



Speech by

PHIL REEVES

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS; OECD REPORT

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (10.28 a.m.): I rise to address the House on the subject of industrial relations. I want to particularly refer to the recently released OECD report. I want to address the House on the subject of employee protection legislation and its effects, if any, on unemployment figures.

Since the election of the Federal coalition Government in Canberra we have had a raft of legislation which has reduced employment protection for thousands of Australian workers. Not only has this legislation reduced workers' rights and conditions but it has also contributed to increased anxiety in workers over future job security. We have had Federal Minister after Federal Minister berating us with all sorts of spurious claims that high unemployment is caused by employee protection legislation. Peter Reith and his friends opposite are on record as stating that "the ability of employers to easily dismiss employees will lead to increased employment"—a somewhat flawed logic.

The Opposition spokesperson for industrial relations, the member for Clayfield, also supports this ridiculous view. This is not surprising as the honourable member has not uttered one original thought since he became industrial relations spokesperson. Members of the National Party have demonstrated over the years that they have never supported urban or, for that matter, rural workers, even though they claim rural workers as their constituency. What we have from the Peter Reiths of this world is flawed logic.

I wish to return to the OECD report on correlation between job protection legislation and unemployment. The OECD is an organisation whose research papers are highly respected throughout the world. The report summary states—

"The analysis strengthens the conclusion that EPL strictness has little or no effect on overall employment."

Here we have evidence that Peter Reith has been peddling nonsense—nonsense supported by members opposite. The report vindicates the stand taken by the Beattie Labor Government and demonstrates that legislation protecting workers' rights and security is irrelevant to employment numbers.
