



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Workplace Relations: Bargaining

SPEECH

Wednesday, 16 February 2005

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Speaker	O'Connor, Brendan, MP	Question No.	

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR (Gorton) (9.52 am)—Most people in Australia recognise Richard Pratt as a good businessman, as a good corporate citizen and, indeed, as a socially responsible one. I can recall his role in raising funds after the disastrous tsunami hit Asian countries. But I would like to draw the parliament's attention to some concerns I have not so much about Richard Pratt but about his business Visy pulp and paper—in particular, the company's site in Tumut, New South Wales.

The mill in New South Wales was established in February 2002 and the employees there have been seeking to collectively bargain with their employer for some time. Just to give the parliament some history on the matter: when the site was established, all of the employees were placed on AWAs, which was one of the provisions pursuant to the Workplace Relations Act 1996. But from that inception to the present time, when the AWAs have in the main nominally expired, there has been an intention by the majority of employees to collectively bargain. In fact, most of those employees have now joined the Pulp and Paper Workers Branch of the CFMEU.

It seems to me that Richard Pratt's company should provide the opportunity for employees to collectively bargain. Indeed, some of the provisions in earlier instruments regulating the company's employees did not allow for representation and limited the capacity for workers to bargain. Given the fact that a majority of employees now wish to collectively bargain, I ask Richard Pratt, his company and his managers to allow that to happen. It is clear that there is provision under the act to allow for Australian workplace agreements. There is also provision for collective agreements. It is the will of the majority to have the conditions of employment contained within a certified agreement, and the company refuses to negotiate. As I understand it, this matter will be before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission tomorrow. I call upon Richard Pratt, who has had a very good name and reputation. I do not think it needs to be besmirched by his acting in such an unfair and antiworker fashion.