



Speech by

Mr M. ROWELL

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (4.30 p.m.): I rise to speak on the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill. Certainly a wide range of issues are addressed in this Bill. I will first speak about the national vendors declaration, which I think is quite important. This voluntary declaration enables beef producers to give a clear indication of the types of chemicals being used. In the past we have experienced great difficulty in selling into some of our overseas markets. I remember the Americans bailing up in one instance because of the nature of the pesticides being used. I think this voluntary system will work particularly well and will be of great benefit to the industry.

I know that there has been cooperation with some of the other primary producers—certainly the sugar industry. We once used BHC dust to control cane grubs, but it was quite disturbing to find BHC dust in the carcasses of beef that had been grazing in nearby fields and so on. That was very detrimental to our ability to sell on our export markets.

The use of pesticides is sometimes used as a trade barrier by some of the countries we deal with, but I think the cattle industry has to come to terms with it. If the industry believes it can go along with voluntary declarations and save quite a bit of work in determining how clear a carcass is of any pesticides used from time to time, I think that will be of great benefit.

I move on to the Brands Act. The coalition does not support the banning of rib branding. I am well aware that the Beef Industry Development Advisory Committee worked on this issue for some time. There was some support for the cessation of cheek branding. There is little question of that. Rib branding has been carried on by the grazing industry over a long period. Sometimes rib branding is more appropriate and it is easier to see a beast on a semitrailer if it has brands on the ribs as opposed to on the twist, the hindquarters or wherever. The industry has worked with this system over a long period. The systems currently in place are the easiest to work with.

I heard the member for Kallangur speak about hides and value adding, and that should happen in many instances. The market reality is that Coles, Woolworths, Australian Meat Holdings and so on are out to screw as much as they can out of producers and give them as little as they can in return. They really do not recognise all the other good things producers may be doing. I think that is where the industry really has difficulty at this time. I think the industry wants proof that there is value adding in the cessation of rib branding.

I believe that the DPI needs to look closely at alternative methods. I know there has been a lot of input to updating technology in relation to the future of branding. There has been a lot of talk about transponders, which enable a whole host of information to be recorded, being placed either in the ruminant or in the ear of cattle. One of the problems with this is cost. Until it is very cheap and very easy to do, I do not think the cattle industry will depart from a lot of its principles and traditions in relation to branding.

A clear skin with no or few impediments would be great—certainly fire branding does not achieve that—but I think the grazier really wants the option of branding or not branding his cattle, which may be reflected in the marketplace. I say "may be" because there is no clear determination. I do not believe anyone has come up with a differentiation between the value of those cattle that are branded on the ribs and those that are not. Some value adding will occur in relation to the sale of a beast that has not been branded.

I move on to the City of Brisbane Market Act 1960. The report of a review carried out by the Brisbane Market Authority Review Committee was handed to the previous Government. It is extremely important that we deal with the issue of exclusivity at the Rocklea markets. When the original Bill was introduced, it was certainly in the best interests of marketing throughout the Brisbane area that there be only one market, but times are changing.

I think the Government also has to realise that this \$1 billion industry that has now developed in Queensland has to change with the times. I know that the Government is very interested in some form of rationalisation of those markets. I am not sure that some of the changes it intends to implement are in the best interests of markets in Queensland in the future. I believe that, as we move to a doubling of the capacity of the horticultural industry in this State, we will see a great proportion of that increase go to exports. I believe we have to have a market that has the capacity to cater for that situation.

The cessation date for exclusivity has been deemed to be 31 August 1999. A five-year extension for lessees at the market is available. I understand that they have the option of moving. There has been some interest on the part of many of the wholesalers at Rocklea in moving out of that market system. I do not think that will be a plus for Queensland's horticultural industry. I believe we need one main market in the Brisbane area. If the Government starts to dictate to those agents out at the market, they may move into an area that they feel more comfortable with. I think the Minister should take that on board.

There is a whole range of other issues in these amendments. Certainly the sawmilling situation has to be addressed. There are also some amendments relating to the QLMA. I believe there is general support for the Bill, other than on the issue of rib branding. Generally, the things that have been brought before this House are important to horticulture, the beef industry, the grain industry, the sawmilling industry and so on right throughout this State.
