

His Excellency referred to the wonderful work done by volunteer fire fighters during the bush fires in parts of Victoria last summer. Those fires caused not only losses of stock and great damage to property but also a tragic loss of life. Extensive property damage was sustained in a small part of my electorate—the Toblern Vale area. I take this opportunity of paying tribute to the magnificent job done by the members of the local fire-fighting organization. All those people affected by the fires greatly appreciated the efforts of the fire fighters who were a credit to their organization.

I hope the volunteer fire-fighting organizations in the country areas will not be left to get along as best they can—that has been the policy of this Government up to date—but that the Government will assist them, as the Chief Secretary indicated would be done, when he made a statement on bush fires during the last session of Parliament.

I am glad that at long last the Federal Government has seen fit to recognize that in Australia there are men of the calibre and with the necessary capabilities to fill the office of Governor-General of the Commonwealth, as was shown by the appointment of Lord Casey. I would not want my remarks to be interpreted as being disrespectful to our present Governor but I hope that when a new Governor is to be appointed, this Government will, if it is still in office, follow the lead of the Commonwealth Government. I pray every night that at that time this Government will not be in office. My prayers have not been answered yet, and I recognize that I have powerful forces working against my hopes. Nevertheless, I shall continue to hope. If this Government is still in office, I urge the appointment as Governor of an outstanding Victorian who has given notable service to the State. The Government would have an excellent opportunity to show its

appreciation of outstanding services to the State over a long period. I suppose it could be said that somebody in another place has already been picked out; I do not know.

Many Victorians outstanding in their profession have given great service to the community. The Government could make a selection from such men to fill the high office of Governor and in doing so provide a fitting climax to the career of some outstanding Victorian.

Mr. STEPHEN (Ballarat South).—On behalf of my constituents in Ballarat South, whom it is an honour and privilege to represent, I offer allegiance to the Crown through His Excellency the Governor, Sir Rohan Delacombe. Recently, we had great pleasure in showing His Excellency around the industries in greater Ballarat. We appreciate his willingness to go into country areas so early in his term of office in order to become acquainted with the way of life of the people of Victoria. He thought that Ballarat was a wonderful place.

Mr. LOXTON.—What about the begonias?

Mr. STEPHEN.—Yes, he liked the begonias, too. We look forward to his visiting our area again at a later date. In his Speech, the Governor mentioned the great increase in primary production and the number of sheep and cattle in Victoria. These vast numbers are, of course, no accident. Great strides are being made by practical farmers, and I remind honorable members that, whether we like it or not, we are still riding on the sheep's back. There are more than 30,000,000 sheep in Victoria. The increase in the number of sheep is partly brought about by extension works of the Department of Agriculture and the encouragement given to farmers to continue to use all methods to improve pastures and sheep husbandry generally. However, not enough stress is placed on the basic improvement of pastures before the stage of raising sheep and

improving sheep husbandry is reached. The Government should continue to support the Department of Agriculture with even larger grants of money, so that it can continue to expand and in order that the agricultural extension officers may further advise and assist farmers to raise production. Farmers are faced with ever-increasing costs yet are bound to a wholesale market over which they have no control. City members often lose sight of this.

The Governor mentioned the Institute of Colleges and the fact that an interim council has been constituted and is meeting regularly. We in Ballarat are glad this is so because we have an outstanding college, the Ballarat School of Mines, which is rearing to go. This is a general trend in education, because even in secondary education great progress is being made throughout the State, but particularly good progress is being made by the Ballarat School of Mines, which is one of the leading educational centres of Victoria.

As always, the Country Roads Board was favourably mentioned by the Governor. We should not always be complimentary about the Country Roads Board; we can be a little critical so long as we are constructive in our criticism. Unfortunately, some honorable members take the Government to task for things about which they know very little. I refer to the remarks of the honorable member for Broadmeadows concerning the extension of State Electricity Commission services in country areas. As a practical farmer, I am one who has been privileged to have State Electricity Commission power connected.

Mr. B. J. EVANS.—Did you need to make a loan to get it on?

Mr. STEPHEN.—Of course we had to find the finance. This is one of those amenities which increase the value of the property. If a primary producer is enabled to have water and electricity connected to his pro-

perty, the increase in value is almost beyond estimation. I know that the Deputy Leader of the Country Party has difficulty in his mountainous area but, if it is possible for the State Electricity Commission to make power available, it will do so.

We often hear the Railway Department criticized in an unwarranted manner, but recently witnessed an example of the Victorian Railways performing remarkably well when hay was transported to New South Wales and to East Gippsland for use in drought-stricken areas. The Victorian Railways moved many thousands of tons of hay to the New South Wales border, but the much vaunted New South Wales Railways were unable to handle it. I commend the members of the railway staff concerned with the outstanding planning and the co-operation with the farmers in both drought-stricken areas and the overcoming of the difficulty of transferring hay to the New South Wales railways. Victorian producers can be proud of the way in which they assisted their fellow primary producers in New South Wales and in East Gippsland.

In conclusion, I repeat that we look forward to having His Excellency in our area again. We hope and trust that he will be spared for many years and will enjoy the best of health to continue Her Majesty's work in this State.

Mr. TURNBULL (Brunswick West).—At the outset, I wish to congratulate previous speakers and join with them in expressing allegiance both to Her Majesty the Queen and her representatives in this country. His Excellency's Speech at the opening of Parliament sounded and read like all those that have been delivered since I became a member of this House. It was completely lacking in colour and flexibility. It failed to mention at least three extremely prominent matters in the community to-day. The first to which I wish to refer is the subject of prices. If time permits, I shall later add something