

UNION OFFICIALS, RIGHT OF ENTRY TO A WORKPLACE

**716. Mrs EDWARDES to the Minister for Labour Relations:**

I refer to the deplorable standover tactics used recently by the Assistant Secretary of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, Joe McDonald, when he entered a work site and forced the non-unionised members of a demolition company to join his union.

- (1) Has the minister, as he promised he would six weeks ago, referred this matter to the Department of Employment and Consumer Protection for investigation, and, if so, what action is the Government taking as a result of that investigation?
- (2) What does the Government's Labour Relations Reform Bill do to stop union thugs such as Joe McDonald from entering a work site and bullying employees into joining a union?

**Mr KOBELKE replied:**

I sincerely thank the member for Kingsley for her question. Members on this side should refer to her expertise in asking questions that provide such a lead-in on important issues. She is very good at it.

- (1) Yes, I did ask that the matter be investigated. I have had some interim reports, but the investigation is ongoing. If the matter is to be prosecuted, it is not necessarily appropriate that the minister be informed until action is taken.
- (2) Clearly, there is a need to ensure that, when union officials exercise their right of entry - which they have now, although it is limited - to protect the rights of their members and to seek to encourage people to join -

Several members interjected.

Mr KOBELKE: That is how it should be. From time to time, that right is abused. Occasionally, people go to workplaces ostensibly to conduct legitimate activities for existing members and to attract new members, but in doing so they cause disruption. The Gallop Government has made it clear that it upholds the right of unions to organise and accepts the need for right of entry, which applies across the rest of Australia. However, it has no truck whatsoever with the odd union official who abuses that right and seeks to disrupt a workplace.

The legislation before the Parliament requires that union officials be authorised by the registrar of the Industrial Relations Commission to exercise that right of entry. That provision is a first in this State, but it is not a big step. If a union official abuses that right, authorisation can be withdrawn for a limited period or totally. If that occurs, the union official will not be able to enter any site as a union representative. If he did, legal action could be taken against him. That is a dramatic toughening of sanctions against union officials who abuse their position and step outside acceptable and proper practice. This Government has introduced that provision to ensure good industrial relations. It is a much more effective approach than that taken by the previous Government. The coalition Government was determined to undermine unions rather than ensure that they worked properly to provide appropriate services to their members.