



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Hansard 29 October 2003

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (9.54 p.m.): I rise tonight to speak to the Primary Industries and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2003. At the outset I would like to say that the majority of the bill I do support, but on the issue of raw milk—here we go again, Henry—I have to oppose this section of the bill.

I am someone who grew up on raw milk and, yes, I might look like it. I am healthy, I am happy, and I am a contented person. I grew up on a dairy. Everyone around our area was a dairyman. We started off with raw milk being sold throughout towns. Eventually it progressed to pasteurisation. So I have followed the path. I recognise the fact that pasteurisation is a good thing. There was no-one in the valley where I lived who did not get measles, who did not get any other childhood diseases, who did not get a lot of things, but they did not get them from raw milk. They were all healthy in that regard.

The truth is that the majority of people today would not want to buy raw milk—they would not go out of their way to search it out—but a lot of people do. Most people have the choice of whether they want fat-free, skim, long-life—you name it. There are a multitude of flavours. People can buy it anywhere they like, but they cannot and will not, under this legislation, have the choice of buying raw milk.

I notice that the QDO was brought into this. The point is that if it is looked at realistically, the QDO has a vested interest. I am not knocking the dairy industry or the processing industry. In fact, I fought very hard for the Calverts at Nanango to be able to establish a processing industry there which is called Sameway Milk. They do a great job, and I respect their right to do it. It was a hard fight for them, because other dairy bodies were actually trying to shut them down. They had the right to be in that industry just the same as anybody else, just as anybody has a right to drink raw milk.

I noticed that there were comments such as, 'What about Louis Pasteur?' Well, thank God we had him, because his work has been an amazing step in history, and a fundamental and necessary one for the times in which he lived. It is still necessary now, but I doubt very much that he, knowing the current circumstances—the procedures, the checks and the balances—that are used for our safe food today, would advocate further diminishing of free choice.

There was a lot of mention of the food standards of Australia and New Zealand. They were responsible for cadmium in peanuts being raised to a level that was far above what was considered safe. The reason for that was simply so that they could import foreign peanuts into Australia. I do not believe that decision was in the best interests of the consumer, and I do not believe that this is in the best interests of all consumers either.

People are individuals. Some are extremely sensitive to certain substances and some will react very badly. It will put them into hospital. I know people who are, believe it or not, allergic to sunlight. As most members would know, there is a condition called lupus, and people with that condition cannot go out into the sun. But that does not mean that every single person in Queensland should be required to walk around with an umbrella because the sun is bad for you. It is just not logical.

My son is allergic to bees, but that does not mean that I advocate that we get rid of all bees. This is downright ridiculous legislation in this respect. People are individuals. We let them smoke. We let them make that decision. We let them drink. We even give them syringes so that they can inject themselves if they are addicted to drugs. This is absolute hypocrisy, and I cannot believe it. I cannot remember the prohibition of alcohol, but I remember its effects. It was prolific afterwards. People were

getting it anywhere and everywhere they possibly could. Quite frankly, I would not be surprised if there was bootlegging when it comes to raw milk. I do not believe that we can police this. I do not believe that we can stop people getting raw milk from somewhere at some time. If people are desperate to be healthy, they will go to any extreme. They do not care if they break the law, because all they want for their children and themselves is good health. Nobody has the right to take away their opportunity to obtain good health. How does the minister intend to enforce this, even if it is only so people can get around it? I would like to know, because I like raw milk. I love it.

Mr Palaszcuk interjected.

Mrs PRATT: Which is?

Mr Palaszcuk interjected.

Mrs PRATT: That is true. The government can do that. It can do anything it likes in this House. It can take away as many rights from people as it likes. The federal and state governments can do whatever they like. They can take away every right that we have if they so choose, because they have the numbers. However, it does not mean that it is right. It does not mean that it is right to restrict a person's freedom of choice, and we will have to disagree on that. Raw milk is sold in many countries and is labelled accordingly. Other countries have not had to go to the extent of calling it Cleopatra's Bath Milk or other extremes so that people can consume raw milk. It is identified by different coloured caps—that is, skim milk has a pink cap, raw milk has a green cap or whole milk has a blue cap. There is nothing wrong with that. People live with it.

Many members have mentioned Cleopatra's Bath Milk and Mr Mahaffey's problem, and I agree: if there are issues with a lack of quality, cleanliness or poor standards, he needs to be clamped down on, as does everybody else. My family had a dairy when I was a child. The dairy inspector came around at regular intervals. He tested the milk. He checked out the machinery and the herds. He did everything. My father was a herd recorder. He went out and checked all of these things too. If there was anything wrong, those producers were stopped from selling their milk straight away. Processes can be followed. If someone wants to sell raw milk, let them be licensed to sell it. Make them be controlled. Make them meet a standard of quality and get proper accreditation. Do not force people to do things behind the law.

There are arguments on both sides. Some people will argue that every single person should have pasteurised milk while other people will say that it is not good and not healthy. Both sides can be argued. What amazes me is that many people on the government side of the House have approached members of the opposition to stand up and argue the case for raw milk.

Mr Palaszcuk: Name them!

Mrs PRATT: No, I will not name them because that is the very reason they asked us.

Mr Palaszcuk interjected.

Mrs PRATT: Do not call me a liar, Henry. I find that unparliamentary and ask that that be withdrawn, because it is the truth, Henry, and other members on this side of the House will bear witness to it. But, no, we are not going to play your silly little game of divulging things. That is not the way to go about it. I face some stupid attitudes in this House sometimes which just amaze me. Minister, I would break this law. I would break this law.

Mr Palaszcuk: Well, you've done it before.

Mrs PRATT: I have done it before and I would break this particular law because I think it is stupid. Members of the House have read letters that people have sent in opposed to this legislation. There were heaps of them. I did not get one letter—not one—supporting this idea. I received an awful lot saying how unfair and ridiculous this was and asking how anyone could legislate what they put in their mouths. Those opposite can argue that they are wrong, but I believe they have the right of choice. Those opposite can say, 'We believe this is no good for your health.' They can say that it is going to kill them, just like cigarettes. People must be able to choose. Again, the hypocrisy just astounds me.

Mr Palaszcuk interjected.

Mrs PRATT: When the first person dies because they are allergic to smoking, what will happen? When the first child dies because their parents smoked and they were allergic to it, what will happen? We do not know how people die. They die from many things, because many people are allergic to many things. My son could easily die from bee stings but, as I said, I am not going to spray every single bee in the country just to protect him. It is very simple. We cannot put people in a box. We must give them a choice. What will happen if in the future people are forced to consume pasteurised milk and they are allergic to it and as a result die? Are those opposite going to say, 'Oh, damn, we got that wrong'? No, of course they are not. It could happen. They should not shake their heads and say that it could not happen, because people do get extremely sick. I have seen babies get sick on raw milk and also seen them get sick on pasteurised milk. It is just a silly argument.

The pasteurisation of milk is good, but it does destroy the quality of the milk. Most members have said that over and over again, and I am not going to repeat it. We tamper with a lot of foods. There are many kids who react badly. There are many allergies nowadays that were almost nonexistent when we were children, but now every second person is allergic to something. The truth is that I would have supported this bill. I felt that the majority of the bill was good. However, the milk issue is a major component. I believe that this section was snuck into the legislation so that it would be passed. If it could stand on its own merit, it could have been put up as a proposal by itself. Rather, it was lumped in with the many positive aspects of this legislation so that it would be passed. That is why I will not support this bill.