

We The People

Program 20 Car Manufacturing



Currently there is a lot of talk about vehicle manufacturing in Australia and that's a good thing. Mind you petrol vehicles are old paradigm and why we want to keep the fossil fuel machines going is beyond me. So there may be a future for vehicles but they will be electric and rely on batteries for energy. Our vehicle manufacturing should be based on Research and Development in battery development and not petrol engines.

Very recently Kim Carr Minister for Manufacturing said that Labor doesn't do 'bail outs' yet he is not telling the whole story and that's not surprising really. My concern is the very favourable deals this government does quietly with the unions and specifically the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union. I saw them interviewed and my immediate reaction was they reminded me of the old Water Side Workers union officials both in style and appearance complete with bikers goatees.

Ford, Holden and now Toyota are all under pressure but don't believe for a moment the unions care about anything except themselves because of the demands they make. They say one thing and mean another and it's an example of old unionism revitalised by this Federal Government. Now I am not beating a drum here about a particular party in the broad sense as I think both sides of politics lack real leaders at present but I do have a deep and abiding worry about Labor and its antics at the moment with manufacturing and the handling of public money.

As an example take this divisive and nasty manufacturing agreement sanctioned and encouraged by the Feds. It's called the **Skilled Trades Enterprise Agreement** and it gives the union unprecedented benefits for its members which Ford have agreed to in order to gain \$34 million public dollars to keep the plant running for a few more years. That's \$34 million of our money from Government which flows direct to the unions via a sanitised agreement with Ford. The workers receive benefits if the plant closes including 95 weeks of redundancy, annual and long service leave paid out and believe it or not, unused sick leave. The agreement also specifies friendly commissioners by name who will hear disputes. The agreement also offers one month's paid leave per year for union training for unionists and despite acknowledging problems with absenteeism, allows Chinese herbal medicine dispensers to sign sick leave certificates for staff. This all comes from an analysis by Grace Collier an independent Industrial Relations expert.

So at a time when the big vehicle manufacturers are struggling and want to reduce costs they are pushed into agreements which dramatically raise costs and with the governments blessing and assistance. All this and very generous pay increases and better conditions as well while the sector goes down the gurgler. So it seems that federal IR these days means more money from the public purse for union hacks. It is all in stark contrast with small and medium Gold Coast business where the owners try and secure a living often working 7 days a week and pay their taxes just to be passed onto the government for redistribution to these powerful unions. Why on earth do we bother and why does this government do all these things which are so unfair to us all.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley