

MINIMUM RATE OF PAY

420. Mr R.C. KUCERA to the Minister for Employment Protection:

Firstly, I congratulate those workers who turned out this morning at a soup kitchen outside the federal member for Stirling's office; it gave a fairly chilling view of the future of lower paid workers in this state under the current federal industrial relations legislation.

Several members interjecting.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: There are so many liabilities over there.

The SPEAKER: Member, ask the question.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Could the minister inform the house of yesterday's decision by the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission to increase state award rates of pay? Is the minister aware of any alternative views of what constitutes a fair minimum rate of pay?

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER replied:

I thank the member for the question. At this time of great wealth across our entire state, it is very easy to forget about those in our state who do not enjoy a lot of that wealth. We sometimes read the headlines about big pays, massive profits by mining companies, big pays to CEOs and some of the higher wages that are being paid to workers in the northern part of our state. However, many Western Australians do not enjoy those levels of pay. Therefore, it was very pleasing to hear yesterday that the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission had introduced a pay increase of \$20 a week, or \$1 000 a year. That increase will be enjoyed from 7 July, in about seven or eight days' time. That decision was historic for three reasons. Firstly, the \$20-a-week increase -

Mr M.W. Trenorden: Three beers and a hamburger; that's all it will buy!

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: The \$20-a-week increase was the highest in history. Secondly, it was the first increase in 25 years that did not follow a national wage case decision.

Mr T. Buswell interjected.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: What did the member for Judas say? Sorry, the member for Vasse.

Mr T. Buswell: Is this the standard EBA that you know so much about?

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: What was that, Judas? What did the member say? I meant the member for Vasse; I am sorry.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Mr Speaker, I should not have to say this, but for the minister to refer to a member of Parliament as Judas is clearly disrespectful.

The SPEAKER: Order! The terminology and the way in which that word was used was not complimentary. I direct the minister to withdraw that particular word.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I withdraw.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members! Whether members heard it or not, I heard it, and it was withdrawn.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: That was the first decision by the state industrial commission since 27 March. It was a historic occasion. As I have said, it was the first time in 25 years that it did not follow a national wage case. The federal Liberal government did not want us to have a state wage case. It wanted us to wait until sometime towards the end of the year when its new Fair Pay - I repeat the word "fair" - Commission brings down its decision. The fact of the matter is the Fair Pay Commission will not consider fairness in its deliberations. So much for the word "fair". The federal government has said categorically that the Fair Pay Commission will not consider the word "fair" in making its deliberations. That is an absolutely shameful decision by the federal Liberal government.

I will say one other thing. First, there are tens of thousands of families in Western Australia. The member for Avon might say that it is only a couple of hamburgers. They will welcome that extra \$1 000 a year from next week. That is \$19.98 more than the people at Spotlight Stores will get an hour under the WorkChoices legislation that has been bought in by the federal Liberal government. It is \$19.98 more. Those people are getting an extra 2c an hour by giving away \$90 worth of conditions. It is the hope of members on this side that

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Mr Bob Kucera; Speaker; Mr John Bowler; Mr Colin Barnett

when the federal government's Fair Pay Commission brings down its first ruling, that \$20 extra a week will shame it into providing at least an equal amount of money.