

Extract from Legislative Council debate

Wednesday 23 November 2005

GAMING CONTROL AMENDMENT (BETTING EXCHANGE) BILL 2005 (No. 78)

Second Reading

[8.51 p.m.]

Mr PARKINSON (Wellington - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Council) - It will come as no surprise to honourable members that I will be supporting this bill. It is either that or leave. I want to be on the record as expressing my view that this is a one-off business opportunity and I believe the Premier has shown tremendous foresight in pursuing this opportunity in the way he has for Tasmania.

He did it single-handedly for a long time. I am not a cabinet member but I feel confident that he convinced his fellow cabinet members to support this opportunity for Tasmania. He has brought this along single-handedly for the State. I firmly believe, having looked at it, that it is not an opportunity to be missed and we would be foolish to do so. It is interesting too, when you consider the opposition that has been around to this bill and compare it with the opposition that we get from time to time to other more controversial matters, this one has not been all that controversial at all, in my opinion. The only real opposition has come from a major self-interested player, the thoroughbred industry. You could not call them anything else but self-interested. I want to say to them, 'Don't knock innovation. Lift your own game. If you have problems with an innovative high-tech new technological industry like this one, look at your own game and lift it.'

Why are they opposing it? There is only one reason and that is they do not like the competition. In that respect I compare the legislation going through this House which led to the deregulation of the retail industry, Sunday trading and all that, and the trauma and the opposition and the mountains of e-mails we received. The vote was carried by one vote and the honourable member for Apsley will remember it well because it was her father's vote that carried the day.

Mrs Rattray-Wagner - I wasn't here but I felt like I was here, honourable member.

Mr PARKINSON - Here again was legislation that was being innovative and trying to pull the State out of the doldrums and there was opposition from self-interested groups who just did not want the competition. The sky was going to fall in if we passed the bill, and it is interesting to see how many new retail complexes have gone in since deregulation came in and how there is talk of a huge one down by the Hobart Airport which will employ about 1 500 people. It will be one of the biggest employers in the State if it goes ahead. Yet again, you get self-interested opponents saying the sky is going to fall in if we go down that path. So beware of self-interested opponents, particularly those who use threats or dodgy legal opinions. I do not remember, in the 12 years that I have been in this place, a legal opinion that came in here to oppose something that was worth anything. There was always something wrong with the legal opinion. Honourable members will recall my comments on an opinion that came in relation to one of the social reforms that we dealt with not so long ago from one of the State's top lawyers who just had not read the act properly and trotted out an opinion to be used in this House and it was full of holes. I cannot say I have read the legal opinion that came in today or yesterday.

Mrs Rattray-Wagner - I have a copy of it. Would you like it?

Mr PARKINSON - Yes, I have had a quick look. I was not all that impressed but I would want to look closely at it before I could comment on it definitively. But I would be very surprised if it is worth anything, particularly the number of pages that it has taken to put it together. I would be very surprised. But we will wait and see on that one. I will not go on.

I am impressed with the way, in this case, that the integrity issues have been addressed, very impressed with that side of it. This is a young business. It is state-of-the-art technology. There will be obvious spin-off benefits, not only for our own racing industry as the Premier has seen, but for the entire IT industry as far as Tasmania is concerned. We have one of the world's large players in the PBL organisation and I am totally impressed with the way that this group of relatively young players who put this business together five years ago have grown it the way they have and have attracted big business like the Packers into what they are doing because of the IT side of it.

I have to say in closing that I have had the opportunity to look at one particular large player who is involved in this industry. I will say no more about that because I do not want to identify the person but a big player who demonstrated to me how the system would work and I was totally impressed. It is mind-boggling.

Mrs Rattray-Wagner - It's very simple though, isn't it?

Mr PARKINSON - It is extremely simple for those mathematical geniuses who can work it out.

Members laughing.

Mr PARKINSON - Which excludes all of your problem gamblers, and that is another very impressive part about it.

Mrs Rattray-Wagner - You have a degree in commerce so that puts you in a different field.

Mr PARKINSON - The bookmakers are going to love this because they will be able to lay off all those bets and reduce their losses which they probably do anyway and probably have done ever since Betfair started.

Ms Forrest - If you believe what they say, that's the case. Good on them, I suppose.

Mr PARKINSON - Yes. There is nothing but good things about this when you come to think of it. When you think of all the dodgy things that have happened over the years in the existing industry and have major players from that industry come in here and say, 'Oh do not touch that because it is dodgy', really, you would turn over in your sleep if you thought about that too often, too long. I support the bill.