



Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR WARWICK

Hansard 9 November 2000

CORPORATIONS LAW

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (8.57 p.m.): I do not believe there would be too many members in this Parliament who would disagree with some of the sentiments and concerns expressed about the actions of the banks, the chain stores and so on. Although the Opposition supports the sentiment behind this motion, it cannot support the motion before the Parliament.

I will highlight a couple of issues. First, the honourable member's motion does not provide the definition of a large company. That is something that would certainly create some issue. I will read out the names of a number of local companies which people in the electorate of Nicklin would consider large. They are Juniper Pty Ltd, building contractors, just down the road at Mooloolaba; Rod Smith Parts and Bearing Co., motor accessories; Crosby Rural Services and Hardware, hardware retail; Nambour Tractors and Implements, agricultural machinery; Arrow Electrical, electrical contractors; Skinners Subaru, new car dealership; and Brown and Thorne Pty Ltd, builders. In that community and any other community, many small operators would consider those companies as large companies. This is what needs to be spelt out. There are some real issues here. Whilst what is contained in the motion is aspiratory, certainly there would be some issue in trying to achieve its aims.

The motion refers to social and cultural impact assessments. For some time Queensland has had a process requiring rural impact statements prior to legislation going before Parliament. Are the rural communities any better off? Have the decisions made on their behalf been any better? I think they are decisions we really need to look at in order to consider whether this is the right way to go.

We need to look at a number of other issues. Tonight we have heard a lot about the matter of the predatory chain stores, and I think that that is something we would all agree with. How many people in this Parliament do the bulk of their grocery shopping in Woolworths, Coles or Franklins? I would say if I went around here, the majority of people would put their hands up. I do not shop in those places because I believe in shopping at my local IGA. I very rarely darken those other companies' doors. Probably 2% of my shopping would be one in those places, and only for items that I cannot get locally. Many people say they aspire to something. I think that the best way to achieve some of these things is to let our actions in the community show what we believe.

I think we would be better off looking at a charter of social responsibilities and encouraging Government to work with large corporations to look at those sorts of things rather than trying to legislate. If we did legislate, we then have to try to define what is a large company, start to define nebulous concepts and then try to interpret whether what they are doing is in line with the expectations of the Parliament or the community. I think that that is an issue of some concern for people.

As I said, whilst this probably provides goals which very few people could really disagree with, the achievement and the expectation of it is something that would probably let the community down. I think we are better off looking at other areas.

I think that the Auctioneers and Agents Act of 1971 as amended provides us with some examples of the sorts of things that we can do in working with companies and corporations to try to achieve these results. With regard to a range of professionals, including commercial agents, motor dealers and auctioneers, the Act says that a committee may, as a guide to the standard of professional

conduct expected of auctioneers, compile a code of professional conduct of auctioneers. In this case the code says it must be approved by regulation.

Whilst I am not necessarily advocating regulation, I am saying that we probably should look at some other legislation that we have in place in this State and look at examples of things that may have worked in the past and work with large corporations to achieve those outcomes. I do not think that there is necessarily a strong relationship with NCP and all of the issues that have been raised here tonight because many of the issues relating to the banks happened when deregulation occurred in the middle of the 1980s.

I think we need to be very careful about the decisions that we make and the interpretation of things as we seek to look at them in later times. I do not think that this is the best way of achieving it. However, very few people would argue against the concerns that have been raised here tonight.

Time expired.
