**MARGARINE BILL 1934**

**House of Assembly, 23 August 1934, pages 735-6**

Second reading

**The Hon. M. McINTOSH (Albert—Commissioner of Crown Lands)—**This Bill contains a number of provisions regulating the manufacture and sale of margarine. I will explain them in the order in which they appear in the Bill. In clause 2 the only matter requiring attention is the definition of “margarine.” This definition follows closely those in force in other States. Put briefly, the effect is that any substance which is capable of being used as a substitute for butter and is not wholly butter is margarine.

Clause 3 sets out certain restrictions on the manufacture and sale of margarine. In the first place it prohibits the manufacture and sale of margarine containing any butterfat. This provision is aimed principally at the commodity formed by blending copha, which is a product of the coconut, and butterfat. This commodity has under various names had a considerable sale by retail. It is really an adulterated kind of butter; and though it is not unwholesome it is considerably inferior to butter in nutritive value. Regulations were made under the Food and Drugs Act prohibiting the sale of this substance, but were found to be ultra vires, and were never put into operation. Secondly, clause 3 prohibits the manufacture and sale of margarine containing any matter which gives the margarine the colour or flavour of butter. The saleability of margarine by- retail depends largely upon the fact that the margarine resembles butter both in colour and taste. If, therefore, manufacturers are prohibited from artificially staining and colouring margarine to resemble butter the result is likely to be a considerable reduction in the retail sale of margarine, although, doubtless, this provision will not greatly affect the use of margarine for cooking purposes.

The Bill provides that margarine shall not be coloured to resemble the ordinarily accepted colour of butter. During the war countries adjoining Germany, Denmark and Holland particularly, exported the whole of their output of butter to Germany, because of the enormous prices obtained. During this period, a large number of people, principally children, became affected with a form of blindness and it was ultimately discovered that this was due to the use of artificial butter which lacked certain essential ingredients. Finally the export of the whole of the output of butter from those countries was prohibited, and 20,000 children, who were suffering from partial blindness, had their normal eyesight restored.

Mr. Thompson—That really proves the necessity for some butterfat in margarine, if it is to be used for human consumption.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH-—I do not want the honourable member to have it that way. It might be doing a great wrong to allow people to use the substitute. We go right to bedrock and say that manufacturers of margarine shall not in any way use butter as a basis for their commodity. We are not preventing the sale of margarine. All we ask is that it shall be sold under its true colours so that people will know what they are buying. Clause 3 also prohibits people from keeping more than 5 lbs. of butter or butterfat on premises where margarine is manufactured. The object of this provision is merely to make it more difficult for manufacturers to contravene the prohibition against putting butterfat in margarine. Fourthly, in order that the public shall not be deceived into thinking that margarine is butter, the clause provides that when margarine is delivered on sale it must be contained in some box, wrapper, or other container on which the word “margarine” is clearly printed. For the purpose of administering the Bill, it is necessary that a list of the margarine factories should be prepared and kept up-to-date; and to achieve this object the Bill provides that all margarine factories are to be registered with the Minister from year to year. Clause 5 is another clause to prevent the public from being deceived when purchasing margarine. This clause prohibits any person from applying to margarine the word *“*butter” or any word resembling *“*butter” such as “’butterine.” By clause 7 any person who contravenes any of its provisions is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding £100. The usual provisions as to regulations and summary proceedings for offences are included. I am sure that the Bill will commend itself to members because it is a genuine attempt by the Government to enable people to procure what they pay for. South Australia has led the way in many reforms and, if this is any reform, let us not be fearful of giving effect to it simply because it has not been tested in the other States. All we set up is that if it is desired to sell margarine, let it be sold under its proper name. This Bill is non-party and non-contentious.

Mr. Thompson—I do not agree that it is non-contentious.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I thought that the food of the people should not be subject to party politics. If there is some factory in Adelaide, employing a few men, producing a substitute for butter, let the honourable member not forget that the basis of that factory is material not derived from Australia at all, but from another country. So far as possible we ought to prevent that material from coming into Australia but, if it is permitted to come in let it be sold under the label to which it belongs. Let margarine be sold as margarine and not as butter. I move the second reading

Mr. THOMPSON secured the adjournment of the debate.