

WAGES POLICY

144. Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE to the Treasurer:

I refer to this government's new wages policy that will save the state \$500 million—a policy that the opposition now overwhelmingly supports. Could these savings have happened earlier; and, if so, what stopped them from being achieved?

Mr B.S. WYATT replied:

That is a great question, member for Thornlie. I was surprised when I heard the Leader of the Opposition warmly embrace the policy of the government that we have unfortunately had to go through to find further savings to a very strained budget. I was surprised when it was announced, so I went back and had a look through the Leader of the Opposition's Twitter account that is usefully promoted on my Twitter handle on a regular basis. It states —

Today the McGowan government announced its plan for wage freezes for frontline services. A pay cut in real terms. #police #nurses #teachers

And the accompanying picture has three red crosses.

I was very surprised, although pleased, when just yesterday and the day before the Leader of the Opposition said —

I did not complain about ... Labor's wages policy.

Again, as it is being promoted on my Twitter time line, apparently not a complaint —

I actually think it is excellent ... The fact that this government got away with it makes me jealous as hell. I tried the same thing. I actually tried to go further at one time with a wage freeze altogether.

That is obviously different from a pay cut in real terms and three red crosses! But then the Leader of the Opposition went on to make this point —

... I was pushing for something like the present government has done. I thought about a freeze altogether for a long time ... I think someone came up with a scheme very similar to that of the present government, of a fixed sum of about \$1 000 a year. I brought it to my colleagues, ...

The question then is: what happened when the Leader of the Opposition brought it to his colleagues? Did the member for Churchlands knock it off? Did the member for Bateman knock it off? Did the member for Scarborough knock it off? Did Banquo's ghost up the back there from Cottesloe knock it off? Who knocked it off, Leader of the Opposition? When it came to it, when the Leader of the Opposition took it to his colleagues —

Dr M.D. Nahan: Where are your union mates?

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Mr B.S. WYATT: I will take that interjection, Mr Speaker: "Where are your union mates?" As far as I understand it, the Leader of the Opposition brought it to his colleagues, but because of our union mates, he could not do anything else. I am just trying to understand. The Leader of the Opposition must have been captured by the unions when he was the Treasurer! Not willing to implement a policy around saving, he was captured by the unions. I thought we had three hours yesterday in which we were reprimanded for such audacity, yet here we have a policy that makes the former Treasurer as jealous as hell, but he brought it to his colleagues, and all of them sitting around him now decided that it was not going to happen. Whether it was all of them or whether it was Banquo's ghost, one or the other —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, no. I will get the cameraman back if we keep this up!

Mr B.S. WYATT: At some point along the way, of course, a government had to be elected that took these things around the finances seriously. We take it seriously.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Again, my identity crisis about whether I am captured or not is coming through. Unfortunately, these decisions need to be made and we will continue to make them.