




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (7.45 pm): I, too, rise to speak on this bill. As the deputy chair of the Education, Employment and Training Committee, I had a good chance to look through it and I have to say it is a wicked, scrofulous piece of legislation. It is the most naked example yet of the Labor Party having given up on ordinary Queenslanders and now feathering the nests of their paymasters in the union movement. This is a disgraceful vindication of everything we have always known about the Labor Party, and that is that they are beholden to the trade union movement. Here they are actually nakedly legislating for their donors to the disadvantage of the competitors of their donors. I ask members can we—

Mrs Frecklington: It is embarrassing.

Mr LISTER: It is embarrassing. I take that interjection from the member for Nanango. I ask members of this House: can they imagine what would happen to a local government councillor if they were to lead the charge for local laws that benefitted their donors to the disadvantage of their electoral competitors? It would not happen; they would be before the CCC. Because we have a unicameral House in Queensland and because the party that holds the Treasury benches can do as it pleases, we have reached this point. It is a low point and I take as wise words and very insightful words those of the Leader of the Opposition when he said that this may be like the renters tax. This is such a wanton and naked attack on the rights and freedoms of people to truly associate as they wish, motivated by the avaricious instincts of the Labor politicians involved and the union movement that supports them.

I heard the member for Rockhampton speaking about the inability of a witness to identify his role. There was something else on that committee that happened. The representative of the Queensland Council of Unions, who undertook to answer on notice a number of questions about the funding arrangements they had, which was how much each union had given and how much they had given to the Labor Party—

Mr Boothman: Affiliation fees.

Mr LISTER:—and affiliation fees; I take the interjection. The representative of the Queensland Council of Unions produced a letter which was basically telling the committee that they are above disclosing such information. Naturally, we work in a political environment where the government controls everything, and nothing could be done about that.

I heard the minister talk about the circumvention of the act by agents. This is nothing to do with looking after the individuals. This is all about restraining the growth of competitors to the Labor affiliated unions or those which channel funds through the Queensland Council of Unions for the electoral purposes of unions; the ones who decide who sits on the Treasury benches in this House when the Labor Party is in power; those who decide who gets a seat and who does not; and those who decide what job, if any, a retiring Labor member, either through defeat or a lack of free selection or some other method, is going to get.

I cannot help but think that Linda Lavarch is a perfect example, a virtuoso example, of somebody who has been looked after subsequent to leaving this House. She led what was nothing more than a sham of an investigation, an inquiry into how the law should be changed. As the member for Kawana, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, there was no consultation.

In fact, there was no consultation at the bill stage with the Red Union Support Hub, the Teachers' Professional Association of Queensland, or the nurses equivalent.

Ms Boyd: They are not a union.

Mr LISTER: I take the interjection from the member for Pine Rivers who says that they are not a union. To me, a union is an organisation that looks after its workers, and I have something to say about that. When I was a pizza delivery boy, my nickname was Dougie and I worked for Silvio's. I found out in my first pay slip—which had been delayed—that I was being charged union fees. I was not told, 'Here you are, please apply and join the union.' I was not thanked for my contribution, I was not given any voting rights. I was merely a cash cow so that a dodgy Labor union could do a deal with a dodgy big employer to sell out their workers. I was on \$7.30 an hour delivering pizzas. I think the haughty suggestions from the Labor members opposite that 'unions look after workers' are just as hollow as the justification for this bill.

I, like the other members on this side of the House, abhor the abuse of people and sexual harassment in workplaces and so forth—we all do. If it is so important, why did the Labor Party devalue and sully that intent, as well as the paid family and domestic violence leave, by lumping it in with this dreadful appalling bill, this disgraceful bill which drenches in shame the government which supports it?

Mr McDonald interjected.

Mr LISTER: It is a smoke screen. I take that interjection from my friend the honourable member for Lockyer. We have heard about democracy in the union movement. The members of the red unions who met outside this place told me that they were leaving the Labor-donating unions, because they were not being listened to. They felt that there had been some sort of deal struck between the union and their employer that would prevent them from representing them fully and without reservation. We heard that unions are not-for-profit. I certainly agree that they are not-for-profit, because every cent that they have they give to the Labor movement.

It is not just the money, of course—union pay the workers who work on members' campaigns. They go out there while being paid by the members of the union. Under the Labor donation laws which excluded Labor, you could have volunteers come and assist on premises and so forth. That is because it suits the Labor Party to enjoy that kind of largesse from union bosses, but they have a price to pay. When the union movement, rigid and unaccountable as it is, decides that it is losing too many members—we have heard the large sums of funds at stake here are going to red unions—something has to be done about it. Beholden to the paymasters and the preselection masters, the overlords of this government, they come in here with this rot. They trot in here with a bill like this which nakedly seeks to disadvantage the opponents of the union movement. This is nothing short of corruption.

I return to chapter 10A and the ludicrous use of this bill to enshrine a power which resides with the federal government. This is because of the obsession that the Labor movement has with destroying those people who wish to work for themselves in a flexible arrangement. Now, I was one of those. I was Dougie the pizza delivery boy. They wanted my money, but they did not want to represent me. When I did turn up at the TWU's headquarters, after not being able to get much sense out of them on the phone, I was told to do something that I cannot repeat in this House. Democracy in the unions means that you have to tow the line. To think that there is true democracy in the union movement is a joke. In reality, if you do not tow the line—depending on which union you are in—you would be ostracised, or if you are in the CFMMEU you might find yourself with concrete boots! So, that is what we are dealing with. For the Labor government to come in here and compare the red unions with their own unions is absolutely obscene.

I was interested in the contribution that His Honour Justice Peter Davis made in his submission—his name has been trotted out a lot. When I talk about the industrial system I am, of course, talking about big business, big unions and big government—not the little guys. I wonder whether to complete this perfectly symmetrical plot, His Honour Justice Peter Davis is the same person who was reported in the *Courier-Mail* for being responsible for making sure that volunteers on election day were fed and watered, according to Mr Peter Russo the member for Toohey. It seems to me that this whole system is rotten. They are happy to roll out the red carpet, then bung up the port holes for a Labor-appointed judge who is assisting in justifying this legislation, but they will not listen to the guys who are out here from the red union standing up for their own rights.