



Speech by

**Hon. D. WELLS**

**MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA**

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Hansard 16 March 2000

### TEACHERS

**Hon. D. M. WELLS** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (6.50 p.m.): Wherever this issue may go, whatever the arguments, whatever the consequences and whatever the frustrations that might lie ahead, honourable members will never hear me criticise the teachers themselves; nor do anything other than praise the professionalism, the patience, the fortitude and the compassion of those teachers who are at the chalkface looking after the children of this State; nor will honourable members hear me say, as the former Minister has just said, that the union was deceiving the teachers. The leaders of that union are too decent to do it and the teachers are too smart to fall for it.

The Labor Government values its relationship with the teachers and we value our relationship with the Teachers Union. It is a relationship which is beyond price, and therefore we are not going to try to buy it. Three per cent is a very fair offer. Three per cent is what is available. Three per cent is what has been offered to other people in the public sector. Three per cent is reasonable. Three per cent is what we are able to negotiate with.

Is it not wonderful to hear the member for Gladstone and the member for Caboolture advocate the cause of organised labour? This is a good sign, and I would seek to encourage it. I hope it expands. We must look at the arguments that they have been advancing. First of all, they advanced the argument that this situation is the same as the situation was in 1997. Well, it is not, because in 1997 there was an ideological component to that enterprise bargaining deal that was being offered by the Government.

The Government was asking for something back from the teachers. The Government was asking the teachers to sign up for Leading Schools. That was in the enterprise bargain. When the Labor Party came to power we had to renegotiate the enterprise bargain to take that ideological component out. It was, in fact, a Faustian deal that the previous Government was trying to get the teachers to sign up for.

**Mr NELSON:** I rise to a point of order. I don't understand what "Faustian" means.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr WELLS:** See me afterwards, Shaun, and I'll tell you. It was a Faustian deal, and we even had old Mephistopheles here thundering his approval retrospectively of his actions at that time.

This Government is asking nothing in return. I suppose that, in saying that, I concede part of the argument that was put forward by the member for Gladstone and the member for Caboolture who say that we are not really bargaining. Perhaps we are not really bargaining because we are giving it away. We are not asking the teachers to do anything except what they want to do. We are asking the teachers to stand up in front of the classroom and teach the kids. We are not asking the teachers to go to gratuitous meetings of committees of management. We are not asking them to become managers. We are not asking them to jump through Leading Schools hoops. We are just saying to the teacher, "We want to give you the 3%."

The other argument that the other side used was that we were not negotiating because we said 3% and we did not move up from the 3%. That was because, in honesty, we came in with what we had. We could, I suppose, have satisfied the argument of the member for Gladstone and the member for

Caboolture if we had come in and said, "We offer 2%", and then moved up to 3%. Within the definition which has been offered by the intellectual position put forward by the Independents over there, we would have been bargaining. If we had accommodated ourselves more to the culture of a fish market whereby somebody says that the price is 100 and somebody else says that it is 20, and one compromises on 60, that would have satisfied the member for Gladstone's argument and the member for Caboolture's argument. But this is not a fish market. We came in, with all honesty, and said, "We are not going to tell you a whole lot of drivel. We have 3% available. That is what the Budget can stand, and 3% is the offer."

There have been negotiations in the past week or so. My departmental officers met with union officers to discuss details of the GST clause. The door is completely open, as it has been ever since this Government took office. The union can come through that door at any time and we are happy to talk to them. Three per cent is what there is.

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