

UNION RALLY, ATTENDANCE BY STAFF FROM GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

439. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Education and Training:

- (1) Can the minister inform the house how many delegates of the State School Teachers' Union of WA and other teachers and staff from government schools attended the union rally today?
- (2) Was there any disruption to the operation of or duty of care at any schools today as a result of attendance at the union rally?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

I thank the honourable member for the question.

- (1)-(2) Gee whiz! I went to the rally today because I thought it was very important to do so, as there will be a significant impact on the workers of Western Australia from the proposed federal industrial relations changes that will change the nature of the Western Australian work force.

The PRESIDENT: Minister!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Mr President, on the question of teachers, I made it quite clear, and the member would know from the information conveyed in this house, that the arrangement was that teachers would be teaching in classrooms today. However, the union delegate from each school was entitled to attend the rally. I thought it was very important that that should be the case, for a number of reasons. For example, the federal government's changes will result in a wage freeze for 1.6 million award workers. That is significant. Removing the protection of unfair dismissal provisions from 3.6 million workers is significant for industrial relations in this state. Allowing employers to push workers into individual contracts is worth fighting.

Hon Barry House: Did you ask your department to provide a report?

The PRESIDENT: It is reasonable for the minister to make some observations about the significance of the rally, but I do not think that any further observations should be made in that regard in answering the question.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Thank you, Mr President. The rally took place about three hours ago. I must say that in much of the past three hours, I have been in the chamber handling legislation, reading in a couple of bills and dealing with the Rates and Charges (Rebates and Deferments) Amendment Bill. With the best will in the world, I have not had the opportunity to do a school-by-school check, but I am unaware of any problems and I am certainly not aware of a breach of a duty of care.