

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, GOVERNMENT'S REFORMS

578. Mrs EDWARDES to the Premier:

I refer the Premier to the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union media release dated 14 February in which Kevin Reynolds is quoted as saying that people can be sure the CFMEU will be watching closely to make sure the Labor Government keeps its promise and that the CFMEU would not let Labor get away with anything less than it promised.

- (1) Is the Government planning to bring in legislation to the Parliament this year to implement Labor's proposed industrial relations reforms?
- (2) How much more power does the Premier propose to give to the unions under that proposed legislation?

Dr GALLOP replied:

Legislation will be introduced into the Western Australian Parliament that will provide fairness. Under the regime created by the former Government clear case studies arose of exploitation in the labour market. Without doubt an ideological prejudice against trade unions and what they do on behalf of their members, was reflected in legislation that was passed by this Parliament. Incidentally, it was rushed through the Parliament before the composition of the Legislative Council changed. However, that is another matter. We will bring fairness back to the labour market.

Mrs Edwardes: Will that be this year?

Dr GALLOP: The member for Kingsley asked me what the legislation would be like and I am answering the question.

The Labor Government wants a society in Western Australia in which employees have their rights properly respected. One of their rights is to meet with fellow employees to pursue their interests collectively.

Mr Barnett: Has that ever been in question?

Dr GALLOP: Under the former Minister for Labor Relations, who was the member for Riverton, that right was severely under question, as illustrated by his attitude in this Parliament. The Government will ensure that there is a fair balance between the rights of individuals and the ability of unions to operate; as, indeed, there will be a proper balance between employers and employees in the labour market.

The Government has been working hard to draft the legislation. It will not be ready to be debated by Parliament this year. It is highly doubtful whether it will be introduced into Parliament this year. However, it will be the Government's first priority to introduce it early next year and have it passed by Parliament in the first half of next year.

I remind this House why this legislation is required. The member who asked the question is a good case study. Under her leadership of industrial relations, people working in the public sector were forced - I stress the word "forced" - to enter into workplace agreements. That was exposed in the courts of Western Australia in the final years of the coalition Government. This Government will move away from that situation and provide a proper balance between employees and employers in the labour market.