

CFMEU, ACTION ON BURRUP PENINSULA

278. Mrs C.L. EDWARDES to the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection:

I refer to comments made by Australian Workers Union organiser Glen Anderton on page 21 of *The Australian Financial Review* on 1 November about industrial action orchestrated by the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union on the Burrup Peninsula. Mr Anderton states that Joe McDonald and the CFMEU are -

...purely after the [membership] dollars and cents. There's \$5 billion worth of contracts planned for the Burrup and he wants to be part of that.

- (1) Does the minister support the disruption of worksites, including placing jobs and investment dollars at risk, for the sole reason that a militant union wants to increase its membership base?
- (2) What action has the minister taken to investigate allegations, as revealed in *The Australian Financial Review*, that the CFMEU is threatening to ban workers from future sites in Perth in order to sign up members on the Burrup?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:

- (1)-(2) The Government and I support the role of unions, as they add a lot of value to what happens in Western Australian workplaces. From time to time, some actions by unions are counterproductive. The member's question alludes to demarcation disputes. Demarcation disputes are something we wish to avoid to the greatest extent possible. What is happening on the Burrup relates to that issue. The Government will use whatever influence it can to ensure that matters are resolved and major projects are not held up through disputation between various unions. That does not serve the interests of unions or business and is counterproductive to the huge potential for growth in this State. I understand that this issue centres on a federal agreement and, therefore, under the state jurisdiction we have no power.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: What about the sites in Perth?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: As I understand it, the dispute relates to a federal agreement. Anything we in this State seek to do will be unproductive because, as the member knows, federal law has precedence over state law. State laws cannot be applied to a federal agreement.

The Leader of the Opposition gets grumpy and says things that have no foundation. He thinks he is making a point by sounding off. I speak almost daily to businesspeople - constituents of the Leader of the Opposition - and they keep asking me, "What are you going to do about that Leader of the Opposition? When is the Opposition going to get its act together, stop being negative, stop being carpy, and stop trying to drag down development in this State?" The Leader of the Opposition is so negative that he would rather this State went backwards than advance under a Gallop Labor Government. This State is going ahead, and that peeves the Leader of the Opposition even more. He is absolutely peeved that the Gallop Labor Government is delivering for the people of this State; he hates it. He gets more and more negative; he loses more and more followers - he cannot even get support from people on his own side. He made an attempt to be positive during an interview with *The West Australian* on 27 July 2002. People had pointed out that he was not very popular and even his own members did not support him, and during that interview he said -

"And, maybe there is even a bit of jealousy.

"When there is an issue, I often see the way out quicker than others do.

Maybe that intimidates people. Maybe that is why people do not like the Leader of the Opposition: he knows the answers and no-one else does. It is about time the Leader of the Opposition worked out that practically everyone in Western Australia knows that he does not know the answers. It is about time he woke up to himself and provided a bit of leadership for the gang on the other side, who are going nowhere but backwards.