

his own. I do not think that any laws in Australia or the Northern Territory were ever designed to prosecute or indeed persecute people who have not been at fault.

That is the problem with it. I make no bones about it. Alcoholism and alcohol within Aboriginal communities are very great problems in my electorate. I believe that the problems that the member for Stuart has within his electorate are representative of problems right across the Northern Territory. Nobody would doubt those problems. Certainly, those people who, for personal gain, deliberately flout the law and deliberately encourage that alcoholism should be prosecuted. They should definitely be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. I would not for a second say other than that. But when people have complied with the law, have acted within the spirit of the obligations and then are still persecuted, then that is something that this Assembly never intended. I hope that this Assembly never intended that. That is why I think our amendments should be supported.

Debate adjourned.

PRINTERS AND NEWSPAPERS BILL (Serial 33)

Continued from 6 June 1984.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the opposition welcomes this piece of legislation. I know that the former member for Nightcliff, Mrs Dawn Lawrie, had for some time been drawing attention to the need for the review of this old legislation. The current Printers and Newspapers Act was introduced in 1928. It has received very little attention since that time. At the very least, it is difficult to read and to understand. More importantly, many of the provisions are outdated and unsuited to modern times. For instance, the act requires the registration of the printing presses. This bill removes such outmoded requirements. Definitions have been updated, a job that was long overdue. Requirements for printers and publishers to be identified on publications are maintained. This is probably the most important provision in this type of legislation.

I went back to the last time a significant amendment was made to this act, which was in 1929, and pulled out some of the press at the time. At that time, Darwin had 2 very active and very vocal newspapers. One was the Northern Territory Standard which was owned by the trade union movement and was renowned for putting the news in the context of its effect on the workers, the unemployed and the underdog. The other paper was the Northern Territory Times which had been published in Darwin since 1873 and, by the 1920s, very much represented the establishment's view in the community. The week after the ordinance was published in the Northern Territory Times, which also at that time published the Government Gazette, the Northern Territory Standard ran an editorial condemning the ordinance's one intention: to muzzle the Standard. The interesting thing about the newspapers of that day - and they do make fascinating reading - is that they quite often simply carried on for months at a time a slanging match with each other. An editorial in the Standard would put a point of view which would be promptly answered by an editorial in the Times which would then be answered again by an editorial in the Standard and so on.

Mr Speaker, I note that, the last time the act was amended, it provided for a sum of £1000, which at that time was a very large sum of money, to be lodged as a recognisance with the government in order that that money could be paid out as damages if the newspaper was found to have committed a libellous act and