

PLANT DISEASES AMENDMENT BILL 2010
Second Reading

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK [5.59 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): It is with pleasure that I join in debate on the Plant Diseases Amendment Bill 2010 and advise the House that the Shooters and Fishers Party supports the bill. As this is my inaugural speech to this Chamber, I acknowledge the fact that, for me, the occasion is one of both pride and sadness at the same time. It is a great honour and a privilege to be elected to this place, but I am here as a replacement for my friend and colleague the late the Hon. Roy Smith, whose sudden death shocked us all.

I place on record from the outset that Roy's work will be continued. He flagged a number of issues he wanted dealt with in his inaugural speech to this place just over three years ago. I will continue with that agenda, and indeed add many topics of my own to that list. Particularly, I hope to continue to negotiate further changes to the firearms legislation that Roy was working on when he died. He was seeking to make more sensible amendments to aspects of the legislation that unreasonably restrict legitimate firearm owners, but do nothing to enhance public safety. On that issue we were, and always had been, like-minded. Roy was also keen on reintroducing shooting sports and firearms safety programs in public school sports programs. This is another key point that we will pursue.

Target shooting is a popular and international sport; indeed both a Commonwealth Games event and an Olympic event. Our football, cricket and tennis stars begin their sporting careers at school. We believe our young shooters should be given the same opportunities in their chosen sport. I publicly place on the record my thanks to a number of people, first, to my friends and colleagues in the Shooters and Fishers Party, to my parliamentary friend and colleague Robert Brown and to John Tingle, the party's founder and its first parliamentary representative.

I have worked with Robert and John since joining the party in 1992 and as Chairman of the Shooters Party in 1995. I have watched the comings and goings of this place as more than just a disinterested observer for more than 15 years. Roy, Robert and I owe much to John for his mentoring and leadership—particularly in the way in which during his time in this place he earned the respect of members from all sides of the Chamber. His path-finding efforts after being elected in 1995 have made it all the easier for those of us who have followed in his footsteps.

I also acknowledge the invaluable support for the Shooters and Fishers Party from the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia, particularly the New South Wales and Sydney branches of which I have been a member since 1974, but also all the other branches throughout the State that share our aim of protecting and promoting the rights of shooters and hunters. The same should be said for Australian Hunters International—a club that I, with five others, founded in 1982—and for all the hundreds of other clubs, large and small, around this great State of ours.

Recently the Shooters Party changed its name to the Shooters and Fishers Party. We are unashamedly a party that seeks to promote and defend the rights of our core constituents—the shooters and fishers of New South Wales. We also understand our position in this place. Unlike

other minor parties, we do not seek to be the Government: We seek only to represent the people who support us and so, in votes in this Chamber, we will generally support whichever of the major parties is in Government, unless the legislation impacts inappropriately on the shooters and fishers of the State.

I believe that the Shooters and Fishers Party is still unique in the world of Westminster parliaments in that New South Wales is the only State to have specific representation for shooters and fishers in its Parliament. We intend to work tirelessly at increasing our representation in this place. We will even have a close look at certain lower House seats, should circumstance require it.

Of course my greatest supporters have been my family, particularly my lovely and activist wife, Cheryl, to whom I have been married for 34 years. We have three beautiful adult children—my daughter, Annie, and twin sons, Robert junior, and Adam. Annie in turn has a real hardworking, dedicated, great husband in Adam and they have two beautiful children—my first grandchildren, Alicia, aged two, and Aiden, aged five months. Cheryl has been my rock in life. She is very independent of mind, a great sounding board, and a hard worker for all those causes and groups that she sees as needing support. She has always supported me in everything I have done since we met in Rover Scouts at the age of 19. Life's ups and downs have been many, but Cheryl Anne is a constant.

I am the Australian product of migrant parents, Czeslaw and Tini Borsak, the eldest of their three children. I have a younger brother, Stephen, and a still younger sister, Christina. My parents ended up in Australia, as many millions did, after World War II destroyed their homes, their way of life and communities in Europe. Their story is different, but not unique to their generation at that time. My father was born in the regional town of Biala Podlaska in eastern Poland in 1918. He was apprenticed as a tailor and, by the age of 21, already had his own small business in Warsaw. By 1 September 1939, the date Germany invaded Poland, he was well established and prospering. My mother was a school girl, 12 years of age, living in the city of Utrecht in the Netherlands.

By 1942 my father had been involved in the intrigues of the local resistance movement and its many factions for some time—one might say warring factions. On 2 October that year, he was arrested at his shop by the Gestapo, charged with being a Communist member of the underground, and put into Pawiak central prison in Warsaw. Here he was interrogated until eventually he was shipped out to Majdanek concentration camp, located near Lublin, on 17 January 1943. After a short internment there, he was condemned to Buchenwald concentration camp and shipped there by rail; he was without any food or water for four days. I can still remember that when my father did talk about his experiences of that time—and that was not often—he would describe them as his descent into Dante's description of hell.

Somehow, though, he survived those experiences. With the Allied forces rolling eastward, early one morning in October 1945 he escaped into the Weimar forest. He hid there for three days and eventually was found by a United States of America Army patrol; he was sleeping by a fallen tree and still dressed in his prison garb. Dad spoke fluent English, having taken English lessons at night school. He also spoke German and Russian. When asked to identify himself, he said his

name was "Borsuk", which in Polish means badger—an animal that is very common in the forests of Europe. However, the name he gave was taken down as "Borsak". His real name was Mojsiejuk—a fact that he was keen to hide because of his Communist arrest papers: Better to be unrecognised than risk going behind wire again. He then spent the next two years, until September 1947, in the American Army as part of a Polish Brigade, until he was demobbed with the rank of captain and told to go home.

He had decided that Poland under Communism was not what he wanted. Hearing that there was plenty of work in Holland, he moved to Amsterdam as an official displaced person. He quickly found work in his trade and started to put his life together. He introduced himself to my mother Tini, née Feenstra, at a tram stop, and asked her out for coffee. They had seen each other on occasion in the building in south Amsterdam where she worked as a trainee nurse and my father shared lodgings upstairs. My mother took a real leap of faith with my father. She was only 19 and was working towards formal admission into nurse training. She was born in Zwolle in 1928 and was living with her parents in north Amsterdam. My parents married on 4 November 1948.

I believe at that time my father thought that another European conflict between Russia and the Allies would break out, and so he resolved to get as far away from Europe as he could go. He applied for migration to South Africa, Argentina and Australia. The Australian papers came through first. He had saved his own fare, my grandfather paid for my mother's fare, and they left Rotterdam on the ship *Volledum* in December 1948. They arrived in Sydney in January 1949. They started in a rented bedsit at Cammeray, paying key money to get in with £25 they had saved. They moved 10 times in the following years until, in 1952, they bought a new fibro two-bedroom house in Punchbowl.

I was born on 14 August 1953 at Crown Street Women's Hospital, commenced school at St Jerome's, Punchbowl, and then I went to St John's, Lakemba, until 1962. During this whole time my father was self-employed—he had a tailor shop in Railway Square in the city—and he remained self-employed for his whole life. I had a great carefree childhood. We used to roam the streets with our school friends, all over the neighbourhood. I played soccer for Punchbowl soccer club—the red and green devils—and I was the best and fairest in the under 10s in 1962. They were great years. I never forget cracker night and bonfires in the back yard, exploring Salt Pan Creek, catching blue tongue lizards, and trapping and snaring rabbits.

Then my father, homesick, decided to sell up and in the middle of the Cold War move us all to Poland in 1963. I can remember being excited about the prospect of seeing snow for the first time. We arrived in the middle of winter in January 1963 to minus 35 degrees celsius in my father's home town. Poland had hardly changed since the war. There were still war-damaged buildings and pot-holed roads all over the country. It was a great experience for me as I was old enough to remember nearly everything, but it took me only six months to say to my parents that as soon as I was old enough, "I'm going back to Australia; you can't get good chewing gum over here."

By July 1966 we were back in Australia and had moved into the dormitory part of Ashfield in a flat that my father purchased. Within two years he had scraped up enough money with a second mortgage to buy his house in Ashfield near the station; I think he paid about \$14,000 for it. This

was the house he lived in until the day he passed away in March 1996, after he proudly told me that he had voted for John Tingle in the 1995 election from his hospital bed at Concord. In 1966 I enrolled in Ashfield Public School, then in Ashfield Boys High School and spent the rest of my school life at that school.

My brother and I joined First Ashfield Scout Group shortly after arriving. I did my scouting under a great Scout Master, the late Ron Rowe. Apart from my father, he probably influenced me the most in life. Whereas my father taught me never to lose sight of my goals and never to give up, Ron taught me about structure and achievement and put goal orientation in my life. He also introduced me to his great love of the Australian bush. With him, I went right through scouting, achieving all goals, through to the Queens Scout Award and the Duke of Edinburgh Award. I made lifelong scouting friends. Even today we still get together once a year for a reunion camp, revisiting old camp sites if we can find them.

My first interest in hunting was spear fishing. I used to haunt the beaches we could reach by train and bus, carrying my home-made spears, goggles and flippers, looking for any opportunity to hunt underwater. At the age of 15 I bought my first single-barrel 12 gauge shotgun and hunted during school holidays on friends' properties down the South Coast around Merimbula and Bega. I was keen on rabbits and foxes. We used to shoot hundreds over the school holidays—the hills were alive with them. I remember shooting foxes in the spotlight at night, along with rabbits, and selling the better rabbits to the local shop owner down the coast. We kept the best rabbit and fox skins, and tanned them ourselves.

Life changed somewhat after I matriculated with the Higher School Certificate: I was told by dad that he could not afford to keep me full time at university. Any thought of being a geography and art teacher studying at the Australian National University with a small teachers college scholarship went out the door. I did not really want to be a teacher, so I had to find employment and resolved to be an accountant. After winning a company cadetship with Waltons Stores, I studied part time at night at the University of Technology, Sydney, for a degree in business studies, majoring in accounting. Over the following seven years I completed my Certified Public Accountant [CPA] qualifications, got a public practice certificate and became a registered tax agent.

My business career has been varied. After Waltons I was employed by News Limited, then by Coopers and Lybrand and then by George Ward Steel. After we sold that company to a BHP subsidiary a hunting friend of mine, Rick Tween, invited me onto the board of an international insurance broking company, Lowndes Lambert, as Finance Director. I left that company in 2002 as Group Managing Director, I thought to enjoy semi-retirement and develop my personal business interests. I am currently an investor, owner and consultant to some 11 different private companies, employing about 200 staff, turning over about \$50 million a year, primarily involved in steel and aluminium fabrication and manufacturing, and computer software and systems solutions. I still keep up my CPA public practice work, though now in a very modest and small way.

I have been involved with the Game Council of New South Wales, prior to set-up and subsequent enactment, first as a councillor, then as chairman since 2004, until my recent

resignation prior to being elected to this place. This authority is a groundbreaking organisation that sets the standard for conservation hunting in Australia. It is a template that should be followed nationally if we are to properly use the skill, enthusiasm and knowledge of our volunteer conservation hunters Australia-wide. There simply is not enough money in all the treasuries of Australian governments that can successfully substitute for the free resources of our volunteer conservation hunters. We should be organising them and using them.

I have been a keen and dedicated conservation hunter since the age of 15. I have hunted all over the world, participating in real conservation and wildlife management programs, not just with my mouth but also with my money, time and emotion. Hunters are at the real sharp end of conservation. They provide the real dollar for programs all over the world over the long haul. Recently a small part of the media has sensationalised that I hunt elephants and that, by implication, this is bad. Hunting elephants as part of national programs has guaranteed their survival in countries such as Zimbabwe, Botswana, Tanzania and many other African countries that conduct such programs.

If the Black Rhino had been on licence in 1982, when I first saw them in the wild in the Chewore Hills on the Zambezi escarpment, then they probably would still be there today. Conservation hunters would have guaranteed their survival by putting money into the pockets of the starving farmers, who were ultimately wooed into poaching for rhino horn instead. Professional national parks staff could not save the rhino; they were understaffed and under-resourced. If you knew as many white hunters as I do, many of them ex national parks staff, you would begin to understand.

I hunt because I like to hunt; it is part of my genetic make-up. It is in all of us, just more strongly expressed in some than others. Those countries that work with hunters in programs all over the world guarantee the long-term viability of all species and their wild places. The same goes for New South Wales and, indeed, Australia, though we are in an even uniquely worse position. We probably have the world's worst feral animal problem. No parts of our wild places in New South Wales are not infected with feral cats, foxes, pigs, goats, rabbits, hares and wild deer. Even the so-called wilderness areas do not escape their predation on native marsupials, insects, reptiles and birds, large and small, or their effect on native grasses and plants.

The same goes for our total lack of proper balanced conservation of native birds and certain native species. We should be encouraging their management as game, thereby guaranteeing their long-term value and the value of their wild places, whether on public or private land. It is only with the controlled intervention of man in the landscape that we can hope to keep some semblance of what we have in wild species in New South Wales. Total blanket protectionism has failed the biodiversity of New South Wales and needs to be fixed as soon as possible.

As for politics, I can thank the Unsworth Labor Government for radicalising me as a shooter, ably assisted by the Howard Government. An especially vivid bad memory for me is the one of John Howard wearing a bullet-proof vest whilst addressing a meeting of shooters in Victoria. That image remains burnt in my brain. If any government epitomised the total lack of understanding of the Australian shooter, their peaceful law-abiding nature and his sporting shooter heritage, it was John Howard's Government. After the 1996 firearms law reforms the

whole attitude to law-abiding shooters seemed to change, and not for the better. Personally, I resent being viewed or treated by anyone as a criminal in waiting; yet here I am in this place, 14 years later, having to talk in these terms. It is plainly just not acceptable.

I refuse to bow to a wrong public view of shooters and hunters that is being actively promoted by a small section of the media and certain activists in some parts of political life in Australia. The flak-jacket Howard view of decent Australian shooters and hunters is insulting and just plain wrong, and I will continue to work to change it. I thank honourable members for their polite forbearance, and for listening to my life history and political views. I look forward to lively democratic debates in this place in the future.