




Speech By
Shane King

MEMBER FOR KALLANGUR

Record of Proceedings, 2 March 2017

MOTION: PALASZCZUK LABOR GOVERNMENT, UNIONS

 **Mr KING** (Kallangur—ALP) (6.16 pm): Another day, another motion from the member for Kawana against workers and their representatives. It is getting tiresome. Just about every time the member for Kawana proposes a motion or speaks in this place it is either to condemn those who represent the workers of Queensland or to character-assassinate members in this place. He appears to me to have very little else to offer.

Who are the workers in this state? They are police, firemen, nurses, teachers, electricians and ambulance officers, just to name a few. I call the member's constant attack on workers' representative bodies an obsession. For the benefit of the House, I thought I would provide the meaning of the word to illustrate this. The dictionary defines 'obsession' as 'an idea or thought that continually preoccupies or intrudes on a person's mind'—tick. Some synonyms for 'obsession' are: fixation—certainly; passion—maybe not; mania—

Government members: Tick!

Mr KING: Compulsion—

Government members: Tick!

Mr KING: Preoccupation—

Government members: Tick!

Mr KING: Infatuation—

Government members: Tick!

Mr KING: Addiction?

Government members: Tick!

Mr KING: Fetish? Let us not go there! Phobia? Maybe phobia is the particular one that is relevant. Maybe this obsession is fuelled by fearing the voice of working people through the union movement.

I know that those opposite have an unexplainable opposition to unions. For the life of me I cannot understand why. Collectivism has been around since records began. As I have said in this place before, when people with a similar interest form a group to have a louder voice of representation to balance the power dynamic between parties, this is collectivism. When a group of like-minded individuals join together, pay a fee to help service their interests, elect a leadership body and have a rank-and-file membership who have a say in making decisions, I would call that body a union or something that seeks to emulate one. At least when workers do it it is called a union. When businesses do it it is called the chamber of commerce or the retail traders association. These groups' representative function is the same as a union, as far as I am concerned. The LNP makes all sorts of unwelcome and vile insinuations about unions but never bothers to look at these organisations that represent business or other groups, even though there is a recent history of one of their own members being accused of corrupt actions in regard to one of these organisations.

The union movement is a collective. The ALP was formed by workers and is certainly a collective. Once again for the record I state: the LNP also meets this criteria. Even though they came much later to the game than unions or the Labor Party, it seems quite hypocritical that those opposite seek to criticise that which they seek to imitate. The one thing that those opposite cannot imitate, however, is the great work the union movement has achieved for working conditions and workers' safety. That is because, in my opinion, they do not care about workers. I think unionism goes back a lot further than we think. I had an opportunity to see a great movie last year and the hero of the movie in my eyes was a great union leader—or union boss, as those opposite would call him. He fought against an oppressive management that treated the workers like slaves and, although this great man tried again and again to get better conditions for his workmates, his attempts fell on deaf ears. Finally in desperation he called his members to down tools and leave their work site. There was not a dry eye in the King house when he did that. Justice was done. That movie was *Exodus: Gods and Kings* and the man in the movie was an artistic interpretation of the biblical person called Moses and I was elated to see him lead what may have been the first industrial action in history against an oppressive boss.

The union movement has done great things and will continue to do so despite the vitriolic rhetoric from those opposite. I will just list a few achievements the union movement has attained for workers: four weeks annual leave, equal pay for women, paid parental leave, personal carers leave, long service leave, paid public holidays, annual leave loading, occupational health and safety laws, superannuation, fair compensation for asbestos sufferers like Bernie Banton. The unions saved us from Work Choices and will help save us from Malcolm Turnbull and One Nation's latest attacks on workers with the ABCC and complacency over Fair Work's decision on penalty rates. It is time for those opposite to tone down the hysteria, the inflammatory language and the hubris they indulge in on a daily basis about the union movement and realise that many Queensland workers are proud trade unionists and have a right to access the services of a union at work.

(Time expired)