

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Treasury Portfolio**

Additional Estimates 20-21 February 2008

**Question: aet 39**

**Topic: Industrial Relations**

**Hansard Page: E113**

**Senator COONAN asked:**

**Senator COONAN**—This is a very generalised question but where might the industrial relations system be improved—we can always make improvements—to increase the efficiency and productivity of the economy and ensure that it can grow sustainably with low unemployment—

**Senator Sherry**—That is hard to analyse. You cannot ask Mr Tune to speculate as to where the industrial relations system can be improved to improve the economy. If he were asked it would be policy advice to government.

**Senator COONAN**—Treasury expresses views about these matters across a broad range of issues. That is hardly going to offend anybody, I would have thought, and certainly not witnesses of this experience.

**Senator Sherry**—I think you are crossing into the highly speculative area of the future.

**Senator COONAN**—The future is always speculative, and we have been asking about the future for about the last three hours.

**Senator Sherry**—No, that is not right.

**Senator COONAN**—It is right. That is what we have been doing.

**Senator Sherry**—It has not been confined to the future.

**Senator COONAN**—In all of this area, with respect, you and I have been around this table in various guises for a very long time—

**Senator Sherry**—What I will do is I will take the question on notice.

**Senator COONAN**—I am very interested to know what Treasury's views are about this. Have you—

**Senator Sherry**—We will take the question on notice and we will come back to you with a considered view. But we will take that on notice.

**Senator COONAN**—Senator Murray just wants to add a rider to it and I am happy for that to happen.

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**Senator MURRAY**—My suggestion was that, if you are going to come back with a kind of broad assessment of the options for improving the system further, you should have regard as far as you can to international precedents, which you can get through the OECD papers.

**Senator Sherry**—I am happy to add consideration of that into our answer.

**Answer:**

This information would constitute policy advice to government.