



Speech by

**BILL FELDMAN**

**MEMBER FOR CABOOLTURE**

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Hansard 19 November 1998

#### **DAIRY INDUSTRY AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr FELDMAN** (Caboolture—ONP) (Leader of the One Nation Party) (3.37 p.m.): I support the Bill before the House. Before I go any further, I would like to talk about my humble beginnings. The honourable member for Southport spoke about having nothing at the start. That is where I come from. There is nothing poorer than a cream farmer from the back of Kumbia. I grew up on a farm. But back then, a farm supported the family and the extended family. Occasionally, it supported a sharefarmer as well. We are far beyond those days when the farm supported that many people. I cannot talk about the amount of money in the back pocket of the honourable member for Southport, but we never grew up with that sort of money.

**Mr Fouras:** What's 700 grand between friends?

**Mr FELDMAN:** Terrific! It is good to see that the dairy industry has come that far. But all my father got for it were two animal diseases: leptospirosis and brucellosis, and he was on an invalid pension for the last 25 years from tick toxin.

It is with great regret that I again see an industry on the destructive path to deregulation as a result of the National Competition Policy. My fear is that the Queensland dairy industry faces the same long-term fate as any other industry which has been deregulated, that is, a monopolised market with higher prices and poorer quality controls—quite the opposite of what National Competition Policy is supposed to achieve.

It continues to amaze me that the Federal Government's brilliant economic rationalist scheme has still not worked, but it continues to pursue it, and State Governments unfortunately fall into line. Last week, the State of Queensland showed its dissent here in this Parliament for the National Competition Policy, with a vote of support for an increased focus on the public benefits test and the human costs involved in this damaging ideology. This, of course, is too late for the industries which have already been destroyed and for the thousands of workers who have lost their jobs and their livelihoods—like the workers from the Woodford butter factory, the closing down of which almost destroyed a town.

This Bill is a result of taking a closer look at the human cost of the National Competition Policy. The human costs associated with deregulation are large and often incalculable. The devastation that it can have on whole communities and Australia's society generally is real and growing. I am sure the member for Tablelands would have loved to rise and speak about the devastation that deregulation will cause to the dairy industry on the tableland and to the factory at Malanda.

**Mr Nelson:** You are lucky I am not.

**Mr FELDMAN:** We are lucky he is not.

Economic rationalism and its offshoots, such as the NCP, have played a major part in Australia's changing and dismal societal landscape. Deregulation rips at the core of Australian industry, increases unemployment and the tax burden and destroys people's lives and families. Governments seem to care little for the long-term benefit of those people, this State and this country. The devastation it creates could never be overemphasised. Governments should forget the textbooks and the advice of the bean counters and the economists and listen to the people, who are screaming for relief and for

someone to listen to them and to help them instead of discarding them like a broken and useless animal and then kicking them every time they cry for help.

The National Competition Policy is Commonwealth legislation and the States have few alternative powers to overcome its effects. But what seriously are the costs to Queensland of pursuing it? It is about time the State and Territory Governments in this country stopped allowing the Commonwealth Government to push them around and dictate to them about what will and will not be done. I am not sure if much was discussed at the latest Premiers Conference in Canberra apart from the GST, but perhaps it should have been. Perhaps the NCP should have been discussed instead of merely kicking it around. Why have successive Queensland Governments—not just Queensland but also all State and Territory Governments—continually allowed Canberra to take more and more power away from them? It is about time we fought back. National Competition Policy is clearly against the spirit of the Constitution and the intentions of Federation. Does the Premier of Queensland have the fortitude to say "No" to the National Competition Policy in its entirety? What is losing \$40m from Canberra? Is it worth all the benefits that we could have for Queensland industry? Members should just ask the dairy farmers and their families.

This Bill at least provides a sigh of relief to the dairy producers to keep the Victorians out of this State and to keep the Victorian industry within its own borders for the time being at least. As the Minister for Primary Industries stated in his second-reading speech, this Bill gives the dairy industry five years to adjust and to prepare for complete deregulation. I agree wholeheartedly with this Bill. I believe it to be an absolute necessity for the survival of the Queensland dairy industry. However, I suggest that the five-year stay of execution for this industry should not be used by dairy producers to adjust and prepare for deregulation; it is five years in which Queensland can oppose National Competition Policy in action and words and save this industry from deregulation before the 2003 deadline arises. It is our duty to do nothing less than that. One could not overemphasise the importance of our primary industries to this State and to Australia. When I was a child at school I heard an old saying that if the city starves, the country will feed it; but if the country starves, we are all doomed.

One Nation will always support the growth and development of those industries and reject anything that may destroy or harm them. One Nation has the backbone and the fortitude to oppose such a disastrous policy, because One Nation is here to represent Queensland and what is best for Queensland. In closing—and I will cut my contribution short because I promised the Minister I would try to finish early for him—I strongly support this Bill and again reiterate the need for more to be done to rescue this industry before it is too late.

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