



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE:
TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS**

Taxation

SPEECH

Tuesday, 27 March 2018

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

<p>Date Tuesday, 27 March 2018 Page 2251 Questioner Speaker Colbeck, Sen Richard</p>	<p>Source Senate Proof No Responder Question No.</p>
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Senator COLBECK (Tasmania) (15:19): You'd almost think that the Labor Party don't really want to debate the motion that they've just moved before the Senate. To be frank, given some of the activities of the last 24 hours and some of the briefings that are coming out from the Labor Party, I have to say I am starting to feel the ghosts of Labor past return from the Rudd-Gillard years, where 'policy turmoil' and 'policy implementation turmoil' were basically the buzzwords of how the Labor Party operated. The Labor Party try to talk about fairness, but I don't think they really understand what fairness is. They come in here and misrepresent numbers—they talk about a \$65 billion tax cut to big business—and yet the background briefing is that they're going to back in the \$30 billion of tax cuts that have already been passed for businesses with a turnover of up to \$50 million a year; that's already done. We're now talking about a process in front of the parliament at the moment for \$35 billion, but they can't go past the old talking points that continue with the \$65 billion. Here we have something that the Leader of the Opposition furiously opposed last year in this place. But now, reportedly, the Labor Party are going to support it.

We had the Labor Party's retirees' tax, which was introduced, or announced, a couple of weeks ago. I think it was described by the opposition spokesperson for Treasury matters, Mr Bowen, as a policy that was well designed and well thought through—I think he even admitted a few weeks ago that it was going to hit pensioners. But we have here today a backflip from the Labor Party. Their current policy, which was going to raise them billions of dollars, hasn't lasted a fortnight. They claimed a couple of weeks ago that this policy was well organised, well thought through, well designed and fair. But perhaps it's not fair. I find it quite interesting that they continue to talk about fairness all the time, because I don't think they really do understand what fairness means and I don't think they really do understand what good policy development is. Quite frankly, I'm not sure what Bill Shorten really does believe. Back in 2011, Bill Shorten said—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Fawcett, I remind you to refer to others—

Senator COLBECK: As long as you refer to me by my right title, I'll refer to him by his!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I beg your pardon; my apologies!

Senator COLBECK: Mr Bill Shorten, the Leader of the Opposition, said:

Cutting the company income tax rate increases domestic productivity and domestic investment—

I agree with that. He went on to say:

More capital means higher productivity and economic growth and leads to more jobs and higher wages.

Now, the Labor Party seem to be arguing today that that's not the case. So my question is: what does Bill Shorten really believe in? He also said—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Colbeck—

Senator COLBECK: Sorry, the Prime Minister—the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Bill Shorten—

Senator Kitching: He can be the Prime Minister! You can call him the Prime Minister!

Senator COLBECK: No, I fear the day that ever happens, Senator! Mr Bill Shorten said, in an ACOSS speech on 30 March 2011:

... lowering the corporate rate for smaller businesses only (as the Greens propose) creates an artificial incentive for Australian businesses to downsize.

In worse case scenarios some businesses might actually lay people off to get smaller—and the size based different tax treatment would create a glass ceiling on business workforce growth.

Instead we want a level playing field regardless of the size of the company.

Yet we understand that the Labor Party are going to support the tax cuts for businesses that have already been passed by the parliament, which they opposed last year, and they're going to continue to oppose something that they said they didn't support last year. What do the Labor Party really believe? What does Mr Shorten really believe in? I do remember one thing: when Mr Shorten said, 'I'm not sure what the Prime Minister has said, but I agree with everything that she has said.' I think there's one question that we all want answered: what does Mr Shorten really believe in? (*Time expired*)