



Speech by

Dr PETER PRENZLER

MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

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ADDRESS IN REPLY

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—ONP) (12.53 p.m.): Firstly, let me say how proud and grateful I am to be standing here today as the member for Lockyer and to speak to the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply to the Governor's Speech. Firstly, I express my loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen and to her distinguished representative His Excellency the Governor, Major-General Peter Arnison.

The biggest issues facing my electorate of Lockyer today are the growing dead hand of bureaucracy and the insane ideology of globalisation. Both are reaching into my electorate and uprooting the prosperity that has been the envy of people for decades. This growing problem and the chaos it is creating among ordinary working people is the prime reason I was elected to this Parliament; now I have the honour and privilege of addressing it.

My electors expect and demand that I put them first and represent them tirelessly and continuously from dawn to dusk in this Parliament, which I now know is not a stranger to long sitting hours. My electors are Queenslanders who take their income largely from the soil. They proudly take their prosperity from beef, vegetables, dairy, grains, fodder and a host of other honoured products.

My electors live in a large electorate. Its boundaries begin at the New South Wales border south-east of Boonah, reach north to Greenbank and then swing west to skirt the southern fringes of Ipswich, continuing inland to the range below Toowoomba. As a result, its residents require the full range of vital Government services. Unfortunately, previous Parliaments have tended to neglect them. They feel let down, largely by forces beyond their control; but they are certainly forces that are within the control of this Parliament.

My electorate was one of the safest National Party seats in Queensland—but not safe enough. After the last election, nobody can consider their seat a safe one. The people are reclaiming ownership of their electorates, and every party had better recognise that the elector is supreme or else. My commitment to my electors is to put them first in all things, to represent them fiercely in this House, to communicate with them and to consult with them. The people must be heard in this Chamber and heard above the irritating and privileged voices of big business, big unions and big government. My electors feel that their voice has not been heard, but they made their voice heard at the last State election.

Another big cause of discord is the withdrawal of Government services to satisfy the demands of faceless bookkeepers in some dark hole in Brisbane. The slashing of services was started by the Goss Labor Party Government and left unaddressed by the Borbidge Government. It left a legacy of bitterness and neglect. In Lockyer, courthouses in Boonah and Laidley were closed. More seriously, contact was lost with sundry departments because staff and contact points were also withdrawn. Electors were forced to drive many miles to find equivalent services elsewhere, if they were lucky enough to have a car. The people felt let down. On another front, the DPI Warrill View research station was closed down by the Labor Party and sold by the former National Party Government. This diminished dairy and goat research capabilities in an electorate where dairy and primary industry concerns are of the utmost importance.

Globalisation and national competition policies over the past two decades have proved to be particularly hard on rural communities. Beef, dairy, pork, small crops and grain industries are continually

under attack. These policies have devastated rural and regional communities, resulting in marriage breakdowns, suicides, bankruptcies, loss of the family farm and rural youth moving to the cities for work. Those youth often do not find any work and then turn to drugs.

We have seen the opening up of our ports to world trade, and the so-called level playing field concept. What a joke! A more apt expression would be "suckers of the world". In reality there is no level playing field. It exists only in the minds of Federal politicians and their economic rationalist mates. We have only to look at the pork industry. Subsidised imports from Canada have devastated pork producers. The pleas for help from the pork producers have fallen on deaf ears. I might add that the Minister for Primary Industries, who has just left the Chamber, tried to support those producers as best he could, and I commend him for that.

A Federal Government inquiry has shown that the Government's stance was wrong. A protective tariff can and should be applied. It is even allowable under the current GATT agreement. Does the Howard Government listen? No! It offers the processors money. If a producer of pigs is destitute, the Government offers that producer a grant of \$45,000 to get that producer out of the industry. That results in the loss of another good farmer. He loses his farm and family pride. Often generations of family farmers are thrown onto the scrap heap.

Mrs Lavarch: Aren't there women farmers?

Dr PRENZLER: Yes, there are.

Let us look at the other rural industries influenced by overseas interests. In the beef industry, the prices paid to graziers are still less than they were 20 years ago. Grain growers are still receiving the same prices as 20 years ago. Soya bean and navy bean prices are being influenced directly by the cost of imports. The poultry industry is being threatened by imports. The list goes on. The worst thing is that these imports are often from countries with subsidies in place or low-cost Third World countries. Have producer costs in Australia dropped? No! Costs have risen, resulting in lower and lower margins to the producers until they do not exist or are in the negative. Have Governments listened? No! They bumble on in the belief that they will lead the world in fair trade and give absolutely no thought to the devastation that this has caused to the people of Australia—their own constituents.

Did they stop at policies such as those? No! They then embraced another famous report—the Hilmer report. Federal and State Governments of all political persuasions openly embraced that policy, and this had led to what is now called the National Competition Policy, which is being administrated by the National Competition Council. This policy was envisaged to give consumers the most competitive prices for goods. In that area it has been an absolute failure. It has devastated communities. For example, shire councils have to compete openly with private contractors. This has resulted in many rural shires downsizing their work forces and selling off council machinery. That has directly impacted on the work available in communities. Often the standard of the work now performed has diminished also.

Rural industry has not been spared from the NCP. The egg industry has already been deregulated, and with devastating effects. The most recent industry to come under the spotlight of National Competition Policy is the dairy industry. Post farm gate deregulation has occurred. Hopefully, the Bill passed during the last session of this Parliament will protect producers for a little while, but I very much doubt it.

Sitting suspended from 1 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Dr PRENZLER: The overpriced Victorian dairy industry is about to deregulate. Once this milk enters the now deregulated market—milk trade across the borders—the market milk price per litre will find its own level. The price of milk per litre coming out of Victoria will probably be around the 35c per litre mark. This will force the Queensland farm gate price for market milk down from the current price of 58.9c per litre to somewhere around 45c to 46c per litre. Considering that the cost of production is around 20c per litre, this means a reduction in profit of market milk to the producers of around 33%.

This will absolutely devastate some producers, particularly those with high overheads and loans to repay. Once again we will see producers going out of the industry, loss of family farms and generations of dairy farmers, and without a doubt more rural suicides. In Queensland this may be up to 400 farmers. With the multiplier effect in the dairy industry of about 6 to 1, this means another 2,500-plus Queenslanders out of work.

I continuously ask myself: why are our Governments doing this to us? I do believe some of the answers lie in greed—greed of the multinationals and monopolies in this country who push and manipulate political parties to implement policies that favour them in their quest for the almighty dollar and squash any persons or small businesses that may be in their way.

I believe we do owe our farming community a living. They pioneered this country. There is no reason that for their hard work and sweat they should not make a reasonable living. They should be in a position to pass on the family farm to the next generation, and we can do this with sensible policies on pricing and tariffs that can be applied sensibly—often in the guidelines as set out in the GATT

agreements. We have to look at how other countries protect their farmers. We have to take into account the costs of production in these countries. If we do not, we will lose our rural industries. We will be at the whim of overseas trade and I do believe that the devastation that these policies have and will continue to cause if they are not changed could at some time in the future come back to haunt this country in a most sinister way.

These problems must be addressed and employment increased by the introduction of positive policies to protect the viability of rural industries, businesses and farming—policies such as One Nation's young Queenslander apprenticeship revival scheme. This allows for apprenticeships being provided at age 15 without the delays involved in further education. What is the point in higher education if, at the end of it, a person is too old to learn a trade such as plumbing, carpentry or hairdressing? Members should not misunderstand me. I am not trying to downplay the importance of education. The people of Lockyer certainly appreciate its importance.

Students at Boonah State High School have achieved almost twice the State average in top OP scores and I take great pleasure in putting that on record in Hansard and congratulating the teachers and students of Boonah State High School on a job well done. One Nation believes modern education must reaffirm the vital importance of the basic three "R"s plus two more. The first three, of course, are reading, writing, and arithmetic. The other two are respect and responsibility.

Even in country areas the days have gone when a person could walk away and leave their doors unlocked. The rise in crime is feared by everyone, especially the elderly. There is no longer any respect for age and it is too late to teach that respect to adults, or "veteran" teenage criminals. Instead, we have to demonstrate to them that disrespect in the form of criminal acts will not be tolerated in our society. This Parliament should acknowledge the violation of the fundamental rights of victims of crime by ensuring that offenders face the consequences of their actions. There should be truth in sentencing. Ten years must mean 10 years. If you do the crime, you certainly must do the time.

The firearms legislation was another good example of Government going out of its way to upset a huge section of the voting public. The fact that Government even stooped to vilification really turned people sick. At that very moment, many of those members—not here today—shot themselves in the foot, and that shot was heard right around the State in every ballot box and has yet to run its historic course. One Nation will introduce amendments to the firearm laws to inject some sanity into an insane set of laws which are an abomination to a free people, to a free society.

As I said, people have felt let down; they have felt betrayed. Even long-time National Party people felt betrayed. Lockyer was the forgotten electorate. It could be ignored by the coalition because it was considered safe and would not rock the boat. It could be ignored by Labor for exactly the opposite reason: because it did not have a history of voting for Labor. For most of us it was our first election and we really learned on the run. We are still learning.

It would be remiss of me not to salute my wife, Christine, and my daughter, Heidi. Like all wives in politics, Christine suffered much inconvenience when her lounge was converted into a campaign headquarters and office. Phone calls came in at all hours of the day and night. People tramped throughout the house. Sometimes hordes of people arrived on our doorstep. Ever ready was a bottomless cup of coffee for visitors and workers and a friendly smile from my wife, daughter and supporters. Everybody was welcome at One Nation in Lockyer. To Christine and Heidi, I give my heartfelt thanks.

I turn now to two other issues that are of great concern to the people of Lockyer, water supplies and health services. Water is, of course, a vital resource for any rural-based electorate. Obviously, it is essential to have good supplies of this resource both for stock and irrigation. But the Lockyer Valley has a particular problem because it does not have large water storage facilities. So water supplied to irrigators is of prime concern, particularly during periods of drought.

Investigations are under way into the use of recycled waste water from the sewage systems of the communities east of the Lockyer Valley, around Ipswich and Brisbane. We will support the financing of these investigations to see what can be done to improve the present situation. Towards the eastern part of the electorate, the Fassifern Valley is more fortunate in that it has the Moogerah Dam. Alas, this dam is not drought proof. The requirements of the Swanbank Power Station are also a drain on the dam with the result that farmers are cut back on their allocations. Swanbank can use water from the Wivenhoe Dam, but unfortunately it is more expensive. However, if Swanbank were able to use recycled waste water, it would go a long way towards helping to ease the problems of farmers. During my term in office I will be investigating all of the options to improve water resources in the Lockyer electorate.

Because the rural areas in my electorate are considered to be close to major cities, there has been a downgrading of some health facilities. Little thought appears to have been given to the disadvantages that this has created for people in these communities. To get to city hospitals, one has to be able to travel—a difficult thing to do when one does not have a car and public transport is either

non-existent or very poor. The Labor Party closed the passenger rail service to Laidley and Gatton. Boonah Shire, too, also suffers from the lack of a rail service, while the Boonah-Ipswich bus leaves early in the morning and only returns late in the evening. Public transport in these country areas must be improved, and one such method is for the investigation into the electrification of the rail from Ipswich to Toowoomba, which would benefit many.

Before the State election, the consensus among the people of Lockyer was that Government had fallen on evil days. Politicians in Brisbane were operating a perverse presidential system in which perks were given and perks were withdrawn, depending on political colouration. The debacle of the firearms laws showed the dangers of Government by a Premier-dominated Cabinet and a Cabinet-dominated parliamentary sausage machine, all dominated from outside Parliament by faceless party hacks.

Parliament needs a second opinion: the voice of the people. One Nation has the solution in its proposal for community-based referendums. Queensland must get back to Westminster. We of One Nation are probably better placed than most because we are not encumbered with all of the baggage of party political intrigue and socialistic lunacy. I will not betray my electors. That is my solemn promise. I will not put Australia last as others do. I intend on being here for a long, long time. These are my principles, but the core of these principles must always be to bring back democracy to Government.
