

WORKPLACE AGREEMENTS, SUCCESS

53. Mr BLOFFWITCH to the Premier

Is the Premier aware of the successful businesses that have been established and have benefited because of the State's workplace agreement legislation? Could the Premier give an example of one of these success stories?

Mr COURT replied:

The workplace agreements legislation was fought tooth and nail in this House by the Leader of the Opposition and his comrades. I remember that debate well. That legislation has provided much needed flexibility in our labour market. The Western Australian people are about to see one of the greatest political cons of all time; that is, the Labor Party is saying that it will abolish workplace agreements legislation and replace it with something else that will allow individual contracts. Members opposite will not tell us the detail of that. Perhaps I can explain to members -

Mr Kobelke: Watch this space.

Mr COURT: Members will not need to watch this space; I will tell them. It does not matter what members opposite say, anyone can have an individual agreement. Opposition members want to get rid of workplace agreements -

Mr Kobelke: Absolutely.

Mr COURT: Yes, and go back to a system whereby the unions will be in control in the workplace, will dictate the terms and conditions and, once again, will play a lead role inside those organisations. Members opposite should not say that their individual agreements would make up for the abolition of these workplace agreements.

Mr Ripper: You haven't even seen the policy!

Mr COURT: The Labor Party is putting at risk jobs, small business, industry and a system that has delivered the flexibility to create a record number of jobs in this State. They cannot have it both ways; they cannot come into this Parliament and say that the workplace agreements legislation will be a huge failure and will work against the interests of working men and women in this State when the exact opposite is the case. I will give an example: On Saturday I had the opportunity to visit the Fletcher International WA Pty Ltd abattoir at Narrikup. On Friday, members of the National Party also inspected that facility.

Mr Ripper: Is that the abattoir that got the government grant?

Mr COURT: Yes.

Mr Ripper: To assist it to compete with others?

Mr COURT: That business was set up under the workplace agreements legislation. In establishing that operation -

Mr Marlborough: Was that a condition of the grant - that it had to set up such an operation?

Mr COURT: I suggest that members opposite take the time to visit that facility, because they will see a plant that has high productivity with no "us" and "them" attitude. They will see none of the old union practices in which the butcher and the boner were heavily unionised and received all the benefits, but the labourers were treated as second-rate citizens. It is now an operation in which the people on the workplace floor do all of those jobs; the butcher, the boner and the labourer rotate and work as a team. They have high productivity and are very content. They have a practice -

Mr Kobelke: If they are so content, why do they have such a high turnover?

Mr COURT: They have workplace practices that are supportive of people with disabilities. I have never seen a workplace in which people with disabilities have been looked after so well. I reinforce the point: We are about to see the biggest political con of all time. The Labor Party will abolish workplace agreements and put in place this magical thing that will allow the Labor Party to do the same thing in practice.

Dr Gallop: Desperate Dick!

Mr COURT: That is about the Leader of the Opposition's standard.

Dr Gallop interjected.

The SPEAKER: I am waiting a while to let people think about the behaviour in this place. We have a practice by which I allow people, particularly those who ask questions, to pursue matters. I am allowing interjections, even though all interjections can be deemed unacceptable.

Some members think they should have the opportunity to put into the arena interjections that have nothing to do with the question at hand. The member for Rockingham can take note that I have listened to some of his interjections and if the member persists, I will be forced to act.