



Speech by

MIKE KAISER

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Hansard 24 August 2000

EMPLOYMENT

Mr KAISER (Woodridge—ALP) (6.17 p.m.): I second the amendment moved by my colleague the member for Logan. The motion as it stands at the moment is nothing more than a cruel hoax on Australian workers. Many people in my electorate have been left behind by globalisation, too. My electorate is one of the most disadvantaged in this State in terms of unemployment rates. There are people in my area who have been left behind by globalisation and global market forces. But the answer lies in freer trade, not in restricting trade. There is not an easy solution. It is not easy to persuade people on that. But I would rather tell them the truth and do something for them than lie to them simply in an attempt to persuade them to vote for me, which is all that the crowd opposite at the back of the Chamber are doing.

It will be interesting to see how the Liberals and Nationals respond to this motion tonight. It will be very interesting to see what the free traders in the Liberal Party do and what the protectionists in the National Party do when it comes to voting in this debate tonight. It will be interesting to see whether they split or pursue a course of electoral expedience as well.

The answer does lie in freer trade, because trade opens markets. India, for example, has a rising middle class. The middle class in that country is as big as the Australian domestic market. What do members opposite say to workers in industries that are already exporting? What do they say to people in manufacturing jobs employed by exporters? What do they say to them in relation to their protectionist argument? Do they say, "No, whack up the protection barriers and tariffs", which are little more than a big flat tax on working people? Do they say that to them? Do they take away their opportunities to prosper and to provide for their families simply because of their ideological bent against free trade?

Free trade promotes innovation and boosts productivity. It tends to create the quality, rewarding jobs that I want my kids to fill. I do not want my kids to fill dead-end jobs or jobs that do not have a future. I want my kids to fill jobs that do have a future in interesting, quality work. That is not to say that there are not legitimate concerns about free trade. Of course there are. I do not believe that Australian Governments should take a purely free market, laissez faire approach. It needs to be moderated and we need to match it with Government intervention here at home. As I have argued since the day I got into this place, globalisation requires greater intervention on the part of Governments, not less. Let us have a look at the record on some of the things that need to be done.

For example, when it comes to industry policy, like the kind of industry policy that this amendment proposes, what have we seen the Federal Government do—the Federal Government that members opposite at the back of the Chamber supported through their preferences at the last election? What did it do with the support that they gave them to get into office? It ripped the heart out of industry policy in this country.

Globalisation also requires research and development for businesses and industries to prosper. What has the Federal Government done? It has ripped the heart out of research and development. This is the Federal Government that members opposite at the back of the Chamber helped to install through their preferences. Globalisation requires labour market programs and labour force readjustment programs to ensure that workers can move from job to job in these days when no job will last forever.

What has the Federal Government done? It has ripped the heart out of labour market programs. This is the Federal Government that they supported through their preferences. That is their approach.

Globalisation requires greater investment in education to promote the concept of lifelong learning, the concept that no-one is going to stay in one job forever anymore. We need to have a flexible education system to ensure that people are able to move from job to job, to make sure that they have the skills and the opportunities to move into the exciting new industries that are being created as a result of free trade and globalisation.

But what has the Federal Government done to education? There has been declining investment in education—the same Federal Government that the members up the back supported by allocating their preferences to its members. In supporting that Government by allocating those preferences, they have opposed everything that they say they stand for. The Federal Government has no intervention, no industry policy, no research and development, no labour market programs and no enhanced education.

People, particularly those on this side of the House, are concerned about the plight of workers in other countries, too. The answer to that does not involve cutting off trade with them. It does not involve cutting off your nose to spite your face. The answer to that lies in strengthening organisations such as the International Labour Organisation so they can actually play a legitimate role in making sure that workers' rights are protected in those Third World countries. The answer does not lie in cutting off trade and cutting off the opportunities of those people to prosper and to provide for their families.

Time expired.
