

TENDERS — GOODS AND SERVICES — WA LABOR PLATFORM

130. MR N.W. MORTON to the Minister for Small Business:

I refer to media reports on the Australian Capital Territory government's policy on tenders for goods and services. Would the minister consider implementing a similar policy here in Western Australia?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I thank the member for Forrestfield for his question and for the support of small business in his electorate. Let me say from the outset, this is an exceptionally serious issue. In fact, there is no more serious issue facing not just small business but all businesses in Western Australia than this issue right now and what the Labor Party policy would be should it win the next election. It is exceptionally serious because, of course, the greatest threat to any business anywhere in Western Australia would be a future Labor government. We need only look at what has occurred in the ACT recently as reported across the front page of yesterday's *The Australian*. I will read just a little bit from it. According to reports in *The Australian*, and I quote —

... all ACT government agencies had been told to “decline to award a tender proposal for ACT government works or services” if the tenderer does not undertake to meet a list of union demands ...

Those demands include access to company records and names and addresses of workers. It states further —

Unions are also to be supplied with the names of companies and contractors —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will get to that.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr S.K. L'Estrange interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Churchlands, for the first time. Member for Armadale, I do not want to hear from you.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The article continues —

Unions are also to be supplied with the names of companies and contractors tendering for business before any contract is let, to “advise the government” if the tenderer fails the union test and can ask for a contract to be cancelled if the company breaches the union requirements.

If Ayn Rand had written this in *Atlas Shrugged*, she would have been absolutely right. It is exactly what the Labor Party is doing in the ACT and the greatest fear for business in Western Australia is that it will happen if the other side wins the election. As a snapshot, 97 per cent of all registered businesses in Western Australia are small businesses. Out of all of those registered small businesses, 18 per cent work in the construction industry.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for West Swan!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Almost 16-odd per cent of all businesses in Western Australia are small businesses in the construction industry. One-third of all government tenders across Western Australia go to small businesses. Construction is the number one industry for small business in Western Australia and we know —

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for West Swan, I call you to order for the third time now.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: We know from the Heydon royal commission about the culture of negativity and the influence unions have everywhere in the country. Dyson Heydon wrote recently that we can look at any area of Australia, at any unionised industry or any type of industrial union or select any period of time or search for any type of misbehaviour and we will find rich examples over the last 23 years in the Australian trade union movement. So, of course, we have to ask: what would happen here if that policy were adopted in Western Australia. We know what the Labor Party's position is.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: We do not have to go far to find out what it would do if it won the next election. I am going to spend every single waking hour, as will everyone on this side of the house, between now and the next

election reminding every single small business operator across the breadth and width of Western Australia what its policy is.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for West Swan!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Let me get to the point —

A WA Labor Government will review all procurement policies and practices to ensure the following:

- (a) That preference in awarding contracts is given to those companies that are prepared to work —

Come in spinner!

Point of Order

The SPEAKER: Members, I want to hear this in silence.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Mr Speaker, you have actually ruled on this previously. The minister can answer matters that come under the minister's administrative responsibility, but it is not possible for him to answer questions regarding the Labor Party's platform.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Forrestfield, I call you to order for the first time. Minister, stick to what is the government's position rather than making some conjectures about something else.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Okay, Mr Speaker; I am happy to do that. The government's position is to not do what the Labor Party wants to do, which is —

That preference in awarding contracts is given to those companies that are prepared to work within the Labor Governments industrial relations framework; that is, which have a positive approach towards the rights of trade unions and their members ...

...

WA Labor will introduce mechanisms, systems and practices within government departments and authorities which are capable of implementing and policing the above,

What a shame! The truth is that the greatest threat to any business operator in this state is a future Labor government. The big challenge right now is for the Leader of the Opposition to get some integrity and to stand up and tell all the union heavyweights otherwise.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Willagee! Right, wind it up, please.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: We know that the Labor Party will never stand up to the union movement. People need only go and ask the Deputy Mayor of Fremantle.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Sit down. Member for Willagee, I call you to order for the first time, and the member for Armadale for the second time. I want a 10-second wind-up.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: People only have to go and ask the Deputy Mayor of Fremantle what he thinks about the union thuggery in the Labor Party. They only have to go and ask Alannah MacTiernan and Gary Gray about the problems facing the Labor Party. It has nothing to do with the leadership; it is to do with the structure. Rest assured that there is not a single person on this side of the house who would ever implement anything that Labor would do if it ever wins government.