

SMALL BUSINESS SLAMS GOVT.

ASBA PROTEST RALLY PACKS THEM IN

Concerned representatives from a wide spectrum of business groups packed the Ringwood Civic Centre last Thursday to protest about a range of issues related to next Saturday's Nunawading Province by-election.

The meeting, convened by the Australian Small Business Association (ASBA), was addressed by speakers from the Mountain Cattlemen's Association, the insurance industry, sub-contractor's groups, rural businessmen, manufacturers and the Sawmillers Association.

particular concern. All but one of the eight motions was passed unanimously by the five hundred strong audience.

Mr Boyle described the size of the turnout as "encouraging". He said that despite the bad weather, the audience size and the reaction of people to the resolutions passed, indicated the depth of people's feelings on the matter being discussed.

In his address, Mr Boyle said that small business had run out of patience.

"It is not by choice that we are angry. It is now obvious that we must become militant like the unions and other interest groups if we are to attract the attention of government."

pie and other small businessmen.

That the impediments to preventing the unemployed from getting jobs in the private sector be removed.

That the government should not proceed with its Alpine Park legislation which, if passed, would seriously undermine the cattle and timber industries in the high country.

- That the Accident Compensation Act be amended to reduce the burden on small business and the administration of the scheme be returned to free enterprise.

- That the state government legislate to de-regulate the award wage system as a positive way of reducing labour costs, and that

- That the saw-milling industry be protected by not allowing the withdrawal of further productive timber resources from the industry.

In moving the first resolution — against union harassment of small business — one of the Directors of Dollar Sweets, Fred Stauder, spoke emotionally about his own personal experience with union problems. His firm, Dollar Sweets, which makes confectionery is under siege from militant unionists demanding a shorter working week.



• Peter Boyle

The standing-room-only audience applauded the Federal President of ASBA, Mr Peter Boyle, when he called for more co-operation between small business groups to influence the outcome of elections such as at Nunawading.

"We are meeting here because politicians only listen at election time. This is the time to extract promises from them and to ensure that they stick to them," he said.

Opposition leader, Jeff Kennett, attended the rally as did representatives from the National Party and the Australian Democrats as well as other Liberal Party politicians. The Liberal Candidate, Rosemary Varty was among the audience.

The Premier, Mr John Cain, was invited to attend and address the rally, but declined on the grounds that he was only interested in conferring with long established business associations.

In his speech, Mr Kennett criticised the Premier's failure to attend. "Politicians have a responsibility to listen to people. By boycotting this meeting, Mr Cain has demonstrated that he simply does not care," Mr Kennett said.

The rally was addressed by eight speakers from different industry groups, with each speaker putting forward a resolution which focused on their

"The farmers and the mountain cattlemen have shown up the way. Like small business people, they have become aroused by government indifference to their plight," he said.

"The unions have shown us the power of organized activity. They could stop Australia dead in its tracks. But so could small business if they so choose, but we have been more responsible. Governments must remember that fact."

"Small business wants governments to get off its back. We want to get on with the job of running viable and efficient business, employing staff and satisfying our customers."

The resolutions passed by the two hour meeting were:

- That governments prevent unions from harassing thousands of small businesses.

That the government should protect the rights of sub-contractors, self-employed peo-



• Fred Stauder

ple and other small businessmen. Mr Stauder was enthusiastically applauded when he said that many small business proprietors make a lot of sacrifices to stay in business.

"My family has been involved in making confectionery for over 100 years. It isn't easy being in small business. You lose a lot of recreation time that other people take for granted. You

have to give up a lot and so too does your family," he said.

Rural businessmen, Charlie Burrows, moved the motion that governments should immediately remove all impediments to employment."



• Charlie Burrows

Mr Burrows said that business was being burdened with costs and with red tape created by a government that keeps changing the rules as regards the operations of businesses.

"You have well paid public servants sitting in comfortable offices with atriiums, and palms surrounding them, dreaming up new ways of frustrating business with rules and regulations."

"The net effect of this in the last 15 years is that unemployment has increased dramatically. We've paid out around \$18 billion in unemployment benefits and we have nothing to show for it. For that money, I'm told we could build five highways right around Australia," he said.

Graeme Stoney of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association told the rally that the cattlemen had been forced into taking direct political action to draw a response from the government.

He said that the creation of the proposed



• Graham Stoney



new National Alpine Park would injure the livelihood of a lot of cattlemen.

"If we had taken direct action five years ago, we wouldn't be in the mess that we are in today."

"That is where I see a great similarity between the mountain cattlemen and the small business man. We both have had problems over the years with extreme demands. The cattlemen have had extreme

conservationists howling for our removal," he said.

"The small businessman has had a gun at his head held by selfish people wanting more money, less hours, and not really caring about how it affected the business."

Liberal Leader, Jeff Kennett told the rally that the "ultimate success of this society will depend on people doing their own thing and getting rewarded for that."

"We support the small man. You have people who are wanting to be sub-contractors, but the government is supporting compulsory unionism of small employers."

"Governments are taking money from the wealth producers and giving it to those who don't produce wealth. Private enterprise has got to get together and advance its own interests," Mr Kennett said.



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