



Speech by

**SHAUN NELSON**

**MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS**

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Hansard 26 November 1999

### **PRIMARY INDUSTRY BODIES REFORM BILL**

**Mr NELSON** (Tablelands—IND) (4.06 p.m.): I will take only a few moments to talk about the Bill, because all of the issues have been discussed already. My electorate is represented by a very broad range of primary industries—dairy, sugar, fruit and vegies of all types, tea and coffee. As I have said many times in the House, my electorate is very agriculturally diverse. I dare say that the Tablelands is probably the most agriculturally diverse area in the State, given the broad range of products that are grown and produced there.

**Mr Seeney:** Callide will give you a run for your money.

**Mr NELSON:** I do not think that they grow tea and coffee in the Callide. As I have always said, we have tea, coffee, milk and sugar, so we would be right if there was ever a breakdown in communications.

Of course, representatives of all the groups—Canegrowers, QFVG, QDO—are very active and productive members of my electorate. In some cases, they have certainly put a lot of time and effort into the situations that have arisen for their respective industries.

The Bill and the issues that we have been discussing today have certainly caused a lot of toing-and-froing in my electorate. Unfortunately, while a lot of dairy farmers think that QDO sold them out through deregulation, many others think that the QDO has done the right thing through deregulation. That argument rages in my office and my home from time to time. Some people think that Pat Rowley has done the right thing and others think that he did not do the right thing. I do not think that that issue will be decided in Parliament and it will not be decided in the near future. It will be decided after deregulation, when we see what it does to the industry.

A few members from both sides of the House have bemoaned deregulation. All I have to say to those members is that the blood of deregulation is on the hands of both the National/Liberal coalition and the Labor Party. New members of this House will probably get a bit of leeway. I am not talking about the Minister. I am saying that the simple fact is that deregulation has been an issue for previous Governments of all colours. I must also say that most of the focus should fall on the Federal Government. We must remember that the current Federal leader of the National Party, Mr Anderson, thinks that deregulation and the National Competition Policy are wonderful things. He does not see what the problem is. I know that the message he gets from people in my electorate, including members of the National Party, is that it is not the way to go.

Certainly the Federal member for Kennedy, Bob Katter, has shown his colours on deregulation. He certainly has his feelings on the matter and has said quite clearly that he does not like it. I take this opportunity to call on Mr Katter to put a little more pressure on his Federal counterparts to fight deregulation. He has a golden opportunity here to make a slam against his Victorian Liberal counterparts and really bring them to book.

Ultimately, I suppose the issue we are arguing about here is a fundamental ideological issue. It is very interesting to hear Labor members talking about compulsory trade unionism. If this were a Bill to bring in compulsory trade unionism, we would probably see Labor members take a completely different approach to it. There would be overwhelming support from the union factions in the ALP. Now we are

introducing a Bill to break down "compulsory trade unionism" in the agricultural arena. It is a very interesting subject. We could get into the social debate for as long as we liked.

The farmers on the Atherton Tablelands and farmers throughout Queensland will now have to work a little harder. They will have to stick together. They will have to do things on a voluntary basis. I encourage, urge and plead with them to recognise that now is the time they need to really be showing their colours and showing where they stand on issues.

As was said before, these organisations have been with us for 75 years and they will be going through a massive restructuring process. I believe that some of them will have a lot of trouble continuing in the future. When anything is made voluntary, fewer people subscribe to it. That is a reality. We cannot blame anybody for that. As a matter of fact, I will go out on a limb and say that the only people we could blame for that would be the farmers themselves.

Ultimately, dairy farmers and sugarcane farmers in my electorate have to look at each other, look at their own backyards and say, "We need to get up and get active now. We need to take part in our organisation on a voluntary basis and make sure that it continues to be an effective agri-political tool." I do not think "agri-politics" is a dirty word. I do not think we should look at it as one.

Primary industries is called primary industries for a reason—because they generate wealth for the nation. If we look at it from the GDP angle, the 27,000-odd voters who live in the Tablelands would probably contribute a lot more towards our gross domestic product than would voters in the electorate of Ashgrove, for example. In terms of the output of primary industries and their earning capacity for the country, electorates such as Tablelands, Mulgrave—

**Mr Musgrove:** Springwood.

**Mr NELSON:** Definitely not electorates such as Springwood. The electorates I mentioned earn the money to keep electorates such as Springwood alive and well.

In this country there has been focus on moving away from our primary industries and towards things such as tourism and service industries. By no means do I want to put the tourism industry down, but our agricultural industries need to be working to combat the ramifications of the compulsory levies becoming voluntary. Our agricultural industries and the people at the grassroots of those industries certainly need to become a lot more effective in their arguments. I support the Bill, but I do have reservations, as I have outlined. I certainly hope these industries will try to take advantage of what can be seen as an opportunity for them to grow a little stronger in the future.

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