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End of union picnics lamented

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KIM Beazley yesterday lamented the death of a 40-year tradition when the new **industrial** relations laws kick in to ban **industry** picnic days from awards and **workplace** agreements.

Speaking at Sydney's Luna Park, where thousands of building sector employees had gathered for their annual picnic, Mr Beazley warned about IR legislation effects on families.

`` **John Howard** has just put through parliament last Friday the most savage **industrial** attack on family life that any government has put in place," he said.

But Master Builders Association acting CEO Richard Calver said the **industry** should concern itself more with lifting low productivity levels.

Mr Calver said the average NSW building worker was ``productive" for just 163 days each year when annual leave, inclement weather and the 36-hour week were taken into account.

``There are insufficient productive days, we are very lucky in this country with the leisure time workers have," Mr Calver said. ``We are actually trying to stop restrictive work practices in the **industry** -- they are a drag on our productivity.

``The concept of picnic days per se we have no problem with -- but we don't want it to be compulsory, we don't want it to be added to the number of unproductive days."

The Howard Government tried to abolish picnic days in 2000 on the grounds they were ``a relic of the past days of **union** control of the workforce", but the Senate rejected the bill.

About 30,000 workers, employers and their families poured into four venues across NSW, including Luna Park, to celebrate the annual day off organised by the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy **Union**. CFMEU NSW secretary Andrew Ferguson said the day brought the construction **industry** together.

``The Howard Government's deceptively named Work Choices laws will

take away this important family time and destroy the sense of community and unity built through **industry** picnic days," Mr Ferguson said. ``This day is an invaluable opportunity for workers and employers to spend time together with their families after a year of working long hours, six days a week, literally building this country."

LIGHT WORK

Estimate of productive working days annually in the NSW building **industry**

Weekdays	260
Less annual holidays	20
Less personal leave	12
Less public holidays	10
Less inclement weather* ...	41
Less rostered days off	14
Productive days	163

* Allowance made in National Building and Construction **Industry** Award

Examples of industries with **union** picnic days

- * Construction **industry**, including builders, painters and fitters
- * Electrical **industry**
- * Warehousing
- * Local government
- * Nurses
- * Security officers
- * Postal workers

Source: Master Builders Association; staff reporters

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