




Speech By
Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (7.28 pm): I could not let this opportunity go by and not speak to the Industrial Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. As this government tends to do, there are some good things in this bill, but the bad things far outweigh those. In fact, some of the things in this bill are just absolutely abhorrent to me—absolutely abhorrent.

I think we can all agree that sexual harassment has no place in the workplace—or anywhere else for that matter. Any provisions that fix up those sorts of issues will be fully supported by me. On gender neutral language, women do not need to have their identity erased. They need respect, to be valued and have equality. Enough of this woke stuff that we see more and more with this government.

The main thrust of this bill is the changes being made to the IR laws. That is the abhorrent part of this bill. The Labor Party go straight back to the old Labor Party playbook. I know I have mentioned this numerous times in the House. They blame everybody else. They instigate a rigged inquiry, they shoot the messenger and then they provide a scapegoat. In this case their rigged inquiry was completely rigged. No-one knew that this change was coming. The submissions were limited to invitation only and, of course, we know who got the invitations: the people who have benefited from this bill. Then we have the people who ran the inquiry: former ALP attorney-general and Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union director, Linda Lavarch, and John Thompson, who was elected as general secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions in 1995. One would think they probably have a vested interest in making sure that theirs are the only representative bodies that can take care of workers' rights.

As I have mentioned previously in the House, I was a union representative—admittedly that was last century. That was over 20 years ago when, people will remember, unions were actually unions. They really were taking care of their members' benefits and doing things to assist their members, unlike the present unions that are more interested in their power base—and they solidify their power base through those opposite. Tonight we have had a conga line of union organisers on the other side of the House stand up and tell us why they do not want to see any competition. They do not want to see their unions lose their membership to people who may actually represent them in a better fashion.

They have come up with all sorts of excuses. They say these associations are linked to the LNP in some way. There might be some people who used to be members of the LNP, but I can tell members that representing the rights of workers is not an exclusive area for the Labor Party. Anybody can do that. Anybody who wants to represent a sector of industry can put their hand up and represent them. If they do a good job they will, of course, attract people to those associations or unions. It is quite clear that the red unions have been doing a far better job than some of the Labor aligned unions. That is why people have been leaving in droves and signing up with these guys. They are signing up with these associations because they do a better job. They are providing a cheaper service to the members and they are not getting involved directly in politics, unlike those Labor aligned unions.

There is no better example of what the government are trying to do here than what has come from the member for Pine Rivers, who said that she would like to see these organisations wiped from existence. This bill is about the Queensland Labor Party and the union movement getting their game

together to support each other. This is how they build their power base. The union movement do favours for members of parliament, they preselect them, they support them financially in their election hopes and then they pick who will be the ministers. In return the government and the ministers reward their union mates with things like Best Practice Industry Conditions that has led the CFMMEU and the ETU to earn far more than they should for the projects that they are on. That money is then kicked back to the Labor Party. We are talking millions and millions of dollars here.

Most of the projects that have BPICs applied to them have far more than 20 per cent; some of them are having 50 per cent, added to them. Look at what has happened to light rail stage 3 on the Gold Coast. It has blown out by \$700 million. Where do members think that \$700 million is going? It is going to be funnelled back in one fashion or another to the Labor Party.

Quite frankly, this government is morally bankrupt. This legislation is like many other pieces of legislation they have put into this House to try to entrench their position in government. They changed the electoral laws with 16 minutes notice. No-one knew that was coming. They just went out and did that. They changed the donation laws to benefit themselves. They made it a completely uneven playing field between supporters of the LNP and the union movement supporting the Labor Party. They did not bother to change anything on that side of it. They do everything they possibly can to rig elections. Now they are rigging the union movement.

Mr Stevens: Rorters!

Mr HART: I will take that interjection from the member for Mermaid Beach. It might be fine for the Labor members to call these unions fake unions, but they are not fake unions. They are trying to do the best they can for their members. The excuses that those opposite use for calling them fake unions are excuses that they have, in fact, put in place themselves. They say they cannot represent their members in the Industrial Relations Commission because they are changing the rules.

Mr Stevens: They've blocked them!

Mr HART: They have blocked them. If, for instance, the Labor Party were being reasonable about this they could have come in here with legislation to improve the situation, to make it a competitive situation in the representative realm as far as unions and associations go, but they have not done that. They have come in here in an attempt to railroad these new associations because their mates are losing membership to these associations and they do not like it.

Mr Millar: Fourteen per cent.

Mr HART: I take that interjection from the member for Gregory. Union membership has sunk to as low as 14 per cent. When I was a union representative it was 40 per cent because we did a good job of representing people. These red unions are doing a great job of representing workers' rights and unfortunately the political wing does not like that. They do not like competition. They do not like anything being on a level playing field. They want to take every advantage they can get. They use this parliament as their own personal plaything. They rig inquiries. They rig the committee system. They rig everything.