

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Budget

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (9.16 p.m.)—I rise to condemn this budget. I rise to condemn those who had a hand in putting it together—and I acknowledge the Assistant Treasurer sitting idly at the bench across—and I rise to condemn all those who would view the budget as anything other than what it is: a cynic's road into the middle. It is interesting that the motion that was put forward is not only damning but also moribund. I do not think the member for Leichhardt actually understands the motion or the budget premise on which he put it. In the Reserve Bank speech on 15 May the member for Leichhardt said:

It is a fact that the Howard government inherited an economy growing strongly in 1996; an economy built on 13 years of sustained economic reform under the stewardship of first the Hawke government and then the Keating government. Inflation was under control and productivity was on the rise.

If I may say so, I think the member for Leichhardt is on a different planet to me—perhaps he went with the probe to Mars—because for the 13 years of the Hawke-Keating government, inflation averaged 5.3 per cent. That is a fact, Assistant Treasurer. In the final year of the Hawke-Keating government, inflation was 4.2 per cent. And you have the hide, you have the audacity, member for Leichhardt, you have the blatant effrontery, to come in here and waste this House's time with motions and speeches that say inflation was under control by the previous Labor government.

But these inadequacies do not stop there do they, member for Leichhardt? You continued to say that 'productivity was on the rise' in 1996 when the Howard government took over. I would hate to burst your little productivity bubble, but let me actually refer you, Sir, to the facts. The facts are that of the 13 years of the Hawke-Keating government productivity, by which I gather you mean labour productivity although you do not specify—perhaps, Sir, because you do not understand—labour productivity averaged 2.2 per cent.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member must address his remarks through the chair.

Mr ROBERT—Thank you, Mr Speaker. In the 11 years of the Howard government the average productivity was 2.4 per cent. In the final five years of the Howard government, labour productivity was 2.8 per cent. In the final five years of the Hawke-Keating government, labour productivity was 2.3 per cent. However you want to look at labour productivity figures, they were lower during the Hawke-Keating years. It is interesting to note—and the Assistant Treasurer would know this—that it is easy to have productivity figures high when real wages decline. And in the 13 glorious years of the Hawke-Keating government what happened to real wages? They declined by two per cent. What happened to working families in 13 years? Their wages, their take-home pay after inflation, went backwards by two per cent. What happened after the 11 years of the Howard government? Real wages for working families after inflation went forward. How far? They increased by 20 per cent. It is easy to sit there and quote a productivity increase when real wages go backwards two per cent.

But the budget does not end there. We can look at one of the sneaky things that this government have put through—and the Assistant Treasurer would know this very well. They have not used deflation by non-farm GDP. No, they have deflated their outlook by CPI to give them a better result. If they had kept the traditional deflation measure by non-farm GDP, they would realise that the expenses in the 2009-10 financial year grow by almost five per cent—the highest growth in expenses since 1990 taking out, of course, the GST. I did not see that in the Treasurer's speech. That was hidden on some page within the budget itself. I, of course, have constituents, people like Paul Hamilton from Runaway Bay, now asking questions about fuel because Labor promised to bring the price of fuel down. Labor promised to bring grocery prices down. Let me reiterate to the member for Leichhardt the words of the Leader of the Opposition: watching fuel prices does not bring them down. Your attack on condensate simply sends a message to the world that if you come and mine and explore in this country then you cannot believe the promises of a Labor government because they will change them. This is an appalling budget. This is an appalling motion. This is a complete waste of the House's time and I condemn it in the strongest possible terms.