

IR zealots Abbott and Abetz plan to bring back WorkChoices, remove No Disadvantage Test

Liberal Leader Tony Abbott's failure to rule out scrapping the No Disadvantage Test is a warning to working Australians that their pay and conditions will be at risk under a Coalition Government, say unions.

ACTU President Sharan Burrow said Mr Abbott had let slip another sign that he intends to bring back WorkChoices by refusing today to guarantee the Coalition would retain the No Disadvantage Test for job contracts.

"The removal of the No Disadvantage Test under WorkChoices was political poison," said Ms Burrow.

"It led to thousands of workers, including many young people and other vulnerable workers having their penalty rates, overtime pay, public holidays and other award conditions stripped away.

"It was a key factor in the massive shift in public opinion against WorkChoices and which led to the eventual loss of the Liberals at the 2007 election."

Since his ascendancy to the Liberal leadership a week ago, Mr Abbott has flagged the reintroduction of WorkChoices-style individual contracts, the removal of unfair dismissal protection for employees in small businesses, and now, the scrapping of the No-Disadvantage Test.

In interviews, he has declared that the only thing wrong with WorkChoices was "the politics", and has talked in favour of "free labour markets", which is code for giving big businesses the power to drive down workers' wages and conditions.

Ms Burrow said the appointment of hardliner Eric Abetz to the Shadow Workplace portfolio is another sign that the Tony Abbott-led Liberals plan to bring back WorkChoices Mark II.

"Senator Abetz and Mr Abbott are industrial relations zealots.

"There is no doubt they want to bring back WorkChoices.

"Senator Abetz was intimately involved with the Coalition's \$121 million promotion of WorkChoices and wrote the notoriously deceptive 'Protected By Law' WorkChoices booklet (see attachment).

"He resisted the passage of the Fair Work Act this year, and in numerous speeches has defended WorkChoices, she said.

"In uncertain economic times when unemployment is still rising, working Australians cannot afford a repeat of the loss of rights and protections that occurred under WorkChoices," Ms Burrow said.

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ACTU

Attachment:

Political authorisation from the WorkChoices booklet of 20 June, 2006 (page 16).

For more information call the **WorkChoices**
hotline on **1800 025 239** or visit the **WorkChoices**
website **www.workchoices.gov.au**



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