nor that they will be getting any better services as a result of these changes.

At no stage did this minister mention the unincorporated associations covered by this bill in terms of how this will benefit their business and help them to sell more and better products to their customers. At no stage of this debate did this minister say, 'This will be better for consumers in Queensland.' This bill is all about it being better for the union bosses of Queensland and no-one else.

There was no mention of better government services, no mention of better local government services, no mention of consumer benefits and no mention of what impact it will have on businesses, other than the fact that it will cost them an estimated \$53 million a year. That is the reality of the thought process of this government as it goes about paying back its union paymasters for all of the support, all of the dirty tricks and the \$178,000 that the shoppies poured into the Labor Party in this state this year alone.

Let me talk about the shoppies. I was harking back to some changes and what did I find? I found a new union to challenge the shoppies after a massive wages scandal. There was a 15-month Fairfax media investigation—those opposite cannot blame the media—that revealed how the deals left more than 250,000 workers paid less than the award, the basic wages safety net, and saved big business more than an estimated \$300 million a year. It showed the shoppies in cosy deals with big businesses—I have no truck with big businesses that do not do the right thing—trying to save them \$300 million a year.

One would expect that such a Socialist Left government would not support the shoppies because what do the shoppies do? They oppose gay marriage. The shoppies under Joe de Bruyn were the last bulwark in the labour movement against the left-wing agenda being driven over there. Some \$178,000 they took off them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I will bring you back to the long title of the bill.

Mr NICHOLLS: Of course, there was no mention of the deals done by Bill Shorten and Cleanevent staff, who lost \$400 million under the deal. I particularly want to mention the changes in relation to union accountability. At a time when the federal parliament sees fit to pass measures about increasing union accountability so that we do not see debacles like those of the Craig Thomsons of the world, or F100s and F250s in Western Australia, or hear stories of the Health Services Union—we know that Stephen Conroy was replaced by Kimberley Kitching, who has such a notable record in the Health Services Union; she even sat tests for six union officials—we are seeing the removal of the accountability measures that should be in place to ensure that union members, whom those opposite speak so fondly of, have the right to know how their money is being spent, what political affiliations are

being put in place, what credit cards are being used to pay for and myriad other measures put in place in relation to disclosure of salaries, publication of financial disclosures, remuneration and benefits of officers. This is nothing more than simple union payback—a government of the unions, by the unions, for the unions, led by a former failed union leader. It should be opposed.

(Time expired)