**BREAD BILL 1954**

**Legislative Assembly, 26 August 1954, pages 509-11**

Second reading

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD, having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to repeal the Bread Act, 1936-1949, and to enact other provisions relating to bread. Read a first time.

**The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—**I move:—

That this Bill be now read a second time. This Bill repeals the Bread Act of 1936 and substitutes other provisions for it. The Act of 1936 was a consolidation of the previous Acts of 1891, 1893, and 1908, which were based on English legislation dating from the early part of the nineteenth century. The bread legislation at present deals with two topics, namely, the weight of bread and the adulteration of corn and flour. The provisions relating to the adulteration of corn and flour are, however, obsolete because a good many years ago they were superseded by provisions of the Food and Drugs Act and the food and drugs regulations which set out a fairly complete code for preventing adulteration and prescribing the quality and ingredients of foodstuffs. It follows that for all practical purposes the existing bread legislation deals only with the weight of bread, and this Bill is directed to the same object. The only provisions in it other than those relating to the weight of bread are ancillary administrative provisions.

The Bill alters the method by which the legal weight of bread is to be determined. The present legislation requires every loaf of bread to be of standard weight, that is to say, a loaf must either weight 1 lb. avoirdupois or some multiple of 1 lb. The weight is determined at the time of sale of the loaf. This method has for many years been under attack by bakers and by the experts in the technology of breadmaking, as an unsatisfactory method of protecting the public. It is also alleged to be unfair to the bakers. From time to time alternative methods have been investigated by the Director of Chemistry and his officers. In 1938 the then Director of Chemistry reported that the loaf weight system had many disadvantages. He said that it was an incentive to the baker to under-bake his bread and so leave as much moisture as possible- in it, although from the health point of view a well-baked loaf was more beneficial.

He also pointed out that bread continues to lose weight for a considerable time after leaving the oven and the condition of the atmosphere alters the rate at which it loses moisture. For example, a loaf carried on a baker’s cart for three hours on a warm summer’s day would weigh less than a loaf of the same original composition and weight carried for the same period in the middle of winter. In the summer time the bread of one baker weighed at 9 a.m. might pass the standard, while that of another baker, if weighed at midday, might be found to be under-weight, although the latter bread might have a higher solids content than the former. Thus the present system is unsatisfactory both to the public and to the baker.

The alternative method which is commonly advocated nowadays and has been adopted by law in Western Australia and New Zealand is what is known as the dough-weight. System. Under this system the law fixes the weights of the pieces of dough from which bread may lawfully be baked. So long as the doughs are of the proper weight when placed in the oven, any subsequent loss of weight due to baking or hot weather does not affect the liability of the baker. Thus the baker has no incentive to underbake his bread; and he cannot be penalized because atmospheric conditions have caused a loaf originally of full weight to become underweight. From these points of view, therefore, the dough-weight system has decided advantages.

However, both the loaf-weight system and the dough-weight system have one disadvantage in common, namely, that the greater the proportion of water in the bread the more profitable it is to the baker. I am advised that bakers do not admit that there is much scope for variation in the amount of water used for making bread. But all the officers of the Department of Chemistry who have inquired into this matter have pointed out that both the loaf-weight and the dough-weight system offers an incentive to the baker to use as slack a dough as possible. For this purpose they have recommended in the past that in addition to introducing the dough- weight system there should be a law governing the minimum solid contents or dry matter in loaves of bread because it is the solid contents of the loaf that really determine its nutritive value.

In this Bill, therefore, the Government has included provisions for introducing the dough- weight system and, in addition, the Bill confers power on the Governor to prescribe by regulation the amount of dry matter which must be included in the loaves of the various classes. Dough weights are prescribed for loaves of the sizes which are now being ordinarily sold, namely,, 1/2 lb., 1 lb., 2 lb., and 4lb. loaves of ordinary bread and 3 ½ lb Vienna loaves. As regards administration, this Bill, like its predecessor, confers the necessary powers on inspectors of municipal and district councils, and also empowers the Governor, if he thinks fit, to appoint inspectors to assist in enforcing the Bill.

As I mentioned earlier, there is no intention in this Bill to deal with anything other than ordinary bread and Vienna bread. Cakes and pastry and the various fancy breads containing such ingredients as currants, raisins, milk, sugar or eggs will not be subject to the Bill, although it will not be possible for a baker to avoid his obligations under the Bill by inserting extremely small quantities of such ingredients in a loaf, solely for the purpose of avoiding the obligation to comply with the standard dough weights. In general the administrative provisions in this Bill are not substantially different from those of the existing Act. The Bill has been accepted by the Bread Manufacturers ’ Association aa a reasonable one and is also regarded by the Director of Chemistry and his officers as a satisfactory solution of the problem of bread weights. The subject is a technical one, on which a great deal has been written by experts. If members should desire any further information I would be glad to try to supply it.

The dough-weight system has been in operation in Western Australia for some time. I have inquired whether the experience there has shown that it can be policed effectively.

Mr. Stephens—Who does the policing?

The Hon. T. PLAYFOED—I think the methods adopted are much the same as here - by having inspectors for the purpose. It dos not matter what the law is: unless inspectors police the position the law ceases to have any effect. Coming back to the main question - whether it will be easier to police the proposed system than the system in operation today - I am advised by my officers and am convinced by the experience of Western Australia that it will be much easier to police the proposed method.

Mr. Stephens—What about the New South Wales Act?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—That is still on the same basis as our Act, or so I have been informed.

Mr. Stephens—No. There they weigh the bread in the morning in the bakehouse after it has been cooked.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes, but it could have much moisture in it and it could be baked, but as long as it turned the scales as it came out of the oven it could go out to the public as good bread, when in fact it was baked and bad for the health of the community. There will be no incentive for a baker not to make a well-baked loaf of bread because he has to put all the flour andother ingredients into it. I know a baker in another State. Recently I had dinner with him and he said I liked his bread, but he said, of course, for myself I always send a loaf through the oven twice!” In Western Australia recently one smart baker thought he could evade the legislation, but he had to face, not an insignificant fine, but cumulative fines totalling 250 pounds.

Mr Lawn—Have you had the views of the r for Mitcham?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I showed him my reading speech just a few moments ago told me that one clause was superfluous, but I not know his views on the Bill itself. I have sometimes found the member for Mitcham has a most disconcerting way of expressing his own views, and I have no doubt he will do so gain on this Bill. The measure will be beneficial and ensure that the public gets a better baked loaf. If an inspector now weighs at mid-day on a hot day and finds it slightly underweight he knows that if he takes the case to court the baker would have a good defence. That shows there must be a decided underweight now before action can be successful.

Mr. O’HALLORAN secured the adjournment debate.