

Mr J.F. McGRATH (Warrnambool) - Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment to that high office. The words used by other honourable members in your honour have given me respect for you.

I also wish to acknowledge, on behalf of the constituents of Warrnambool and myself, the important work undertaken by Sir Brian and Lady Murray, and I trust that good health will allow them an opportunity of continuing their excellent work.

It is appropriate at the beginning of the fiftieth Parliament to reflect on the history of the Warrnambool electorate. It was 50 years ago in 1935 that the last National Party representative, Mr Henry Bailey, was elected to represent the Warrnambool electorate. He occupied the seat for fifteen years and it eventually passed to Mr Ron Mack, a prominent Liberal in Western Victoria.

The electorate of Warrnambool, which comprises approximately 5000 square kilometres, is bordered on the south by the coastline which runs from the Bay of Islands in the east to Lady Julia Percy Island in the west, commonly known as the "Home of Great White Shark". The electorate is largely rural and also contains some viable industries.

I come to this Parliament with a broad background of experience. I was raised on a dairy farm until I reached the age of twenty years, when I decided to expand my knowledge of the world and enter the area of industry and commerce. I took my place on the factory floor and eventually obtained my own business.

Along the way I married and had a family and, with those credentials, I believe I bring some experience to my role as the member for Warrnambool, an electorate with which I have a close affinity because I have spent my life there.

I should also mention my predecessor, Mr Adam Kempton, who represented the electorate energetically and enthusiastically for 23 months. I am sure the constituents of Warrnambool, would wish me to record their appreciation for the work he did. Mr Kempton's predecessor now takes his place as the honourable member for Polwarth, and he left his mark in the electorate of Warrnambool, having served it for a number of years.

With due respect, I express disappointment that the Governor's Speech did not touch on the subject of agriculture.

That was particularly sad in view of the present crisis in the rural industry and particularly in the dairying industry. The electorate of Warrnambool, has some 3000 farms, 1800 of which are dairy farms.

Most honourable members would be aware that an enormous crisis exists in the dairy industry. As a person who has operated a small business in Warrnambool and who has mixed regularly with retailers in the electorate, I can assure honourable members that consumer spending in the urban sectors of the electorate is down substantially. That is attributed directly to the reduction in dairy farm income, and that is one problem that I look forward to resolving.

The electorate of Warrnambool has several industries. The home of Warrnambool blankets is the Warrnambool Woollen Mill; Nestle Australia Ltd processes some of the milk it collects but it is involved largely in the packaging of coffee and Milo. Those two industries alone employ some 800 people. Kraft Foods Ltd has expanded, mainly by relocating some of its manufacturing and packaging facets in Warrnambool. Hopefully that business will expand further to provide more

employment.

The focal point in the electorate and the City of Warrnambool is Fletcher Jones and Staff Pty Ltd. I suppose Fletcher Jones needs no introduction to honourable members. He was a man who carried on a tradition from his early days and he showed a great community spirit that has been carried right through the industry to this day and age. The organization is extremely forthright and generous in its support of some of the important functions in the electorate of Warrnambool, particularly those relating to the arts.

The Fletcher Jones organization employs approximately 800 people. In many cases, apart from the quality garments that are manufactured and retailed, the company is probably best known for its elaborate and spectacular gardens. When one considers that the gardens and the factory site were once the site of a disused quarry, the transformation becomes significant.

The electorate of Warrnambool has approximately 60 schools, some of which are private or non-Government schools. It has a TAFE college and the Warrnambool Institute of Advanced Education, which has grown dramatically over the past ten years. The institute now has some 2000 students; approximately 900 of those students are full-time and 1100 are part-time. The institute has been an enormous boost to the economy of the electorate and particularly to the City of Warrnambool. The 150 people employed by the institute look forward with optimism to 1986 when it is hoped to expand the services of the institute to include the training of nurses. The institute closely with the Warrnambool and District Base Hospital by supplying tutors for some time.

Tourism is another aspect which deserves to be mentioned. Flagstaff Hill attracts people from the regions to Warrnambool. For example, three and a half times the population of the City of Warrnambool pass through its gates each year. That achievement is significant in the ten years of its operation. Many other sites to which people travel as tourists include the day drives to the Port Campbell coastline. Swimming is popular in the area during the tourist season so it is fortunate that Warrnambool has a safe swimming beach. When one moves further inland towards Terang, Mortlake and Hawkesdale, one has the use of swimming pools of Olympic standard.

Another aspect of tourism in the electorate is the big event on the first Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of May each year—that is the Warrnambool racing carnival. When one talks about Warrnambool, in many cases one mentions the Fletcher Jones organization or the May racing carnival. During the three days of that carnival approximately \$9.5 million is spent. That figure is significant. People come from all over the world to attend that carnival.

Housing is also a priority. I was interested to hear earlier about the program proposed by the Government for housing. Warrnambool has approximately 341 people waiting for subsidized housing. The minimum wait for that type of housing is two years, and in some cases the period is classified as indefinite. I shall be working to try to alleviate some of the problems faced by low income earners, the single mothers and those who are unable to acquire housing at a reasonable cost.

Unemployment was also mentioned earlier. The electorate I represent also has a problem with unemployment not only among the youth but also among those in the 35 to 40 year-old age bracket who have been retrenched. Youth unemployment is a problem in Warrnambool as it is everywhere. I look forward to working with honourable members in trying to resolve this never-ending problem. Unemployment in the 35 to 40 year old age bracket is a complicated problem

because it is both a financial and social problem. These people have commitments to families, homes and responsibility to make certain payments yet, through no fault of their own, are retrenched and suddenly find themselves on an unemployed list or on an unemployable list.

Health and hospitals have been mentioned. Constituents are concerned about the ongoing viability of some country hospitals. The needs of these hospitals have been demonstrated. They have called for funds to meet their needs. Grave concern has been expressed that some of the services to the hospitals could be reduced. I would be very sad if that occurred and am very keen to ensure that it does not occur.

During the past few days a national conference on drug and alcohol addiction has been held in Canberra. The people of the City of Warrnambool are anxious to set up a facility to service this major problem. The city is waiting for a reply to a submission made some time ago for funds to establish this necessary facility. Its need has been demonstrated and the people look forward to the funds coming forth.

In closing I shall speak about a group of people for whom I and many others have enormous admiration; I refer to the members of the Country Fire Authority. Two years ago western Victoria, along with other parts of Victoria, was ravaged and devastated by the fires of Ash Wednesday.

The vivid memories of those experiences will live on in the minds of those people for the rest of their lives. Out of that tragic event emanated a group of people who were prepared to risk their lives and properties for the safety of the district. I am very keen to see the viability and the autonomy of the Country Fire Authority of Victoria maintained.

I thank the House for its consideration during the presentation of my speech.