



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

ADJOURNMENT

Building and Construction Industry

SPEECH

Tuesday, 8 November 2016

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Tuesday, 8 November 2016</p> <p>Page 77</p> <p>Questioner</p> <p>Speaker O'Brien, Ted, MP</p>	<p>Source House</p> <p>Proof Yes</p> <p>Responder</p> <p>Question No.</p>
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Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (19:34): As a Queensland, I am ashamed to say that my state has overtaken Victoria as the epicentre of CFMEU thuggery. In this year alone, 40 per cent of the issues detailed on the Fair Work Building and Construction website relates to CFMEU in Queensland. As a new member to this chamber, I have had the displeasure of witnessing how submissive the Labor Party is to the union movement, as evidenced by the debate over the Australian Building and Construction Commission, the ABCC.

Once upon a time, the people pulling the strings in Labor were labelled 'faceless'. There is that famous image from 1963, just outside the Kingston Hotel, which is just down the road from here. The photo is of Arthur Calwell with his deputy, Gough Whitlam, standing forlornly outside the pub, as 36 faceless men, mostly union members, decided the policies the Labor Party were to take to that year's election. They met behind closed doors in secret back in 1963, because they wanted to keep it a secret. How things have changed, Mr Speaker. Not nowadays—nowadays the union movement signals its control over the Australian Labor Party as openly as the ALP bows to it.

Established by the Howard government in 2005, the ABCC was killed off by Prime Minister Julia Gillard in 2012. For reasons revealed the following year by *The Sydney Morning Herald's* Peter Hartcher, who wrote:

In November 2011 Gillard hosted a meeting with the secretary of the ACTU, Dave Oliver, and the heads of the major unions. It was held over lunch at Kirribilli House. Its purpose to forge a strategic alliance between Gillard and the union movement.

Basically, it was a dirty deal. Or, as Martin Ferguson told Hartcher, it was 'another Kirribilli agreement' in reference to that infamous Hawke-Keating deal. One last quote from that article:

She gave the unions everything they wanted.

On top of the list of their demands, of course, was the disbandment of the ABCC, and Prime Minister Gillard dutifully complied.

Fast forward a few years and, unfortunately, that is precisely what we see today: the current Leader of the Opposition—who admits he has battled to retain the leadership of the ALP against the member for Grayndler—has committed to the CFMEU that he would oppose the ABCC's reinstatement—its reintroduction. That is the sole and the crude reason for the Labor Party continuing to oppose this bill.

However, my state can no longer afford these dirty deals. We need the ABCC reinstated. We need to stop recriminations against employers who employ non-union labour. We need to reverse Labor's cuts to the maximum penalties for breaching the law. We need Fair Work Building and Construction to have the right to continue court proceedings, regardless of private settlements. We need evidence-gathering powers to be retained; we need to introduce an effective building code; and we need to take away the opportunity for big employers and big unions to collude locking out smaller players and discriminating against subcontractors.

A few days ago I looked at the website of the Queensland branch of the CFMEU and learnt how proud they are of their most recent merger with the BLF, the Builders Labourers Federation—a union that was deregistered for corruption and poor behaviour. Guess who announced that merger? The former CFMEU president no less, Dave Hanna, who, we learned only last week, will be going to court for—wait for it—threatening to stuff a phone down a worksite manager's throat! This is who is running the Labor Party nowadays. It makes one wonder if the CFMEU will go the same way as the BLF. The ABCC bill needs to be passed.