



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Trade

QUESTION

Tuesday, 23 November 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner Parke, Melissa, MP
Speaker

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

Trade

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (3.18 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Trade. What is the government doing to improve our exporters' access to key markets and why is this important?

Dr EMERSON (Rankin—Minister for Trade)—I have just been checking, Mr Speaker, that we have the new paradigm of peace, light and sweetness. I thank the member for Fremantle for her question. Australia has always been a great trading nation. It is a great trading nation now and will always be a great trading nation. It is terrific to receive a question from the member for Fremantle, who is a member of parliament from a great trading state. Western Australia, along with Queensland and other states, have been enormous beneficiaries of trade liberalising policies overwhelmingly implemented by previous Labor governments. The House might remember that the Whitlam government provided the first reductions in tariffs with the 25 per cent across-the-board tariff reduction. Then it was the Hawke and Keating governments that refashioned the Australian economy from an inward looking economy—inefficient, with very high protective barriers that supplied a narrow domestic market—to an outward looking economy engaged with the world. It has been estimated that the refashioning of the Australian economy by previous Labor governments generated \$3,900 worth of increased income for the average household in Australia. There have been great gains from trade. I am following in the footsteps of the former Minister for Trade, the member for Hotham. I know that he applied great energy to his task. If I can replicate that energy then we are in for a very good future over the next couple of years in terms to trade liberalisation.

I thank the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs for their efforts in inviting to Australia, Seiji Maehara, Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs—who also has responsibility for trade. Just recently, Japan released a very important document, its comprehensive economic partnership agreement, whereby the Japanese government, very sensibly and with great foresight, outline a new approach to trade liberalisation which will involve domestic reform of agriculture in that country. We were pleased to host Minister Maehara for lunch today.

We encourage, very strongly, the minister and Prime Minister Kan's government in their efforts to open up the Japanese economy, including their agricultural industries, to more foreign trade. These are very encouraging times in terms of our increased investment and engagement with Japan. I want to make sure that the minister and the Japanese government know that we are right behind them in these reforms because they are also embracing the sort of trade liberalisation that Labor governments in this country adopted. All power, all strength to the Kan government for making these important decisions. We have agreed to re-energise the FTA negotiations with the next round in January. I am glad to get a little bit of support from the opposition. We will take any support we can get because they have done nothing but be negative for the last couple of weeks—in fact, since the election. Negative three-word slogans are no substitute for trade policy reform and economic policy reform. That is why we welcome the visit of Minister Maehara today. It has been a great day, and I am sure we are going to do a lot more good work this afternoon when he meets the Prime Minister.

Ms Gillard—Mr Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the *Notice Paper*.