

**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

*Motion*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**HON J.A. SCOTT** (South Metropolitan) [5.33 pm]: Prior to question time I was speaking about the loss of rights in some sections of our community that have been forced upon us by the World Trade Organisation's rules and regulations, and ably assisted by the Prime Minister. In particular, I was speaking about the push by the Australian Government at the latest meeting of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to ensure that it cannot use genetically modified-free and non-genetically modified labels worldwide. It was aware that this would undermine the genetically-modified food industry, which wants to be allowed some level of contamination, so that it can coexist with GM-free industry, or so-called GM-free as the Prime Minister would have it. The Prime Minister clearly does not want the Australian community to have the choice between GM-free foods and GM foods and is prepared to do everything he can to prevent it. Before the break for question time, I read from a media alert from the Natural Food Commission, and I will go back to the last point, which relates to the strategy of undermining the non-GM food market. The article reported -

1. Maximising the global spread of GM pollution through the deliberate contamination of the seed supplies which they control, the non-segregation of raw materials for the food industry and the placement of uncontained 'field trials' of GM crops on regions wishing to be GM-Free.

Similar trials can be found in Western Australia. I am not sure what has happened in Western Australia, but members should note that in every other place - the United States, Europe, Tasmania and South Australia - breaches have occurred at those trials and GM contamination has been reported. A second uprising of GM grain, which was supposed to be completely free of GM contamination, recently occurred in Tasmania. The media alert continued -

... the GM contamination of food is still principally a US problem, the contamination of seeds from the US and Canada, together with the 'trialling' of GM crops in hundreds of locations in many countries including New Zealand and Australia threatens to globalise the problem.)

2. Undermining public support for negative GM labeling by finding and giving high-level publicity to any food products labelled as 'non-GM' or 'GM-Free' that they have succeeded in contaminating - and then calling for national and international bans on such labels. This would effectively prevent food manufacturers from informing the public that they are exercising due diligence in avoiding contamination.

3. Undermining statutory GM labelling by ensuring that there is so much contamination that everything has to be labelled as GM, by demanding that contamination thresholds are increased every time the background contamination level increases, or by outlawing statutory GM labeling globally via the controlling CODEX committee of the WTO.

The article provides more information about the attempt to undermine the genetic purity of food in this and other countries. I sometimes wonder what the Prime Minister is on about when he promotes those sorts of industries, particularly unethical companies like Monsanto Company, which is based in the United States.

Members know that one of the principal mechanisms of the World Trade Organisation is competition policy, which spawned deregulation and outsourcing as a religious belief. There is some sort of belief that the market can control everything; that the market is all wise, all knowing and will work towards the greater good of humankind. I suggest members read *Candide*, which Voltaire wrote some time ago and which shows what was thought about those philosophies even then. There is a great belief in the market as a source of wisdom and that somehow, by deregulating everything and allowing market forces to operate, it will provide succour to the masses, providing they do as they are told of course.

Deregulation has occurred in a number of industries in this country. For instance, regulations have been watered down in the gas industry on the basis that best practice controls can be implemented in the workplace. The result of that was obvious when a huge explosion at the Esso refinery in Victoria plunged the State into an energy crisis for some time. In Western Australia we are feeling the effects of deregulation, which has occurred throughout the Australian dairy industry. We were told that deregulation would be wonderful for dairy farmers. The Greens (WA) did everything they could in this place to prevent the enabling Bill being passed. We now find that it has not been the great success it was supposed to be.

Hon Kim Chance: It is difficult to imagine a worse failure.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: The federal Government is making inquiries to ascertain what can be done about the disaster that has befallen dairying communities throughout Australia. The great market God did not solve everything

after all. Many Western Australian dairy farmers will be driven from their farms. Hon Frank Hough spoke of a dairy farmer who had suffered as a result of deregulation.

I am not sure whether I felt more angry than I felt sad that the Labor Party eventually supported the Government's aim for dairy deregulation. Apparently it did so under pressure from Labor Parties in other States so that Western Australia would not be the only State that did not deregulate. The Labor Party would have been a hero today in the eyes of the Western Australian dairying industry had it not supported the Bill.

Hon Kim Chance: The effect of the dairy structural adjustment national plan made it impossible for us to do anything else.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Nonetheless, there are times when people must take a stand in seemingly impossible situations to make a point. Western Australia is too far away from Victoria for it to have succumbed to threats of invasion of trucks across the border. I am convinced that a campaign by Western Australian dairy farmers would have ensured that Western Australians bought the local product to conserve their dairy industry. We could have ridden that out successfully.

Hon Kim Chance: That may be, but had we been wrong it would have been an even greater disaster. It was not an easy call.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: It is a disaster that has caused the federal Government to consider taking action to alleviate the situation.

The other side of outsourcing and deregulation is the loss of expertise among government agencies and departments. During debates in this place about whether our bus fleet should be gas or diesel powered, people in the industry pointed out to me many times that those who had the expertise to ensure the State got the best deal were no longer available to properly examine the latest technologies.

This has also happened in the Health Department, during the period of outsourcing, deregulation and the sale of various parts of the health service, like Healthcare Linen Pty Ltd. People who stood in the way were dispensed with. Often they were very experienced people, particularly in financial management in the health system. Within six months, the health system was \$800 million in debt. I remember speaking to Paul Solomon's replacement, who said he did not know why he had been put in the job because he did not have a clue about how he would manage this massive budget. He was a level three policeman, and did not know a lot about health administration, which was very quickly evident. The health system has really never recovered in Western Australia since that time. A turning point was reached at which the health services were reduced in quality, and were struggling to adequately look after their staff.

The construction of the southern extension to the Kwinana Freeway was outsourced, and Main Roads lost a lot of its expertise as a result. A privately-contracted section of the Kwinana Freeway southern section had to be rebuilt when it was found not to be up to specifications, and started to fall apart. This is another example of the hidden effects of the belief that the market is perfect. The Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (Western Australia) Bill was introduced into this place in 1999. Quarantine was among the matters dealt with in that legislation. The Bill linked Western Australia's quarantine regulations to the World Trade Organisation specifications, which would have prevented Western Australia from banning the importation from New Zealand of fruit infected with fire blight. These are just a handful of the ways in which our ability to control our own lives is being taken away by these changes made by the World Trade Organisation. Something must be done about this. Some of the silly rules imposed by the competition laws of this State threaten that the use of sports ovals owned by councils will have to be paid for by community groups at a rate comparable to that paid for a private sporting facility, because it would be anti-competitive for the council to let the community use such facilities free of charge. This drive for more competition has been taken far too far, and it is time a bit of commonsense was brought back into this area. I am not saying that everything about globalisation is terrible. Hon Norman Moore got it wrong. The Greens (WA) believe there are some positive aspects of globalisation, but what is not right about it is the lack of grassroots democracy, which means there is no opportunity for people at the bottom end to say what is going wrong.

Dairy farmers and others are not part of the decision-making process that is affecting them. They are totally unaware of it. Much of the decision making that affects Western Australia is occurring in Canberra, without the people there knowing our local conditions and how their decisions might impact on us. It may be all right for Victorians to import fire blight into Victoria because it may already be there; I do not know! A rumour has been put around that maybe it is. However, we do not have it here, and we do not want it.

We are very concerned about the lack of democracy that is arising as a result of international pressures. We hope the new Western Australian Government realises that the market is not God but a cargo cult, and we must use our commonsense about it. When competition policy is good for us, fair and in the public interest, we should

certainly go along with it. However, when it is not, we should say that it is beyond the pale and stupid and that we will not go along with it. At the same time we must put forward good reasons for saying that.

In many instances there has been an erosion of local powers. There has also been an erosion of individual powers. I like to know what I put in my mouth when I eat. I do not want John Howard saying that I should not have my food labelled. I believe that I have a right to know what I am eating, as does anybody else. It is extraordinarily un-liberal for him to be trying to impose such conditions on the community.

Hon M.J. Criddle: What process would you put in place?

Hon J.A. SCOTT: For Western Australia?

Hon M.J. Criddle: For you.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: I am not so much concerned about the process in Canberra because the parliamentarians from Western Australia are supposed to represent us. I am worried about the World Trade Organisation because it is being run by people who are not elected and who have secret meetings.

Hon M.J. Criddle: We all agree with that.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: They are making decisions by which we must abide, even though we have never been consulted. That is my problem.

Hon M.J. Criddle: That is not what I was asking. I was asking how you would overcome the problem and what process you would put in place.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: I believe that we should not be involved in taking up WTO rules until such time as we put in place a proper process of consultation with the community to ensure that such rules are put in place properly. Most surveys show that between 70 and 90 per cent of people do not want a bar of genetically modified foods. We must listen to those people because they have rights. Those surveys have been carried out by the people who oppose genetically modified foods and by the industry. However, the industry says that people will get over it and come around to the idea. It says that people object only because they are poorly educated and do not know anything about it.

Hon M.J. Criddle: The question I have been posing is how do you get that message across? I have posed that question three times.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: It is done by Governments getting involved in community consultation on important, fundamental issues, like whether to allow scientists to change the genetic material of plants and animals we are surrounded by and with which we share the planet. Those are fundamental, big questions. The Government has never asked the community what it thinks about it. Government surveys have never been carried out, and there have been no community consultations about whether we want it or not. We have only been asked how we would like it implemented.

Hon M.J. Criddle: The answer is already there. The member has just enunciated the answer. The question is how to get it acted on.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: One undertakes the same community consultation process as has already been done. With something as fundamental as those changes there should have been a referendum. It deserved a referendum. It is one of the biggest changes and fundamental challenges to our rights as human beings on this planet. We will see the effects of the changes for a very long time. If we are not even asked before John Howard rushes off saying that we must have the changes - whether we want them or not - we do not have a proper democracy. The community must be asked those questions. We must have an opportunity to respond to those questions. The Government should listen to the answers.

Another issue I would like to address quickly concerns the problems occurring in detention centres in this State. Philip Ruddock calls the detainees illegal immigrants. Ninety per cent of the detainees are genuine refugees and are not illegal.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: No way in the world is the figure 90 per cent.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: What is it then, 92 per cent?

Hon B.K. Donaldson: The member knows that half of them came to Australia on people-smuggling boats.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Those people came to Australia for the same reason as would apply if my family were to be bumped off in Afghanistan because I did not want to do the things that others were being forced to do. I would move my family from those conditions, either legally or illegally. I would not stay on the edge of an exploding volcano.

Hon John Fischer: There are hundreds of people in the detention centre at Port Hedland but only a quarter of them are Afghani.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Some are from Iraq and lots of other places where there are despots. Our problems arise in our foreign policy. We have had a series of gutless federal Governments that were too weak to speak out against breaches of human rights that occur around the world. I do not care which country we talk about, whether it is Iraq, Afghanistan or whatever: our Government seems totally moribund when it comes to sticking up for human rights. If it had more guts and if it were not operating just on greed and trying to maintain markets and not upset anyone in case it lost a market, I do not believe we would have the problems we have today. We need to try harder to express our displeasure at that sort of behaviour and to insist on sanctions against countries that continue to breach human rights. People come to this country for other reasons. If we continue to assist George Bush in his refusal to do anything about global warming, hundreds of millions of people will come to this country from Bangladesh and some of the islands to the north of Australia that will go underwater when the sea levels rise. We will then struggle to maintain the integrity of our borders. We must deal with causes, not effects. This is always the way with the federal Government: it waits until it is too late and the problems manifest themselves in ways such as people escaping from repressive regimes.

One of the things I liked about growing up in Australia was that we always gave people a fair go. I do not believe that the detainees have been given a fair go. We need to process their cases with dignity and respect. If those people are not genuine refugees, they should be sent back to their countries. People who are genuine refugees should be treated as human beings. We should make sure that their children are treated properly and not traumatised by jailing them for years. It is an absolute, utter disgrace.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm*

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Before the suspension I was speaking about my concerns for the way we treat refugees in this country.

I now move to the comments made by other members in this Chamber including the former member Hon Greg Smith, and Hon Norman Moore, who have both been fairly unhappy -

Hon N.F. Moore: I knew I should stay here tonight to listen to this.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Yes, I knew the honourable member would enjoy this. Hon Greg Smith is not happy with the electoral system that has been in use for many years. It is surprising that he was happy with the system by which he was elected in the previous election, but now is unhappy with the same -

Hon Tom Stephens: The Hon Norman Moore used to get elected on 300 votes when he first arrived!

Hon N.F. Moore: That was 300 out of 400 votes!

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Hon Greg Smith was elected with even fewer votes than that. He has now been unelected by the primary votes.

Hon N.F. Moore: No. Hon Greg Smith only had 300 votes out of the lot.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: That is what I am saying and Hon Greg Smith should not be too dismayed. Hon Norman Moore expressed his displeasure to Hon Giz Watson about how she did not have sufficient numbers to get elected in her own right and was elected on preferences. During the break, I searched on the Internet to see how many votes Hon Giz Watson received and I noted that she got over 30 000 votes. Hon Norman Moore got only 13 000 votes. He would not have been elected in an urban area with that amount of votes. Hon Giz Watson was supported by more than double the number of people supporting Hon Norman Moore, which is not too bad. He should not feel too aggrieved even though he was angry with Steve Walker seriously challenging the now member for Nedlands for that seat.

Hon N.F. Moore: So that is what you think.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: I thought Hon Norman Moore said that it would be a travesty if Steve Walker got up with only 14 per cent of the vote.

Hon N.F. Moore: I did not say a word about that. I do not know what you are talking about. Oh, yes I did say that, and Hon Nick Griffiths would agree with me.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Yes, the honourable member did say that. This preferential system has been in place for a long time and in all that time he has been elected through this system. Many Liberal Party members win elections on preferences.

The preferential system means that if an elector's first choice is eliminated, his vote will go on to elect his next preferred candidate. Therefore, when the counting eliminates all but the last two people, the person wanted by more than 50 per cent of the electorate gets the seat. That is what happened to Sue Walker and I congratulate her

for that. I also congratulate the Greens candidate, Steve Walker, who was wanted by a considerable percentage of the electorate. In fact, if the same amount of money had been spent on his campaign as was spent by the Liberal Party, he probably would have won that seat. On the basis of votes per dollar spent, we did very well.

Hon N.F. Moore: You wouldn't have done well in a first-past-the-post system.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: First-past-the-post is a step backwards. I know Hon Norman Moore likes to go backwards, but some of us do not. They say that a conservative is somebody who recognises a visionary 100 years after he dies. Rather than getting angry at the Greens or the electoral system, the Liberal Party should look at why it did not do so well in the by-election. It should face up to its policy weaknesses and its inability to speak to the electorate directly. We would be happy to help with that, and to tell it where it is going wrong. We will always be ready to help point out where the Liberal Party is going wrong.

Hon Simon O'Brien: You owe a debt of gratitude to the conservative One Nation party.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: We could do.

Hon Simon O'Brien: You were elected on their preferences.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: The voters decide where their votes will go.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Not when they fill in a ticket.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: That is true.

Hon Simon O'Brien: That's the problem.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: They still choose, as some of us show the preferences on the ticket vote. Hon Simon O'Brien raised an interesting point. We are the only party -

Hon M.J. Criddle: No.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: The National Party, to its credit, and the Greens are the only two parties to show people where their ticket vote will go. The other parties are not honest enough to show their preferences in case they lose a handful of votes. We have been doing that for a while, and it is something the other parties should follow. It is a matter of honesty. One Nation, for example, could take it up. In that way, the how-to-vote card would not just say "1"; it would show the parties to which preferences on the ticket vote are directed. We are happy for people to fill in the whole ticket, but if they choose to use our ticket vote, they know which way their vote will go.

Hon Frank Hough interjected.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Yes, we should. Hon Frank Hough says we should not waste paper through how-to-vote cards. He is quite right. I lobbied for a number of years to try to get changes so that we could simply put up a sign in the polling place. I spoke to Fred Chaney about the issue during a federal election, but he was not keen on the idea because he knew that he could get dozens of people to hand out how-to-vote cards in every booth whereas we probably could not. It gave him an unfair advantage, so he preferred to keep it. We agree entirely with Hon Frank Hough. We should get rid of all that paper and simply put a sign in the polling place. In that way, the paper will not go everywhere. It would be a fairer system. How is an independent candidate for the Senate expected to get people to hand out cards for him in the Pilbara, in Kalgoorlie and in other places? It is very unfair and undemocratic. The member is right. I would support that. I will take it up if the member wants to help push it.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon B.K. Donaldson.