



Speech by

VAUGHAN JOHNSON

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Hansard 19 November 1998

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (4.45 p.m.): Whereas the Opposition supports the legislation, the Opposition does not support the aspect of the legislation regarding the branding of cattle, whereby the Minister is trying to eliminate the rib factor. Being a cattleman, and having been in the industry for all of my life, I believe that this is another ploy by bureaucracy of which we have to be very careful.

Many people are not familiar with the cattle industry. Small operators might not want to brand their cattle on the ribs; they might want to brand them on the shoulder or on the rump. But because a bullock is branded on the rump or the shoulder, that does not mean to say that the brand is on the end of the hide; it is a long way back inside the hide—the same as a rib brand. I trust that the Minister will listen to what I have to say. I am talking about big commercial operators. I am also talking about operators in the industry like my colleagues the honourable member for Crows Nest and the honourable member for Burnett, who are cattle producers. And there are smaller operators than them around.

It is absolutely paramount that it be the prerogative of the producers as to where they brand their cattle. When the DPI issue a brand, they will usually stipulate a position. But if there are five or six neighbours and they all brand on the rump, the cattle are not easily identifiable. If somebody brands on the rump, somebody brands on the ribs and somebody brands on the shoulders, those brands are easily identifiable—whether it be by the owner of the cattle, the ringer who is handling the cattle, or the agent who is selling the cattle.

In the part of western Queensland that I represent, we have large commercial operations. Members of the Stock Squad make inspections, and they certainly look for brands on cattle. In big lots of cattle, they like to see a brand that is easily identifiable. On most occasions it is on the ribs or the rump. A company like Stanbroke Pastoral Company will brand 106,000 calves a year. I know that that company is branding on the rump. The Australian Agricultural Company brands 110,000 calves a year. Where they brand their cattle should be the prerogative of those big companies.

What proof is there for people in the industry that they are going to be better advantaged by branding their cattle other than on the ribs? Yes, I totally oppose the cheek brand. As far as I am concerned, it is blatantly cruel, and I will not have it in any way, shape or form. I know from State conferences and that sort of thing that some members of my party or the party hierarchy want the prerogative to be able to say where they want to brand their cattle. Some of them want cheek branding retained, but I outlaw it. I believe that it is cruel, and I will not wear it.

I believe that this is another attack on industry. I say to Government members: being a cattleman, I believe that it is the prerogative of cattle producers to be able to brand their beasts where they want to—whether it be the rump, the ribs or the shoulder. I know that my neighbour at Quilpie—the late Colin Watts—always branded his cattle on the ribs. No doubt his sons brand their cattle on the ribs today. I can still see that old familiar "CL6" brand. It stood out and was easily identifiable. In large areas where there are huge numbers of cattle, it is paramount that cattle are easily identifiable.

Again, that brings me back to the security factor. Some brands are not very clear on the rump. I know that some are not very clear on the shoulder. It is the prerogative of the producers to brand those cattle where they like. If members can prove to me that value adding will be beneficial down the track, I

will listen to them. At the end of day, no more damage is done by branding on the ribs than on the rump or the shoulder.

I ask the Minister to please listen to me. I request that he give consideration to Russell Cooper's amendment to reinsert the rib branding provision. I believe that it has to be retained. In conjunction with the Northern Territory, Queensland is one of the largest cattle-producing States of the Commonwealth. We have large commercial herds. Cattle producing has been a way of life for Queensland. I ask the Minister not to remove a practice that the industry has engaged in since time immemorial. Many people have had one branding position for generations. The branding positioning prerogative should be retained. I fear that the next thing we know cattle producers will not be able to brand on the shoulder; they will be able to brand only on the rump. I fear that the rump will then be eliminated and cattle producers will be able to brand only the twist. I fear that, before too long, we will not be branding at all. That would create absolute anarchy and chaos in the industry.

I plead with the Minister to take on board Russell Cooper's amendment and reinsert into his legislation the prerogative to rib brand. It is paramount for the industry to have those three positions available to them. I plead with the Minister to retain that provision.
