



75/26

FOR PRESS

PRIME MINISTER

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PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE IN MELBOURNE 26th NOVEMBEROPENING STATEMENT BY THE HON. J.M. FRASERINDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

The decision of the ACTU yesterday five months after the release of the detailed Liberal National Country Parties policy on Industrial Relations is a belated attempt to bolster Labor's diminishing support amongst ordinary trade unionists.

In his double-hatted role as ACTU and ALP President, Mr Hawke is resorting to this kind of tactic in an attempt to revive the myth of Labor's claim to a special relationship with the union movement.

The record of Labor in government shows this to be nothing more than a myth.

In 1972, under the Liberal National Country Parties industrial disputes accounted for two million man days lost and \$32 million in lost wages.

In 1974, after two years of Labor in government six and a quarter million man days were lost and wages lost totalled \$218 million.

That is, man days lost under Labor trebled and wages lost went up four times.

In 23 years of Liberal National Country Party Government, the monthly average of working days lost was 94,000. In two and a half years of Labor government that monthly average was 367,000 days. That is, four times our figure.

The only real relationship that exists between Labor and the industrial movement is one of a Labor government submitting to the demands of militant unions, or of a Labor government failing to act in the face of evidence of union extremism..

In government the Labor Party caved in to militant pressure in the case of export bans relating to beef and wheat.

It has stood by on occasions when thuggery of the worst type has occurred in industrial relations. The judgement given in the Builders Laborers Federation deregistration case and the Sweeney Report into payments to maritime unions cite examples of this nature.

In the current election campaign, the Labor Party is acting on the presumption that it is entitled to the unquestioning financial and political support of trade unionists.

This is despite the fact that Labor's economic incompetence has created unemployment on a greater scale than at any time since the depression of the 'thirties'. Information available to me indicates that unemployment may go as high as 335,000 (actual) in June, 1976.

But Labor wants to ignore these facts and go on exerting open pressure on unionists by enforced stoppages to enable attendances at political rallies, by pressure to subscribe a days pay to the ALP through unions, and by pressure to distribute political literature and exhibit stickers and slogans.

I believe a great number of ordinary members of trade unions in Australia resent this attempt at ruthless political exploitation.

I believe that these tactics will generate a groundswell of resentment amongst union members who have no wish to be politically regimented by militant and unrepresentative union officials.

- . Observance of two principles in wage adjustments: the need to raise the minimum wage and appropriately reward skill, effort and responsibility.
- . The development of permanent machinery at the shop floor level for continuing consultation between employees and management rather than solely at times of crisis.
- . Re-establish the NLAC as a forum for continuing consultation between government, employers and employees.
- . Strengthen dispute settling procedures to provide for greater obligation to negotiate and conciliate.
- . Establishment of the Industrial Relations Bureau to secure the observance of industrial law.
- . Provide the Industrial Court with the maximum flexibility in determining consequences for the breaking of industrial agreements or awards.