

GOVERNMENT'S APPROVAL RATING AMONG BUSINESSES

374. Mrs C.L. EDWARDES to the Minister for Small Business:

I refer the minister to the results of the November 2002 *Yellow Pages* business index survey of small and medium businesses in Western Australia, showing that the Gallop Labor Government currently suffers from a minus 26 per cent net approval rating and ask -

- (1) Is the minister aware that business attitudes towards state government policies indicate that his Government remains the least supported Government in the country?
- (2) Given that the minister's small business policy states that business needs to be assured the State Government will implement policies that encourage growth and investment and that the Gallop Labor Government will accept this challenge, will the minister advise the House why his policies are so unpopular with business and when he expects to take up the challenge?

Mr C.M. BROWN replied:

I thank the member for Kingsley for the question.

(1)-(2) It -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr C.M. BROWN: It is true that the approval rating of the Government has improved by 10 per cent. It is true that it is coming off a low base. Let me ask the member for Kingsley which Government stopped ensuring that the 40 000 small businesses that deal with government get paid within 30 days and pushed the time limit out to 60 days. Let me ask which Government removed the provisions for local content and had no regard for local content and the way in which small business would receive opportunities from the Government. It was the coalition Government. When workers compensation premiums were increasing, which Government increased the stamp duty on workers compensation premiums? It was the coalition Government. Time after time the coalition Government turned its back completely on the small business community.

Let us look at the greatest rort the coalition Government tried to do. According to its election commitments, it intended to deregulate trading hours. Its pre-election commitment said that it would not deregulate trading hours without further consultation with the small business sector. If we read those little weasel words on the end of that statement, we can see that there is no question about it: the coalition intended to deregulate trading hours during this term of government. The coalition Government let small business down through its attitude to retail trading hours, local content, payment to small business, the buy local program and a whole range of things.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse!

Mr C.M. BROWN: We have re-established the local content unit. We have signed the Australian industry participation agreement and have done a whole range of things to assist small business.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I am sure that some members are greatly enjoying the level of interjection but it is holding up question time. I urge members to desist if they wish question time to run its course.

Mr C.M. BROWN: The Opposition does not like having history recorded. It also does not like acknowledging that we have introduced a range of initiatives and initiated decisions that it would not.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warren-Blackwood!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Kalgoorlie!

Mr C.M. BROWN: The Opposition simply acted like a wimp and avoided those decisions.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warren-Blackwood!

Mr C.M. BROWN: I have looked at the figures involved in the popularity contest.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Nedlands!

Mr C.M. BROWN: The Opposition ran a great scare campaign on the industrial relations legislation. The Opposition when in government promised Western Australians that no worker would be worse off in 1993 than they would have been under the award system. That is what the Opposition promised and that is what it lied about. That is why we fixed the system.