



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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RACING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (12.20 pm): In rising to speak on the Racing and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I want to say that I believe this bill is one of the greatest attacks, not only on thoroughbred racing but also on country racing, ever seen in Queensland's history. This bill gives supreme power to the man who has caused ultimate devastation for country racing right across Queensland. The obsession of one particular person to see the death knell of country racing is astronomical. Country clubs take pride in running race meetings of the highest quality. Those meetings have raised funds for charities, sporting clubs, local P&Cs and the Royal Flying Doctor Service. However, they have fallen on the sword as we have a chairman who is not interested in working in the best interests of country racing. His philosophy is to implement every impediment possible to make the lives of country clubs a misery and eventually see country racing eradicated from the rural calendar. If this legislation is passed, finally he will have supreme and unlimited power.

The explanatory notes state—

This amendment puts it beyond doubt that a control body has the power to make policies and give directions in relation to how a club is to deal with its assets, including its real property and intellectual property rights.

The notes also state that one of the objectives of the bill is to, 'abolish entities established under the Racing Act that can be established administratively by the control body'. That is what it is: a control body. The only thing that is beyond any doubt is that this legislation gives absolute control to a power-hungry individual and his henchmen.

This country is supposed to be a democracy, but what is the minister responsible for racing doing about this? He is washing his hands of it. He is removing any ministerial responsibility and handing country racing, on a silver platter, to an anti-rural racing chairman. The racing minister has promised that no club will be abolished because of the proposed changes, yet those two policy amendments give the controlling body the supreme power to appoint, abolish, close down, refuse funding and all the other laws that will kick country racing in the guts. While there are certain rules for some people, things can be different for others, especially if a person is a friend of the Labor Party and the chairman of Queensland Racing Ltd. Not only is Mr Bentley the chairman of Queensland Racing Ltd; he also has been the director of Tattersalls since his appointment in October 2006.

The Tattersalls 2007 annual report states that all members of the board were considered to be independent with the exception of Mr Bentley who, as chairman of the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board, is directly associated with the material supply to UNiTAB. Mr Bentley is in a position to improve the outcome for shareholders yet he remains the chairman of the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board, which has a vendetta against non-profit TAB meetings such as those held by country race clubs. This is a monumental conflict of interest. It is appalling that this person is allowed to continue in his role as chairman of Queensland Racing Ltd while sitting on the board of Tattersalls. As the shadow minister for racing said, this needs to be referred to the Integrity Commission because it involves the integrity of the racing industry.

Clearly, Queensland Racing Ltd does not abide by the same ideals as country racing, and country racing is suffering. It is not being given a fair go and, consequently, the entire racing industry is suffering. Already there are fewer jockeys and trainers in country areas because of these astronomical cutbacks. People are travelling further and further to meetings because of the lack of support given to them by Bob Bentley who, with his anti-country, anti-racing and pro-profit making stance, is making things harder and harder for jockeys and trainers.

The government wants the three separate racing codes to be administered by a single body. Obviously, that has come about without any consultation with experts. The three codes are up in arms about the concept of a single governing body for all of them. It is puzzling how this government can claim to be qualified to determine if a club is able to be administered from a central governing body, particularly as it has displayed a complete disregard for the interests of those in the bush and a lack of willingness to engage in any consultation. As an example, all country race clubs have had to endure impediments such as cutbacks in funding, reduced race meetings and inflexible race dates. In addition, Queensland Racing Ltd has slammed country clubs with ridiculous laws, such as forcing them to erect inside and outside running rails at an extra cost of some \$70,000 and spending tens of thousands of dollars on special air-conditioned amenities for male and female jockeys, which is an overkill for the bush. The rules that apply down south do not fit country racing. It is a totally different environment. It is paramount that the minister for racing venture out of his subterranean existence and have a good look at the uniqueness of country racing and the differences between it and city racing.

Queensland Racing Ltd does not recognise or understand the importance of country race days, which are the lifeblood of small communities. Country clubs are continually being kicked in the guts by the hierarchy of Queensland Racing Ltd. Rural communities need to be allowed to stage these special events, which were a time honoured tradition for many years before Queensland Racing Ltd took control. I vehemently oppose this legislation.