



Pyne taunts Shorten over unions

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THE Abbott government has blasted Bill Shorten as a soft hand on union thuggery after the opposition sided with the Greens to vote down key Coalition legislation that would have imposed tougher penalties on dodgy union leaders and held them to higher standards.

Leader of the House Christopher Pyne seized on Labor's opposition to its registered organisations legislation to launch an animated attack on the Opposition Leader in question time yesterday, accusing him of looking the other way when unions did the wrong thing.

"(On Monday) night, the Labor Party opposed the introduction of the registered organis-

ations commission, which would have supported the poorest workers like those of the Health Services Union who were ripped off by their previous union secretary, a former member of this house, the former member for Dobell," Mr Pyne said.

Holding up a copy of *The Australian's* front-page story last week in which one of its journalists was assaulted by a unionist at the Maritime Union of Australia state conference in Western Australia, Mr Pyne ridiculed the response of Mr Shorten as ignorant. "Last week ... the Maritime Union of Australia had some very bad times with one of their members attacking a journalist," Mr Pyne said.

"This was the Opposition Leader's response; that he hadn't seen the story on the front page of

The Australian newspaper. He hadn't seen the story."

Chief executive of the Australian Mines and Metals Association Steve Knott also questioned why Labor had voted down the Coalition's registered organisation legislation on Monday night.

The bill would have afforded greater protection to trade union members, but had been criticised by some in the business sector for imposing onerous restrictions on both unions and employer groups.

However, Mr Knott said the legislation did not go far enough and that registered organisations should come under the jurisdiction of Australia's corporations laws and be regulated by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission.