

Kim Beazley: Democracy Needs Unions

In his valedictory speech to parliament Kim Beazley mounted a spirited defence of the role of the union movement.

"The union movement's now being abused up hill and down dale by employers in advertising that you see on your television every night and it's being abused up hill and down dale by our political opponents in this place," he said.

"But understand this: when you wish to assault democracy, first you attack the unions. When you wish to restore democracy, first you start with the unions.

"It is no accident that the opposition in Zimbabwe

now is led by the unions.

"When you undermine unions, you undermine democracy in the workplace, then you will undermine democracy in the nation overall.

"First you destroy the unions, then you destroy democracy."

Kim Beazley's Labor colleagues, some of whom were moved to tears by the speech, gave him a standing ovation.

Defence Minister Brendan Nelson and former Liberal Party director Andrew Robb watched the speech from the government benches, which were otherwise almost deserted.

Howard's IR laws and the election

John Howard told business leaders:

"If the Government is returned, then I confidently predict that the reforms that have been made over the last few years will never be dismantled.

Because by the time of the next and subsequent elections, they will have become so much part of the economic and industrial fabric of this country, that will be quite impossible."

Mr Howard and the Liberals had no mandate to introduce the IR laws. They didn't make a peep about their radical workplace changes at the 2004 election.

If we allow the Liberal Government to be reelected, the existing unfair laws will be entrenched. And their workplace changes will be taken even further.

Mr Howard said, "No issue will be more keenly argued in that campaign than the fate of the Government's reforms to Australia's workplace system.

Let us understand without any ambiguity and without any polite words, but there is a very clear choice."

Yes, there is a very clear choice.

A vote for a Liberal Government is a vote for no protection from unfair dismissal. It's a vote for AWA individual contracts that cut pay and conditions and reduce time with family. A vote for the Liberal party is kissing goodbye to rights at work not just for you, but for your kids and grandkids.

Read our factsheet on the clear choice we are presented with this election. Please pass it on to your friends.

www.rightsatwork.com.au/thefacts/clearchoice

Mr Howard also told the assembled crowd of big business people:

"If the Government is defeated and the reforms are over-turned, I do not believe a future government of my persuasion will again be able to re-introduce those reforms."

Please tell your friends, family, and everybody you know that this election, there is indeed a clear choice.

Making the Liberal Government's WorkChoices our new reality - or getting rid of them forever.

Ear infections destroying Aboriginal children

More than 90 per cent of Aboriginal children suffered from ear infections, which often caused hearing problems leading to illiteracy, truancy and unemployment and in turn triggered drug abuse and violence, Dr Perry said.

Dr Perry, who is the chairman of the Queensland branch of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, said the incidence of ear infections among Aboriginal children was the worst in the world.

Despite this, he said, there had been no commitment of sufficient long-term funding

to combat the problem - which he said was "widespread, catastrophic socially and an indication of poverty".

The failure to deal with the problem, which could be easily fixed, was "a national shame", Dr Perry said, urging Labor, if it won federal government, to commit to combating the disease.

"What we have found ... is that close to 100 per cent of Aboriginal children have ear infections by three months of age and in Caucasian children you almost never see them starting so young."



Taxing Times!

James Packer's Publishing & Broadcasting is not only not paying any tax on last year's media sell-down to private equity - it even managed to get a tax credit.

Announcing its full-year profit, PBL posted a \$1.53 billion gain from selling a half stake in most of its media businesses, including Nine Network and ACP Magazines, to buyout firm CVC Asia Pacific. Tax experts and analysts were mystified how PBL managed to book a \$3 million tax credit from the sale, rather than having to pay capital gains tax of

30 per cent.

"It's surprising that when they make a gain of that magnitude, they don't appear to have a tax liability," said Ann O'Connell, an associate professor at the University of Melbourne's Law School, who teaches courses on capital gains tax.



A film you have to see before the election!

A documentary exposing the activity of an industrial inquisition targeting building workers across Australia.

"Constructing Fear" shows how these workers are the front line in an attack on civil liberties that has implications for every Australian.



Since 2005, the Australian Building Construction Commission (ABCC) has targeted hundreds of

workers. The ABCC conducts closed tribunals and seeks individual fines of up to \$28,600.

Those summonsed cannot refuse to attend a hearing; they cannot refuse to answer questions and they cannot tell anyone, including their families, what happened in the hearing. Penalty? Six months in prison!

The ABCC's operations have been described as "...foreign to the workplace relations of civilised societies, as distinct from undemocratic and authoritarian states." (Federal Court Justice Marshall, 2004)

ACF & CFMEU tell Howard: sign Kyoto

With climate change set to be a critical federal election campaign issue, the CFMEU Mining and Energy division and the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) said strong, urgent action on climate change would be good for jobs, the economy and the environment.

ACF Executive Director Don Henry and General President of the CFMEU Mining and Energy division, Tony Maher, called for Government and Opposition to commit to:

- 1 Set science-based, legislated targets to cut greenhouse emissions
- 2 Substantially increase the existing mandatory renewable energy target
- 3 Join the international effort by ratifying the Kyoto Protocol before the end of 2007

“It’s taken an issue as pressing and potentially devastating as climate change to get ACF and the CFMEU to stand together on the same platform,” said ACF’s Don Henry.

“Strong binding targets, guided by the best available science, are vital if we are going to protect future generations from dangerous climate change. Australia can show leadership by ratifying the Kyoto Protocol before the end of this year – and encouraging the USA to do the same. Australia is missing out on billions of dollars because it hasn’t ratified.”

“Emissions trading will not be enough on its own

to drive the scale of investment that is necessary to clean up our energy economy and address the threat of dangerous climate change,” said the CFMEU’s Tony Maher.

“A regulatory mechanism is essential to secure sufficient investment. Substantially increasing the mandatory renewable energy target will lower average emissions – it’s critical and it’s supported by mineworkers.

“The Government’s decade of denial and inaction is the real threat to coal miners job security. The coal industry is going to have to clean up its act if it is going to have a future in a low carbon economy. That means billions of dollars of investment by mining companies in new technologies. We’re ten years behind where we should be.”

Howard wants to stop young workers voting and has passed a new law closing the Electoral Roll the very day he calls the election, so you must enrol before it's too late!
Kick Howard out!



Not all employers prefer individual contracts

At last an employer-backed study into the Australian Construction Industry has rejected the Howard Government’s individual contracts and concedes the benefits of trade unions in making the industry more productive.

Despite the spin by Leighton’s CEO Wal King, the study from the Australian Construction Association reinforces the CFMEU view that strangling unions out of the industry will be counterproductive.

‘This report is actually a slap in the face for the Howard Government and their union-busting agency, the Australian Building and Construction Commission,’ CFMEU national secretary Dave Noonan said.

The ACA study ‘Four Years On’ of insights from

personnel in the building industry, following reforms from the Building and Construction Industry Royal Commission overwhelmingly found:

- * There is a continuing role for unions in the industry,
- * Many union officials are reasonable, if tough to deal with,
- * Moving to individual contracts could cause instability in the industry.

‘This report shows the heavy handed tactics of the ABCC will ultimately be counterproductive and it should be immediately disbanded. ‘In an industry where a worker dies every week, the union has an important role to play,’ said Dave Noonan.

Women's chances worse under WorkChoices

A national report demonstrates that WorkChoices isn't working for low paid women and their families.

The report, which documents interviews with over 120 low-income women across all mainland States and the ACT, shows that many women working in sectors such as retail, hospitality, aged care and childcare are doing it tough.

The report recommends changes to the Commonwealth legislative framework to redress these problems, including restoration of unfair dismissal rights and more effective guarantees of minimum conditions.

The report Women and WorkChoices: Impacts

on the Low Pay Sector was commissioned by the NFAW, WEL Australia and YWCA Australia and was undertaken by leading industrial relations researchers.

NFAW Spokeswoman Marie Coleman said:

“This report provides government and policy makers with vital information and recommendations on how to redress these workplace abuses.

It is clear from the current advertising campaign that the Government is already aware that many employees are not receiving their entitlements. Our report bears this out and outlines additional issues.”

Join a Union Now

Unions Australia is a “one stop shop” to quickly and easily join a union with just one phone call to

1300 486 466

Howard's IR laws mean more people are turning to unions - Unions Australia makes joining easy!

Hugh Mackay: waking from the Dreamy Period

As they wake from the Dreamy Period, the voters are also listening to their own memories. That's why this is a retrospective election: we're rethinking some stuff we let slip by while we were in our little trance.

As this mood takes hold, many Australians who have been feeling powerless will want to punish this Government for sins long past. Those who once marched in support of Aboriginal reconciliation, for instance, will decide it was not good enough, after all, to simply push that idea off the agenda.

Those who were ashamed of our treatment of asylum seekers, but let themselves become anaesthetised by propaganda, will decide it was wrong to capitulate. Those who took the easy path of prejudice against ethnic or religious groups will decide they are capable of nobler responses than that.

Those who were too dozy to react to their gut instinct that told them the anti-terror laws went too far will think again. Those who

marched in protest at the ill-conceived invasion of Iraq and then went quiet will wish they had kept marching.

Those who believe in public education as a powerful symbol of our commitment to equality of opportunity will wonder why the Federal Government has, in the words of Ross Gittins “(biased) federal grants heavily in favour of private schools — particularly the least needy”.

Republicans will reflect on the fact that they were conned in 1999. Those who still believe in federation will note the relentless fiscal squeezing of the states.

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