



Speech by

BILL FELDMAN

MEMBER FOR CABOOLTURE

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EMPLOYMENT

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (6.40 p.m.): I am glad we have heard from the honourable member for Springwood, who is obviously a champion of the battler. I am sure he knows how much education each and every one of them has, and he has just wiped out half of his work force. Free trade! Those opposite have done a good job of making free trade sound good. I am sure all their union members are listening to them. They have made it sound really good.

If our competitors played the same game it would indeed be good. Our competitors, however, do not play the same game. We opened our doors and they shut theirs with tighter tariffs. If we listened to those on the other side we would think that the Americans and the Europeans did not have tariffs, that they did not have primage on their imports. If we believed everything they said we would be believing in the free trade theory. However, as I said, they shut their doors and they shut them with tighter tariffs.

We are not against free trade if free trade means fair trade, but we know that free trade does not mean fair trade. Our workers and our farmers are paying the price of Mr Keating's theories for the long haul. Those opposite really have a hide. I hear that Labor is blaming the National Party for selling off Telstra. Down in Tasmania at its national conference some in the Labor Party were knocking free trade. It was widely reported that the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union was extremely outspoken in its opposition to free trade. One would have to wonder how fair dinkum the AMWU is in its stance on this issue.

Numerous concerns have been expressed to us by grassroots members of the horrific destruction of the jobs that flows from a blind allegiance to that flawed and simplistic theory of free trade. One of our most fundamental philosophies has always been to strive for the protection of Australian jobs, so it was natural that we would offer our support to the AMWU. However, just recently at the executive level they asked us to drop the issue. Well, we do not propose to drop it, because grassroots union members demonstrated that they did not want us to. The executive's allegiance might be to the Labor Party, but I know quite a few unions that are starting to move motions to have the little bit of money they used to send the Labor Party sent to other places.

It is arrogant to disregard the wishes of grassroots members, as demonstrated by the major political parties and the union bureaucracy that is allowing our nation to be reduced to a Third World status and allowing our economy to be destroyed. The evidence is overwhelming. Everyone with a bit of commonsense can see what needs to be done to restore employment opportunities and preserve our standard of living. The actions of the political and powerful union brokers demonstrate that either they have absolutely no commonsense or they have a separate agenda, an agenda that requires them to sacrifice the future of Australian workers on the altar of free trade.

As I said before, we are not opposed to free trade if free trade means fair trade, but the current concept of fair trade is a cruel hoax—a cruel hoax on our farmers and on our workers. Almost every country involved in world trade is prepared to subsidise its farmers and its manufacturers. We then expect our manufacturers and farmers to compete against their heavily subsidised products with virtually no assistance from the Government whatsoever. We are fighting the battle of international trade with one hand tied behind our back. The victims, unfortunately, are Australian farmers and Australian workers and their families. All of them are now punch drunk, and here we have Labor

politicians who do not care less and a union that is not prepared to put up a genuine fight for the survival of its members.

Yes, while the union power brokers are swanning about, pandering to the globalists and living the life of Riley, Australian workers are being thrown on the unemployment scrap heap, worrying themselves sick about how they are going to support their families. Union power brokers know the personal tragedies living all around them, but their attitude is obviously "I'm all right, Jack". The Australian worker has been well and truly deserted by his Labor Party and his union. Some of the great Labor leaders of the past, along with some genuine caring union leaders gone by, would turn in their graves if they could see what this organisation has done for their workers.

Time expired.
