



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Economy

QUESTION

Wednesday, 27 October 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Date Wednesday, 27 October 2010
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Questioner Grierson, Sharon, MP
Speaker

Source House
Proof No
Responder Emerson, Craig, MP
Question No.

Economy

Ms GRIERSON (Newcastle) (3.22 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Trade. Can the minister advise the House of his engagement with countries in our region and explain why economic reform is essential to Australia's trade competitiveness? Minister, what are the impediments to economic reform?

Dr EMERSON (Rankin—Minister for Trade)—I will briefly take this opportunity to welcome Mr Oakeshott Sr and to point out that Mr Oakeshott Sr and the mum of the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency were the tennis captains at Lismore High some little time ago.

Obviously trade is fundamental to Australia's future prosperity and to the generation of high-skill, high-wage jobs. I was asked about the region—I will be visiting a number of countries in the region. On Monday I will be visiting Korea; on Tuesday, China; on Wednesday, Hong Kong; and on Thursday, Singapore. So it will be a whirlwind tour, but one that will be very important in furthering Australia's trade objectives.

This visit will be ahead of the APEC ministerial meeting, which I will be involved in. What is fundamentally important about APEC is that this was an organisation to promote free trade in the region. It was an initiative of the Hawke Labor government, furthered by the Keating Labor government—a very important and shining example of economic reform. We will be delivering a report on the Bogor Declaration, the goal of which was free and open trade by 2010. That report will be delivered on the back of the pledges that were made back in 1994 and it will be great when Australia can report that we have substantially achieved free and open trade. Why? Because we have embraced economic reform.

This country, under the leadership of Hawke and Keating and in places furthered by the Howard government, has embraced economic reform, but unfortunately we are now going through a period in which the Liberal Party is moving to the far right to the position occupied by Pauline Hanson and Lyndon La Rouche.

The SPEAKER—Order! The Minister for Trade should be very careful.

Dr EMERSON—The problem with this is that it is antireform. This leader is antireform and the one person who could unite John Howard and Peter Costello is Tony Abbott, because they said that this man has no interest in economics whatsoever. We will continue to embrace economic reform in this country, but we will —

Mr Pyne—On a point of order, Mr Speaker: clearly there is an issue of direct relevance. These slag and bag answers should not be allowed.

The SPEAKER—Order! There are two issues: the minister will refer to members by their parliamentary titles and he will be directly relevant to the question.

Dr EMERSON—The relevance is that we need to lock in our trade competitiveness. We will only do that through ongoing economic reform under the Labor government led by Prime Minister Julia Gillard. We will not cop the cheapjack populism of the man opposite, the cheapjack populism of the Liberal Party embracing Hanson economics. We are not going to cop it. We are going to continue with reform.