

HD Local producers get raw deal

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UNFORTUNATELY this is not a letter written in good spirits, nor with pride for the leaders of our nation, this is one written in bitter disappointment.

Again we have watched as our smaller industries are trampled by the supermarket giants, while those who were elected to protect them stood idly aside.

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First it was the **dairy** farmers who suffered as the grocery duopoly charged more for a bottle of water than they do for two litres of **milk**. The immediate effects of these price wars hit agricultural communities across the nation.

In the past decade alone we have seen farming families pull out of the industry at an alarming rate, leaving under 500 operating in Queensland, with disastrous impact on families and local economies.

This week however it was the bakers and wheat producers who copped an undeserved blow to the hip pocket.

We saw the dawn of a new low for the industry, as the Coles/Woolworths duopoly began to charge just 85c for a loaf of **bread**, which amounts to just 4c per slice.

According to a spokesman for the Baking Association of Australia, as quoted in the Queensland Country Life, a loaf of **bread** cannot be made for under \$1.50, 40% more than the retailers were willing to charge.

However the tragedy doesn't stop at the price tag, the quality of the product was also compromised. Coles, which was selling its **bread** under the guise of 'freshly baked', was ordered by a Federal Court Notice to tell consumers it had broken Australian consumer law, due to false advertising.

In truth, the loaves were partially baked and then frozen, many weeks previous, some of which had been imported from overseas.

Sadly this instance is a common occurrence! Across the country we are watching the Australian consumer get taken for granted, as the international markets and multinational companies reap the rewards.

While everyday essentials should be accessible to your average working family, we need to be wary that these industries keep many in a job.

Competition only works when there is true competition, and a market share between two giants is hardly that.

When there are only two to **buy** from there are only two to sell to.

A situation which is proving to be disastrous for producers in nearly every primary industry.

Unfortunately though, the plight of the producer is an issue which is out of sight, out of mind for those in Canberra. As of a Federal Government decision this week, even our armed forces will be wearing imported footwear.

Rossi Boots, an Adelaide-based manufacturer has lost out on a contract of \$15 million, to produce non-combat boots for the Australian Defence Force. Instead the representatives of our nation have favoured a company which will supply Indonesian-made boots.

Clearly the Abbott Government has a shorter memory span than that of most Australians as we have run into trouble with imported products before.

In May of 2012, just two years ago ,the ABC reported on issues regarding Chinese dress boots which were made for the Australian Defence Force. The glue holding the footwear together was melting in the hot Australian climate. This is not new news.

Why then do we as a nation insist on selling off our home-grown stock just to be replaced by inferior products?

Why do we continue to have such blind faith in the neo-liberal free market?

Why do we forget the simple mistakes of the past?

The fact of the matter is, the average Australian doesn't, we are simply without a choice as the LNP-led government removes the working hands of this country - one finger at a time.

Shane Paulger,

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