

TYPEWRITTEN COPY OF HAND WRITTEN SUBMISSION

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9-12-98

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The Secretary
Productivity Commission
Canberra

Dear Sir/Madam

My thanks for the opportunity of expressing my thoughts and concerns on Policy Reforms for Rural Australia. I wish to advise that my main expression of thoughts would be on behalf of the dairying industry as this is the industry I am engaged in. It is now 40 years since I left the Sydney area to settle in Moruya.

The business, I endeavour to take care of, employees - 4 personnel, 3 family men, one 1997 HSC apprentice (4 years).

The industry has had its share of troubled times, major drought last year and now facing deregulation with the uncertainty of its future. You may ask then why persist?

My age, 79 last birthday, why not retire? In that regard my reply is, providing I've recouped our costs and that the 4 families working here have employment and are contributing to the welfare of their country I must continue.

So we carry on hoping for a brighter outlook tomorrow and that Governments will give deeper and more positive consideration to all primary industries. In respect to this I believe and recognise Australia as the food bowl of our Asian neighbours, and it is my opinion if this need is not recognised Australia (very vulnerable) could finish up (as it almost did if the Coral Sea battle had been lost by the Allies) being annexed as part of the Asian complex. I do not intend to pursue this angle but I can assure you as an NCO in Corps Signals we were a lucky country.

A further vital consideration in addressing the welfare of small business is the major problem of coping with the Industrial Relations Laws and I at this point give full credit to Mr Peter Reith for his endeavours to bring some light to the darkness that prevails.

In respect to this, even the last 12 months I have had 8 court cases in relation to the AWU against me. Canberra charged me with illegally dismissing the said employee. After 7 hearings and it appeared to me that the case was deliberately being prolonged and adjourned, I approached both State and Federal Ministers. Much to the credit of the Attorney General and State member Russell Smith the last hearing (Narooma Court) was under oath and I am now awaiting the handing down of the verdict (30 to 60 days).

I am sure the whole matter could have been resolved at the first Court hearing at a minimal cost to the legal profession and myself, but, evidently this is not the way of the Justice system. I am sure it is not in the best interest of Australia or Australians. Primary industry has enough burdens to cope with without being harassed by unions and the Industrial Relations Act as it now stands. The need for amendment to allow flexibility so far as hiring and firing staff is concerned should be given A1 priority.

Not to be able to dismiss legally an employee who is a debit to any industry is an injustice to that industry. Surely justice must be honoured by both employer and employee.

The milk industry, an expanding export earner, is based on quality and hygiene is the component part of that quality, yet if I employ a person who chooses not to recognise hygiene in the fullness of its context I cannot dismiss the said person, unless he commits the offence on 3 occasions. This to me is totally unfair.

Finally, it is my opinion taking into full consideration the uncertainty of the dairying industry, I see many dairies facing the wall. However, with every support from Governments concerned stability can still be honoured and the welfare of many Australians respected.

Thanking you I am

Yours faithfully

E.T. Clout