Facing up to structural change

By JOHN HYDE, MP

Clearly there is a need to balance the fortunes of those adversely and beneficially affected by change.

Public confidence in addressing future change would be enhanced by the knowledge that governments were fully and systematically informed about the impact of changes in the trading environment and by the knowledge that government policy would ultimately reflect information rather than threats made by competing lobbyists.

I see no single means by which public understanding and confidence in fair play may be assessed but there are several possibilities, each of which would help.

The Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, when Leader of the Opposition, advocated a committee of the House of Representatives to consider IAC reports.

While in practice and in theory any advantage gained by one group is at the expense of others, the established vested interest has a very unfair advantage over new interests in the business of leasing on the Government.

What is more, Australian economic growth has been so poor that within only 25 years we have slipped from the sixth to the 16th wealthiest nation in the OECD group, so poor that the standard of living in Japan measured by gross product per head is now higher than in Australia.

This unfortunate circumstance must be because we have been using our exceptionally bountiful resources wastefully.

The textile clothing footwear and motor car industries employ only about 2 per cent of the workforce, but at the expense of the other 98 per cent, those well organised interests have managed to induce the Government to grant them immunity from those changes which would properly reflect their competitive disadvantages.

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