



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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ELECTORATE TALK

Over the past week the leaders of the trade union movement have shown scant regard for the people they supposedly represent - the working men and women of Australia.

The wages policy adopted by the ACTU Congress in Melbourne is a recipe for economic disaster. If successful, it would lead to a massive increase in the numbers of unemployed. It would push even further into the distance the time when the unemployed can be offered jobs. It ranks of the utmost foolishness and utmost selfishness.

Put simply, what the ACTU is saying is this: "Employers and the Government should abide by the decisions of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission leaving unions free to pursue any wage claim they want, over and above increases awarded by the Commission". This dog-in-the-manger attitude would make it even harder for employers to provide jobs.

How could a union movement, supposedly concerned for the welfare of its members, put forward a plan that would deprive those very members of their jobs.

Let's look back in the year to March 1975, when wages went up a staggering 38 per cent in the space of 12 months.

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One can easily see that if wages go up by that much in one year, it is going to cause a great deal of harm to Australian industry.

The ACTU has caved in to the extremists. It is this left-wing element which is pushing for huge wage increases irrespective of the capacity of industry to pay. They remain blind to the simple fact that there is a well-established link between wage increases and unemployment. The two are inseparable.

While the leadership may be blind, not so the rank and file; the people who understand and feel the consequences. Of 800 members of the workforce questioned in a survey in May of this year, 6 out of 10 agreed that wage increases these days mean somebody else loses a job.

Two out of three believed that wage increases wouldn't help. I don't believe that Australia's working men and women are as uncaring and greedy as to deny a workmate of a job. I don't believe that the "I'm all right Jack" attitude is evident to any real extent in Australian society.

It is disturbing that the Labor Party has also caved in to its more radical elements and come up with a wages policy that is virtually identical and equally as disastrous as that of the ACTU's.

Mr. Hayden seems to have forgotten that in February this year, in one of his more sane economic moments, he observed that "the unions must accept that the economy cannot bear unreasonable wage claims". Yet, the Labor Party now has a policy which, as a principal feature, avoids any reference to wage restraint in any shape or form.