

Mr HISCUTT (West Devon) - Mr President, as members who spoke last week did, I would like to add my congratulations to you on the honour you have assumed in occupying the Chair of this Chamber. Knowing you from past experience, I know you will occupy it with dignity and decorum.

I would also like to offer my thanks to those members who, in previous speeches, have welcomed me as a newcomer to the Chamber. I hope I can reciprocate by offering them a contribution through our discussions in the years ahead.

My concern is for the welfare, well-being and even the continued livelihood of the smaller shopkeepers, their families and their employees. I am totally opposed to this bill. I am also totally opposed to open slather trading but at this stage I cannot see how that is to be overcome; I think that must be back on the Government's head after we have disposed of the bill before us.

During my recent election campaign, I made it quite clear in several advertisements and in discussion that I was totally opposed to any extension whatsoever in the trading hours of the larger stores of this State. I think my stand in that matter was vindicated by the way in which the people voted for me at the election a couple of weeks ago. As I see it, if these larger stores are granted what they are looking for at the moment - four or five Saturdays' trading, as the case may be, in December, or unrestricted hours - it will be the demise of the smaller shopkeepers whose cause the Government of the day should be espousing; it does not seem to be doing this. It seems to be a complete turnabout for a government of its nature.

Mr President, I understand I have some licence in a maiden speech - and I propose to take advantage of that - but I would think that most of the topics to which I will refer will in some way relate to the matter in hand.

It may be of some interest to mention that I am only the fourth person to hold the seat in the Division of West Devon, which I now represent, since its inception in, I think, 1946. One of the points of interest in that is that two of the previous holders were operating shops and would have been vitally concerned with the legislation before us at the moment.

In 1947, the seat was occupied for the first time by Mr A.W. Tattersall, a person of long residence in Burnie who was held in the highest esteem in that area. He operated a hardware and general shop in the centre of Burnie. He was noted for his high ideals and his honest dealing, both in the community of the north-west coast and, I know, in this House. Some of his descendants are still operating in business in Burnie in particular and they have maintained the high standard of ethics set by Mr Tattersall.

I bring this matter forward because these are some of the diligent people who will be adversely affected by this bill, if it is carried, and also by open slather trading, which term has been applied to the matter in hand.

When Mr Tattersall retired from the Council in 1953 his place as the representative for West Devon was taken by Mr W.J.T. Davis, a man of similarly high standards. Again, he was in charge of a thriving business in Burnie at the time and would have been hit by legislation such as we are dealing with now. Mr Davis was President of this Council from 1968 to 1971 and he died in office.

In December 1971, the seat was filled by Mr W.T. Young, a man honourable members would probably know as well as, or even better than, I for his qualities as a person and for the amount he contributed to discussion in this Chamber, the area in which I live and to Tasmania in general. Let me assure you, Sir, that his contribution has been well and truly recognised in the area in which he lived and in our municipalities in particular.

During their earlier days, two of these men, the late Mr Tattersall and Mr Young, served in local government, as I have done myself over the last 17 years; I am still a member of the Penguin Council. This is where I bring in another connection with the bill under discussion.

Local government is dependent on the rates and revenue it receives from its constituent ratepayers. Therefore all businesses must if possible be kept viable so that they can contribute to the well-being of the district in which they operate.

Continuing on with a few more words on local government, the unemployment situation in our particular area is at present completely unacceptable and I believe more unemployment will be created by this legislation with which we are dealing and any consequent legislation to increase the hours of trading for the larger shops. The Government has been giving councils grants for unemployment projects and, whilst we recognise that these have been valuable in the context in which they have been given, I understand that the money from Federal sources has been an untied grant. Yet the State Government passes the money on to councils on a dollar-for-dollar basis and then insists that 50 per cent, I think, of the money expended should be for the labour content. This means two things: only certain projects can be undertaken by councils because of that labour content requirement and councils must find the matching money, which may not have been budgeted for. I know that, in our own case, only a few weeks ago we were granted \$30 000 which had to be spent before the end of June - a matter of six or seven weeks. Whilst we wished in no way to reject the money, we were certainly put to extremes - first, to get the work done and, second, to match the money. I may take that matter up at some later stage.

I am also acutely aware of the voluntary contribution councillors in the 49 municipalities throughout Tasmania have made over the years. So many councillors operate for the benefit of their local areas and for Tasmania in general and it is only those who, like myself, have been connected with local government for so long, who really know the contribution and diligent effort which has been put in by so many councillors over so many years for so little - in fact no - financial reward. The reward is in the satisfaction of seeing a job done, the municipality prosper and Tasmania in general forging ahead.

I am pleased to know that at the moment the Burnie Council is in a firm planning stage to achieve city status. This will of course be a great lift for the north-west coast.

Let me remind honourable members, too, of the achievement the Penguin Council has made with the establishment of the Dial Regional Sporting Complex. If any honourable members have not seen that complex, I would recommend it to their attention on their next visit along the north-west coast. It is an excellent example of regional participation to give the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people for the most economic cost.

On the north-west coast, as probably in other places in Tasmania, we have other examples of joint undertakings: for example, we have a couple of cemeteries, one serving three municipalities in combination and another, in my own area, shared by both the Penguin and Ulverstone municipalities. In fact I think that, rather than the amalgamation of councils, the answer is in joint undertakings - things which can be shared by municipalities while the municipalities still have their own identity and means of operating.

The major joint undertaking on the north-west coast in recent years has been the North West Regional Water Authority, a project in which seven of the eight municipalities are participating to provide an adequate supply of clean water to those areas. This scheme has been in the capital stage of construction for some six-and-a-half years and it is well on the way to completion. Only last week the tenders were let for two final major treatment plants. It was with some regret, in a way, that I had to resign from that authority upon my election to the Legislative Council a couple of weeks ago.

As I say, these are shining examples which other places in Tasmania could no doubt emulate where co-operation in joint undertakings provides something for the benefit of the people without subjugating one's own ideals and ideas.

Before returning to my initial subject - shop trading hours - I would like to mention two other matters of very great importance to myself, to the area in which I live and, I am sure, to Tasmania. One is the promotion of tourism, especially in our part of the State. We have a lovely island with much to offer, and this has been recognised by the many thousands of tourists who have come to Tasmania over the years. I think my area of Burnie and Penguin is missing out badly in the State promotion. That is not only my idea; it is the idea of the people with whom I have spoken in recent weeks and, in fact, over recent years. People in our area are doing their utmost: they have promotion committees, tourist and progress committees and all those sorts of things. They are doing their best and private enterprise is doing its best too.

But I think that before long, unless they get the benefit of government and State expertise, they will lose heart and what happens then? I do not know. The State expertise must be developed and directed towards sending tourists to all parts of the State, not only the recognised areas to which they travel at the moment. Our part of the State, in particular, has so much to offer. It is a centre for travelling to other areas. At the moment we have excess accommodation ranging right through from the top-class hotel/motel type to caravan parks and camping areas - whatever type of accommodation is required it is there to suit the pockets of the people who may come to visit us and at the moment it is going to waste. I think the State has an obligation to help those people who are helping themselves.

The other matter, Sir, is the vital west coast road link. The proposed road is, I think, only 20-odd kilometres of new construction which is required from Hampshire to Guildford to take the major commercial traffic through to the west coast. Here we have an opportunity for the State to swing into action; it is a worthwhile project which would not only relieve the unemployment situation but would relieve the commercial freighting industry of a cost of \$1 million per year. This was the figure that was independently assessed by three individual transport companies and presented to a recent inquiry into the feasibility of the road link. That \$1 million is the extra cost imposed on commercial freighting from the west coast to Burnie and the other way of course. We have to get our priorities right and here is a project that will add something substantial rather than being a hand-out. I am not knocking hand-outs; they are okay up to a point but here at least is something that we can get our teeth into; here is something substantial which will add something to the commercial value of our area.

The west coast of Tasmania - and honourable members would know this - contributes immensely to the wealth and the economy of our State. In fact, ore to the value of \$670 million went out through the Port of Burnie last year. I know that not all of that came by road; a major portion came by rail but a certain portion came by road and the servicing of the industry - food, repairs, electrical and mining gear - all this has to travel by road as quickly and as safely as possible. It is of very great interest that a great number of commercial loads per year go through what we know as the APPM road, which is a private road, simply because the existing road through the Hellyer Gorge is not wide enough or good enough for those large loads to travel on.

Mr President, as a natural progression from these projects, I think that our Government should be guaranteeing bank loans or subsidising interest, or both, to small industry, businesses and farms because this is where the recovery in our economy will start. We can help those people in these two obvious ways. They are the battlers; they are the people who require help in this form. They will repay Tasmania with their returns if they can get the financial encouragement they need to expand. These are the people who need help. Whomever one speaks to says it is not only the cost of money but the difficulty in getting it that is the stumbling-block for many small industries.

I know the Government has had its fingers burnt on previous occasions but there are plenty of good brains in the Treasury who should be able to assess the potential of the proposals and, more importantly, check the equity of the proposer. This is the type of help that is urgently needed. The sooner we offer practical help the sooner the Tasmanian economy will start - or perhaps I should say continue - to improve.

Sir, thank you for your indulgence in my digressions onto other matters - I may never have the opportunity again - but I have strong views against the larger shops opening for longer than they are. I feel that if the present system is altered to allow these shops to trade all day Saturday in December, in addition to the hours permissible now, several serious consequences will occur. Inquiries in other States have indicated that changes will occur, one of the main ones being a change from employing mainly adult full-time employees to employing a large number of casual workers. Certainly there is merit in casual work - I am not knocking that - but we will find that the total number of person work hours will be reduced in the end. Consequently there will be less money for employees overall, apart from the fact that the junior casual workers will not be getting as much money as the others.

The consumer will have no more to spend on shopping and in fact does not appear to have asked for this extra trading time. We do not really know where it has come from; the only ones we can label are those four or seven - whichever figure we like to use - large traders. If the demand is there from the consumer he has plenty of opportunity to buy the various smaller items he needs over the week-end - Saturday afternoons and Sundays - from the convenience stores.

As I said at the outset, I am very concerned for the small shopkeeper, his family and his employees. I think they are the people who will be affected by this legislation. Rest assured, the big shops will not stop at that if they get the four Saturdays in December. I know what a gentleman's agreement means to some people. Nobody wins except those large retailers.

Who loses is the point we as a Chamber should be concerned about, and the Liberal Government in another place should be concerned about it too. Almost all other retailers in Tasmania will lose, many of whom are second and third generation in the same business. Most of them will not see the fourth generation if this happens. The shop employees will lose out on employment and money through the concentration of business into a few major retailers. This is no myth; it will happen. We know what happens when rationalisation occurs, and this is another form of it in retail trading. The consumer will lose out because once monopolies gain control competitiveness is gone, and we also know what happens then.

Where one or the other of the big retailers has gained a monopoly in certain towns on the north coast of New South Wales and particularly further up into Queensland I have seen notices in the car-parks of these large stores reading, 'Would customers please bring in a trolley as they come'. In another shop I saw a sign in the vegetable area reading, 'Customers, would you kindly trim your own cabbages'. If I am paying for something I want service and I think the customer deserves service. By the same token, if one has shares in one of those companies he has access to its balance sheets. If he looks at their balance sheets at the end of the financial year he will see who is winning in this battle.

As I said before, I am strongly opposed to this legislation. I think it is back on the Government's head how it is tackled if this bill is not passed. We are looking to the lower House to legislate to maintain trading as it is at present.

The matter of the 100 or 10 employees was brought up. I would favour 10 employees being the limit. But that is not the point we are discussing today; that is something for another time.

I think we have to lay it straight back at the Government. This bill today has to be knocked out; the extra trading that has been asked for on the Saturday afternoons in December should be rejected. The consumers are not asking for more hours. In my

election campaign recently we knocked on 7 000 doors; we had discussions with a large number of those people. Many people who were at home, were there because they were out of work; many of them were looking after the homes and various things. Many of them discussed the shop trading hours as well as many other matters and not one of them said he would like the larger stores to be open on Saturday afternoons or Sundays.

If this bill is passed, as some other member said in an interjection earlier, I do not think the Government deserves many friends. It is the small businesses we are talking about. We have a minister for small business and I think he should remember what he is there for.

In conclusion, if this bill is passed and if unrestricted trading comes in, we will not need a minister. What we will need will be a funeral director.

Mr PRESIDENT - Before I call the honourable member for Russell, I would like to commend the honourable member for West Devon on his address and I would also like to remind all honourable members that the licence I have just given to the honourable member for West Devon will not be extended to other honourable members. I would like to remind them that the bill is for an act -

'to remove the limitation of time of operation of the Shop Trading Hours Act 1981 and to extend the occasions on which shops whose hours of opening are restricted by that Act may open.'