

Mr STOPP (Queenborough) - Mr President, may I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your preferment and to thank sincerely honourable members for the understanding and great courtesy I have received since being elected to the Legislative Council. I hope to be a contributor to this House.

Let me say in debating this bill that as a supporter of free enterprise principles I find myself in somewhat of an invidious position in supporting the previous legislation. Many of the speakers have covered clearly the salient points of the debate so with your permission I will cover just a few of them.

Let it be clearly understood that in grocery retailing there are fewer corporations supplying the Australian retail market, a small market, on a pro rata basis than in any other Western country. Indeed in Tasmania they appear to have, from available figures, some 85 per cent of the total turnover. In general retail sales the large retailers appear to have about 55 per cent of the market. I do not believe that under these circumstances the previous legislation could be said to have discriminated against our larger retailers. The retail market in real terms has dropped and with all the goodwill in the world I cannot believe that increasing the hours of trading will increase the market. Only consumer confidence can do that.

Increased personal savings show that the confidence of the consumer has as yet not returned and any increase in hours for the larger stores must only split further the available market. We must be realistic and accept that the request for increased hours will be justified only by increased sales. Indeed the principal exercise for retailers today does not seem to be at what price they sell the goods but their ability to buy through sheer volume at the cheapest price. As the larger buyer demands cheaper prices and co-operative advertising the manufacturer is caught in the unenviable position of cutting costs, and that means reducing staff, or increasing his price to the smaller buyer. The smaller retailer is forced into a non-competitive situation and I believe he may need extra protection.

The point which concerns me greatly is the comment that 12 months' extra Saturday trading will lead to the creation of some 966 new jobs and an injection, through wages, of some \$3 million into the community. I believe these figures, without an overall increase in sales, would be hard to sustain. In fact, we may eventually suffer more unemployment.

Naturally close consideration must be given to the needs and wishes of the public. However there seems to be general satisfaction in our community with shop trading since its extension to Saturday mornings. The short commuting time from home to shops in centres in Tasmania enables family buying to be a quicker process than in the big cities on the mainland and overseas.

Mr President, I believe that as this is my maiden speech, I am allowed to digress a little and, having mentioned unemployment amongst our young, I would like to give honourable members a few figures which I found distressing and extremely disturbing.

It was as mentioned in a paper from the Summit Conference of 15 April 1983 that 29 per cent of our teenagers are currently unemployed. Since 1975 the average length of unemployment has doubled. Apprenticeships are declining and this year will be down approximately 25 per cent from last year. Even with these appalling statistics we find overall numbers of secondary level students in our educational system are falling. Half the original intake of students leave before year 10 and only a third go on to reach year 12. Full-time higher education fell by 15 per cent, and that at a time of great youth unemployment. Here in Australia only 35 per cent of our youth obtain leaving certificates; in Japan, Canada and the United States the average is between 70 and 90 per cent.

Mr President, I regard this as an indictment of our educational system which appears to be crying out for a return to more practical courses - such as business and rural studies, arts and crafts and public administration. I hope that honourable members will remember that probably less than half our students are academically inclined.

Tasmania has potential as a tourist State. Surely it is time to introduce a suitable course into our schools; the School of Hospitality should be charged with this task.

I thank you, Mr President, for allowing me to disgress but I do feel strongly on this matter and when I have an opportunity I intend to pursue this issue. However let me return to the bill at hand and make two final points.

I am most concerned that this change to the previous controls is premature and comes in the middle of the worst and most prolonged economic downturn in my tender years. Change now for change's sake could lead to serious consequences for many small businesses. Secondly I would make an appeal to all legislators, when considering sunset legislation in the future, that steps be taken to advise those concerned of the Government's long-term plan. How else can business plan ahead?

I can only hark back to the words of an American businessman who, when asked how he got on dealing with the Russians, said, 'I can trade with anyone when I know the rules'.

I will support the bill through the second reading and then seek an amendment.