

INTERPRETATION OF LEGISLATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

An amendment is proposed to section 32 of the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 to enable matters to be prescribed in a subordinate instrument by reference to one of the uniform legislative codes in effect in this State.

This Bill was brought in and read a first time in the Upper House as a privilege Bill following the Governor's Speech. It is therefore short and non-contentious.

Section 32 of the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 requires that certain documents referred to in a subordinate instrument must be laid before Parliament and must be available for inspection by the public. The intention of the provision is to ensure that Parliament has the opportunity to consider any documents which are referred to in a subordinate instrument, but which are not otherwise subject to the Parliamentary process. For this reason, statutory rules and Acts are excluded from the requirement, as they are documents which have already been considered by Parliament.

The uniform codes, such as the Companies Code, form part of the law of this State by virtue of Parliament having passed an Act applying Commonwealth legislation.

An "Act" is defined in section 38 of the Interpretation of Legislation Act as meaning "an Act passed by the Parliament of Victoria". Doubt has been expressed on whether that expression would include the uniform codes adopted by all jurisdictions. The codes are provisions which have effect in a State or Territory, but which are not actually passed by Parliament. They take effect by virtue of an enabling Act. The effect of the present provision is that every time a subordinate instrument refers to a provision of the Companies Code, for example, the Companies Code would need to be tabled with that subordinate instrument. The effect of failing to do so is to render the provision void.

Clearly, it is convenient to refer to a corporation in a subordinate instrument by reference to the definition in the Companies Code. The amendment will ensure that uniform codes adopted in Federal and State jurisdictions will be treated in this State in the same way as an Act of State Parliament.

The amendment is not contentious, and serves merely to clarify a potential ambiguity. The only persons directly affected by the amendment are those who formulate subordinate legislation. I commend the Bill to the House.

On the motion of Mr AUSTIN (Ripon), the debate was adjourned.

It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until Tuesday, April 30.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

The debate (interrupted on the previous day) on the motion of Mrs Hirsh (Wantirna) for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech was resumed.

Mr HEFFERNAN (Ivanhoe)—I take this opportunity of thanking my wife and children for the support that they have given to me and the sacrifices that they have made not only in the recent election campaign but also over the many years that I have been involved in local government. Also, I thank my electorate committee, which worked hard and tirelessly for my election, and the electors of Ivanhoe for their support not only in the recent election but also over the many years of my involvement in local government.

The electorate of Ivanhoe includes the City of Heidelberg, and I had the pleasure, when in local government, of being able to take part in that city's celebration of 50 years as a

registered city. I now welcome the pleasure of being able to be part of the 50th session of this Parliament.

During my election campaign, it became obvious to me that a candidate should know the electorate that he seeks to represent. My lifetime association with the City of Heidelberg has made me very much able to speak with a certain amount of authority in this regard. The electorate that I represent offers many challenges. It contains a broad spectrum of society. In the west, it has a Ministry of Housing estate and, to the east, in East Ivanhoe and Lower Plenty, it has the more affluent sector of society.

The most important issue is people—although in the short time that I have been a member of this place I have wondered. There are many important people in the electorate that I represent. I refer to the aged. In 1970, the electorate consisted of 11 per cent of the population being aged; by 1983 that figure had increased to 20 per cent; one in five of the voting population in the electorate of Ivanhoe is retired, which is creating tremendous social welfare problems to the ratepayers of that city. I refer to the aged in terms of obligation because I believe the aged in the community have a right to live with dignity and security after many years of making major contributions to society.

Government increases are having a marked effect on this group, especially because of the inroads local government is making with its high-spending programs. If these increases are sustained, the electorate I represent will have a voting power of 40 per cent by the year 1990.

I refer to a newspaper cutting from the *Age* in which the Australian Bureau of Statistics pointed out that by the year 2020 the aged population will have doubled. State Governments ought to take heed of this warning.

Coupled with the problems concerning the aged, the electorate I represent has another major concern in that it has more than 1000 single-parent families. This is an ongoing problem with which the Government will have to come to grips. The statistics also reveal that there are large families on low incomes throughout the city. Further highlighting the problem is the fact that 60 per cent of the population in the electorate is aged either below 19 years or more than 50 years. I reiterate my concern for both these groups.

The Government ought to ensure that any cuts made do not reduce the living standards of these groups.

Many speakers have mentioned unemployment. The Government has failed to overcome the problem, and the long-term social ramifications of unemployment could move to second and perhaps third generations, as was the experience in the United States of America. Therefore, the Government ought to treat unemployment with the gravest concern.

During the past ten years, unemployment in the Ivanhoe electorate has quadrupled amongst the 16 to 25-year age group, especially in the areas of West Heidelberg and West Ivanhoe. The future generations will judge us harshly if we leave them with a legacy of unemployment and under-achievement. It is unacceptable that one person out of every five within the city is out of work and the over-all unemployment figure is 15 per cent.

If the Government approaches this massive social problem with the dubious policy outlined in its pre-election statements, it will have a devastating effect if it does not produce the result it promised. I ask the Government not to mislead youth. Any politician who stands up today and says that he will guarantee a job is either naive or completely removed from the real world. If the policy of early retirement for public servants is implemented, as has been outlined, it will create a further strain on the social welfare system.

When will Governments learn that the stimulus of private enterprise is the only way in which to produce a satisfactory result? All sections of the community are accountable for

this problem, including families, teachers, the trade union movement, employers and governments. Each has an obligation to help overcome the problem.

A further problem facing the electorate of Ivanhoe, as with so many other electorates, is that of the poor and the needy. I am concerned about whether any progress has been made in overcoming the problem. I do not think so. Are people better off today than they were three years ago? Will they be better off in four years' time? These are questions that one must ask.

The past three years have seen the greatest attack on the living standard of the working class in my lifetime. Government spending does not put money in the purses of the poor but takes it out. The Ivanhoe electorate is polarized on income, distribution and security.

At the time of the 1981 census 23 per cent of Ivanhoe's families earned in excess of \$23 000 per annum while another 27 per cent—5847 families—lived below the poverty line. Those families earned less than \$8000 per annum. Many of the people in those 5847 families were unemployed and live in the West Heidelberg and West Ivanhoe Commission estates. No inroads have been made on this problem.

An article by Alan Thornhill in the *Sun* on 14 March 1985 stated:

Two million families draw from their savings each week or sink further into debt as they fight to maintain their living standards.

Government can expand spending and increase staff ceilings, but to do that it is taxing those who can least afford it. I say, "Enough is enough!" Honourable members are protected in this House. The Government has lost sight of the feelings of those in need. To overcome that problem the Government ought to reconsider its priorities. That is what Governments both Federal and State will have to face.

I question some of the Government's priorities. The extra politicians, for example, who were recently appointed may not have been necessary. Those appointments cost the Government approximately \$2 million. What does that achieve for the taxpayers of the State? The 20 000 public servants cost the Government approximately \$250 million a year. What do they produce? What has been achieved by this massive investment?

One can imagine the tremendous stimulus funds of that magnitude would create if they were invested in the private sector, in research and development, reducing oncosts, payroll tax, workers compensation and so on. In the electorate I represent these funds would contribute to removing all sub-standard housing. I also notice the Government has decided that senior bureaucrats will receive a bonus for extra effort. I assure honourable members that in the private sector if one does not perform with increased effort, one has no job.

Is the Government taking money from and taxing the productive sector to give to senior bureaucrats whose hours and responsibilities do not equate with their private enterprise counterparts? One cannot let this opportunity pass without also mentioning the appointment of former Labor Party politicians to Government positions. That is of concern to the public who will have the final say at the ballot-box. Over the next four years the wages for those appointments could be used to build a badly needed elderly citizens village in the Ivanhoe electorate.

In an article in the *Age* of 27 September 1984, David Broadbent reported:

The State Government has hired a \$62 000-a-year private marketing manager to revamp publicity services and boost promotion of the Government's corporate image.

That appointment was made because the State is not getting enough value for the \$26 million already spent in publicity. Why is this sort of money being spent on Government advertising? Is it necessary? One should think that the additional cost of a marketing manager would not be necessary when 313 full-time and 31 part-time publicity officers are employed in Government departments.

In the *Age* of 27 September David Broadbent referred to a confidential report prepared by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet which strongly criticized inefficiencies and costs associated with a small empire of publicity staff that has grown up in all Government departments. What head has rolled if those inefficiencies exist? Has the Government taken the necessary steps that ought to be taken and would be taken in the private sector? I hope, when I come forward with a request from my electorate for urgent funds for the needy for both the young and aged, that the Government does not refuse it. It is a matter of priority and the Government ought to get that message. I am concerned about the needy, not the senior bureaucrats.

Many honourable members have touched on the state of the Victorian economy and what ought to be done about it. One ought not let this opportunity pass. The State is entering into a huge financial debt. This debt is growing at a time of supposed high prosperity and economic growth and the economy ought to be approached in a confident manner. If one looks at the financial reports and the economic standing of our country as it slips slowly into the abyss, one has to ask where we are heading.

The Labor Government is selling off the assets of the State. I am shocked at this approach. Ben Chifley and Sir Robert Menzies would be turning in their graves if they could see this sort of thing happening.

All honourable members should have read an article in the *Weekend Australian* by Des Keegan, especially in light of the recent drop in the value of the Australian dollar. The article refers to the management of State public sector businesses and states:

Management of State public sector businesses has been found wanting in the wake of the Australian dollar crash. Capital losses could exceed \$1000m before the rot stops.

State politicians are busy denying losses, but the fact is they borrowed, largely unhedged, to avail of illusory cheap interest in money centres such as Switzerland and Euro-currency markets where our dollar was strong.

Does the Government now intend to pay senior bureaucrats bonuses for this sort of effort? If this happened in the private sector someone would be fired. The Government is placing a ball and chain around the necks of Victorian children.

I now refer to the Budget strategy and review for 1984-85, as outlined by the Treasurer. Table 1 refers to assets of \$555 million being sold off. "Other financial items" are referred to on the same page and it is indicated that borrowings of \$1184 million have been made from overseas resources. The Labor Government is mortgaging the State. The Government is totally obsessed with spending money to the great detriment, not only of the productive areas but also the needy of the State.

Private enterprise is the only solution to a long-term economic recovery. I make it quite clear that I support the private enterprise system.

In conclusion, I quote from a former great American leader, Abraham Lincoln, who stated:

You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift. You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot help the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer. You cannot establish sound security on borrowed money alone. You cannot build character and courage by raking away man's initiative and independence. You cannot help a man permanently by doing for him that which he can and should do for himself.

Mr WHITING (Mildura)—In joining in the debate on the Address-in-Reply to His Excellency the Governor I take this opportunity of congratulating the new members of Parliament who have made their contributions because they have all spoken extremely well and will improve the standard of debate in the Parliament in years to come.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WHITING—Some honourable members who were in Parliament for some time have already had their chance to do so but have failed. I congratulate the new members on the contributions they have made to the debate.