

TEACHERS — WAGES AND CONDITIONS — NEGOTIATIONS

228. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Premier:

I refer to the planned strike next Tuesday during which thousands of public school teachers will walk off the job to protest the government's lousy pay offer, nurses' failed negotiations, police failed negotiations and now teachers. Would it not be better for the government to strike a deal instead of its teachers going on strike?

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Education, please desist.

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

Madam Speaker, I feel ructions in the force. We have had two questions from members of the Nationals WA before the Liberal Party gets its turn and then of course we need the member for Cottesloe to have his turn, none of whom speak to each other about what questions will be asked.

I welcome the opportunity to talk about WA Labor's proud record in industrial relations, providing our public sector workers with the wages and conditions they need so they can continue to be proud members of our public sector. The government is committed to reaching a negotiated settlement with the State School Teachers' Union of WA and will continue to bargain in good faith. We will make sure that the teachers understand that we value their work and that we are doing everything we can to reach a settlement and avoid disruption to schools and families.

In the event that industrial action does proceed—let us be clear, we do not think it needs to proceed—we put a subsequent offer to the teachers on 10 April. We believe it is a very generous offer, one that they should carefully consider before pulling the industrial action trigger. We know that if industrial action does proceed, the Department of Education is preparing to minimise the impact on students and parents. Families can expect to receive information from schools shortly about what arrangements will be in place should that industrial action go ahead.

This is the first time I have come across a National Party that supports trade unions.

Dr A.D. Buti: He hates them.

Mr R.H. COOK: They do hate them. The National Party has provided them with a short moment of political convenience. State school teachers can be guaranteed of good faith bargaining and a commitment to valuing our public sector workers. That is something that they would never get from members of the National Party. We know that they hate unions and we know that they hate the public sector. We know that the agenda that they have for teachers is to continue to erode the public sector like it does every time it comes into government. We know that public sector workers always do better under a WA Labor government, and that is the message that we are delivering to the teachers as we negotiate in good faith.