




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (7.08 pm): I rise to talk about the Industrial Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. First and foremost I would like to say that we support the sexual harassment workplace protections contained in this bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I apologise for interrupting my colleague. The member for Thuringowa is only just leaving the chamber. He has engaged in conversation, quarrelling across the table. You have asked him to leave immediately and he has only just left the chamber.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lister): The member for Kawana—
Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House will come to order while I am making a ruling. I noted that. The member has left for one hour. I think we can leave it at that. Members are warned generally that when they are required to leave the chamber under 253 they do so quickly and without conversation. Member for Toowoomba North, please continue.

Mr WATTS: I want to be very clear that I support the sexual harassment protections that are contained within the Industrial Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. That said, a lot of the rest of the bill I oppose. I want to try to take people back in history. Imagine it is the 1800s and a group of people feel that they do not have decent representation, that their skills are being abused and that there is someone with monopolistic power over them, forcing them to do things they do not want to do but for fear that they would not be able to feed their families. Imagine that monopoly controlling their lives and them coming together as a group of individuals and saying, 'If we all back each other and we stick together, we should be able to get a better outcome.' Imagine if this House made a rule that they were not allowed to come together as a group of individuals to seek their own representation.

Ms Boyd interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Pine Rivers is warned.

Mr WATTS: Imagine if this House put a veto in place that said, 'If there's another group that you don't want to be a member of that says they promise they'll represent you if you pay them more money than the one you choose, you can only join that organisation.' Imagine coming into this House in the 1800s, as workers are out there standing against the monopolistic control of those who were trying to tell people what to do, starving them, not giving them what their families need to survive and abusing their labour. Imagine if this House said, 'No, you can't choose your own representation. Thou shalt have the representation we dictate.' Imagine that situation and imagine what should happen in this House when that legislation comes forward. When that legislation comes forward, this House should respect the rights of individual Queenslanders to choose their own association and their own representation for their own interests and it should protect them. That is what this House should do. Unfortunately, I do not see that in this bill. What I see in this bill is a veto power over anybody who wants to break down the monopolistic control.

We will hear often from those opposite that monopolies are a bad thing and do not lead to good outcomes. Usually it relates to business. They will say that if the business has monopolistic control it can dominate and do its own thing and will be anti-competitive. Let me say that I see nothing good in a monopoly. I totally believe in competition. Competition and individuals' rights to choose are keys to a flourishing society, and this place should protect people's freedom of choice, individual rights and the ability to collectively stand together against monopolistic control. Of course, if we did that, that would jeopardise somebody's career.

The people of Queensland need to start putting this together. They need to understand that this is clear overreach by the Labor government. The Labor government dictates who can represent them. That organisation then dictates that they must pay a particular fee. That fee then gets donated back to the Labor member they have chosen. Sometimes they might send—I do not know—secret emails on a private email address and try to find their way around the procedures of this House. They might not want to disclose those things to people because it would mean that the nepotism, the control, the influence and the power would be affected. Those would all be really bad outcomes for the people of Queensland! We have a Labor Party in government in this state that is behaving like that. This is about power, control and money. It has nothing to do with the representation of people in an industrial court. Let's call it what it is. This is about power and control. I have heard plenty of Labor members telling me that it is not about power and control. I ask them where they got their preselection.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr Boothman interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. The minister and the member for Theodore will cease their quarrelling across the chamber. The member for Theodore knows better than to interject from a seat other than his own.

Mr WATTS: What we see is that people's right of association is being restricted and their financial resources are being taken and spent in areas they do not want them spent in. What people want when they join a union is a little bit of collective bargaining, some industrial protections and maybe some insurance. The union movement in Australia has won the battle because we have fantastic industrial legislation. This House is in charge of that industrial legislation. If there is a weakness in that industrial legislation, we can bring in amendments to protect people's rights.

This is not about protecting workers' rights; this is about the government feathering its nest. To understand this we need look no further than to the Deputy Premier, who studied hard to get his PhD. What was it in? It was in union renewal. Why does he need to do a PhD in union renewal? It is because people do not want to join their unions. Why do they not want to join their unions? It is because their unions do not represent them. The unions take their money and give it to the Labor Party. The Labor Party comes in here and rewards the unions and the taxpayer pays more money, whether it is for a building, administration or any other service being provided in this state. It is clear—and there have been plenty of reports done—that with all of the legislation that has been brought forward, with union encouragement and other things, people will pay more money for infrastructure and so on. Who are those people? They are the taxpayers of Queensland.

The taxpayers of Queensland should understand the game that is being played here. The game being played is very clear. It is nothing to do with industrial representation. It is nothing to do with public indemnity insurance. It is to do with making sure the union movement makes donations and provides boots on the ground to Labor members, because the Labor members will then reward the union by giving them more power and more control over the lives of the people of Queensland. All people want is the freedom to associate with fellow members, collectively bargain with their colleagues in their workplace, have their public liability insurance in place and be properly represented on the things they want—not the things that the monster that has become the Australian Labor Party in Queensland wants. We know very clearly what the Australian Labor Party wants. It wants to be able to dictate, because it loves the power. Clearly it is not providing the services required. To see this we only need look at the hospitals, the ambulance or so many other services in Queensland that are falling apart. Why are they falling apart? It is because monopoly control is never efficient. These guys love monopolies because they have monopoly control over the taxpayers of Queensland and they line their own pockets with that money and reward the power.

That is the game that is being played, and the people who lose are the taxpayers of Queensland. They lose because the Labor ministers are selected by the union, who will then force members to pay more money in their union membership and then the union will be rewarded by those members who are in the ministry. They will pick the members who are in the ministry and then they will send them private emails and communicate with them in other ways—surreptitiously, to avoid scrutiny and the transparency that this place deserves, outside of ministerial handbooks and without any credibility. We

all know the game that is being played here. The Red Union should be allowed to operate because it brings in competition. If the union movement were any good, it would get up and compete, but it cannot because its lords and masters will not let it.