

who were previously totally isolated on the twentieth floor of the high-rise flats in Racecourse Road.

The capacity now exists for the community to be involved in child-care facilities within high-rise estates. They are involved in work creation programs, and a general raising of the standard of living has occurred; but I make the point that it is difficult when the average income of these people is approximately \$8000 a year—and that is determined by the Federal government's social security payments.

The State government has done as much as it possibly can but much more work needs to be done. The quality and quantity of public housing in our area is a tribute to the government, but we have a lot more to do. In particular, I direct attention to the Crown Street flats. If one were to attend the Melbourne Cup next Tuesday and look down the main straight, one would see the Crown Street flats. They supply flats for 150 senior citizens, the entry requirement being that the senior citizens are more than 55 years of age.

These people have lived in difficult circumstances for many years. In 1982 a campaign was held and, with the cooperation of the government, substantial improvement was made to the estate. It was not expensive, but it was a fantastic job and the residents now refer to it as "the Hyatt on Crown Street." It was a great achievement, and I am proud that the government took the time out to do it.

I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on achieving the role of Speaker. I am sure you will do as good a job as you have done in representing the seat of Werribee. I also pay my respects to His Excellency the Governor, Dr McCaughey, whose contribution to the government has been as superb as was his contribution to the University of Melbourne in the days when I was there. His contribution to theology has also been wonderful. All in all, he has been a wonderful choice and I am sure most Victorians will accept that fact.

In conclusion, I thank the previous honourable member for Melbourne, Mr Keith Remington, who has been most supportive of me over the past twelve months. His contribution to Parliament is well known. His contribution as an Australian is also well known. He served in the second world war in New Guinea for three years, defending his country as he thought he should, and he is now a committed believer in the peace movement. He also served the trade union movement for more than ten years as President of the Australian Bank Employees Union.

**Mr THOMSON (Pascoe Vale)**—I have much pleasure in seconding the motion for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor.

We have come a long way since the time when King George III came out of the House of Lords, after opening the Parliament, and said to Lord Eldon, "Lord Chancellor, did I deliver the Speech well?" "Very well indeed, Sir", was the enthusiastic answer. "I'm glad of that", replied the King, "for there was nothing in it".

Today we do have an opening Speech of substance, so it is an honour to second the motion for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply and to follow the thoughtful remarks made by the honourable member for Melbourne. It is an honour not only for me but also for the people of Pascoe Vale, whom I am delighted to represent in this House.

It is an historic occasion in that a Labor government has been re-elected for a third consecutive term by the people of Victoria. That has never happened in this State before. This is also the first occasion since the 1950s when the Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech on the opening of Parliament has been moved or seconded by a member from the northern or western suburbs.

I acknowledge the Speech of His Excellency the Governor which represents the views of the government and outlines the government's program for the next four

years. I wish His Excellency and Mrs McCaughey well and I hope they will both continue to have a successful and enjoyable term in the service of the people of Victoria.

To you, Mr Speaker, I extend my personal congratulations. You have a reputation for being progressive and innovative—a reformer by instinct. I know you will discharge your duties and responsibilities with impartiality and distinction and that this Parliament will benefit enormously from your period as one of its principal custodians.

I also wish to pay tribute to the work of your predecessor not only as a Speaker of the previous Parliament but also as my predecessor as the honourable member for Pascoe Vale. In recent years, Tom Edmunds gave me a great deal of fatherly advice—some of which I have taken.

I also wish to say how pleased I am to be a member of a government led by the honourable member for Bundoora, John Cain—the Premier. One of the things I admire most about the Premier is that he believes in and insists on the highest standards of propriety in public life. Victoria is extremely fortunate to have such a Premier; more fortunate than the States to our north where the highest standards of conduct by those in positions of public trust are, regrettably, not insisted upon.

I wish to say a few words about honesty in public life, although in a slightly different sense from that to which I have just referred. Each of us who enters this place has a responsibility to ensure that honesty in political debates takes place here. When Nelson Rockefeller was first contemplating standing for public office, he sought advice from the head of a marketing agency—which he just happened to own. That agency went away, did some research, and came back with the advice that in order to succeed he must do four things: firstly, he had to promise a massive program of urban renewal and spending on the infrastructure of the cities; secondly, he had to promise greatly expanded support services for elderly people; thirdly, he had to do a great deal in the area of schools and for children; and, finally, and most importantly, he had to promise to substantially lower levels of taxation.

It is easy to say that which is popular, but it takes a lot of political courage to tell people things they do not wish to hear. However, if we are to do a service to the electorate and the community and to be of real value to them, we must say what is right, rather than what is popular. That creates a responsibility on both governments and oppositions. Honest political debate is not achieved if an Opposition, or the media, one day tells us “Victoria or Australia is too deeply in debt, we will all be ruined” and the next day says, “Get rid of the government because it is taking too much in taxes.”

Honest political debate is not achieved if one day an Opposition says that we are all living beyond our means and that the situation cannot go on and says the next day, “Get rid of the government—it is cutting our living standards.” For honest political debate in this place, it is necessary for opposition policies and arguments to add up, to be internally consistent and for opposition parties not to seek to be all things to all people but rather to put forward a fair dinkum alternative which does add up.

Governments also have a responsibility in producing honest debate. Although they do not have the luxury of being able to make promises without being held to them, they must in my view avoid policies designed to take them through to the next election with no thought to the future. It is easy for governments to succumb to that trap, especially if confronted with an irresponsible opposition, but it is important for the welfare of the community that they do not. I see it as an important part of my work to help ensure that this does not happen.

It is because I believe John Cains's third government meets that most important test, that is, is the government acting in the best long-term interests of the community, that I am proud to be one of its members.

The measures announced by His Excellency today do amount to a blueprint for Victoria's future for which the next generation of Victorians will thank us. For example, the government is on line to reach a target of the creation of 520 000 new jobs in its first decade, compared with the creation of 100 000 new jobs in the previous decade. It is also on line to reach an unemployment rate of less than 4 per cent, compared with the rate of 9 per cent that existed when it came to office.

The government envisages export growth of 180 per cent, compared with only 5 per cent in the previous decade. It envisages investment growth of 130 per cent, compared with only 3 per cent in the previous decade. The government intends to raise the level of household income to 12 per cent above the rest of Australia; it is already 10 per cent higher.

This can be achieved, and is being achieved, without a blow-out in either debt or taxation. Debt should be measured as a proportion of State income—non-farm gross domestic product. In 1971 the level was 44 per cent; this year it is projected to be 28 per cent. The government expects that the debt level will continue to fall as a share of non-farm gross domestic product to 25 per cent by 1991–92. So far as I am aware, that will be the lowest level this century. So far as taxation is concerned, no matter which way one chooses to measure it, Victoria's growth in taxation since 1982–83 has been the lowest of all the States.

Against this background of highly responsible and successful economic strategy and economic outlook, I shall focus more sharply on two specific areas of the government's program. The first is in the area of conservation, forests and lands. In its second term of office the government expanded the national parks system from 3.6 per cent to 7.6 per cent of the State. It built on the magnificent achievement of the Grampians National Park with a new national park in the Dandenong Ranges; the Barmah State Park; the Coopracambra State Park; the Errinundra National Park; the Snowy River National Park; the Rodger River National Park; the Point Nepean National Park and the Avon wilderness.

I remember many years ago belonging to a conservation movement which was lobbying the government for just 5 per cent of the State to be set aside for national parks—we have come a long way! The government plans to build on its proud record with major parks and wilderness areas in the Big Desert, the Sunset country and the Alps, and with legislation to prohibit mining and exploration in all national and State parks, subject only to existing contractual obligations.

Although national parks are the jewel in the environmental crown, many other areas are also important. Control of land degradation, soil conservation and land care programs and salinity control are all areas where the government has been taking, and will continue to take, action of vital importance to the future of our rural environment.

The other area I shall focus on concerns the way we treat our elderly people. It is important that their retirement years be spent in security and dignity, recognising the contribution they have made to our community's prosperity. Under the government's social justice strategy, many initiatives have been developed to assist older people. These include winter gas and electricity concessions, the maxi-taxi service, stamp duty exemptions and, of course, the home and community care program. Although there is no doubt that government benefits must be directed to those most in need, the difficulty is that so many of these concessions are tied to pensioner health card eligibility that older people become discouraged from putting money aside for their old age, for example, by superannuation investments.

This is a problem which will challenge all governments, but the Cain government has taken an important step in introducing, from 1 January 1989, half-fare entitlements up to a maximum daily fare of \$1 for all retired people over 60 years of age to use on public transport anywhere on the Met system at any time, without any means test. The government is also acting to provide frail older people living at home with emergency alarm systems linked to ambulance and hospital switchboards. It is acting to provide better information for older people by means of a one-stop telephone information service and a new publication setting out all their services and entitlements.

The government is also acting to provide additional nursing home beds—the largest expansion of public nursing home beds in twenty years.

I am proud to support the introduction of two respite care programs which will enable those who care for older people to have time away for themselves. The first program will provide an increased number of nursing home and hostel beds to be made available for respite stays, and the second innovative program will provide live-in or extended hours care in the homes of older people on a temporary basis, when the family or friends who normally provide care take a break.

The need for this kind of assistance was brought home to me by the members of the Pascoe Vale Women's Task Force, which I established earlier this year. It is often women who remain at home to care for the ageing, and they will benefit most from this initiative. It is the kind of initiative that shows that the values of compassion, social justice and individual freedom—values which are near and dear to my heart—are alive and well.

Unfortunately, we live in an era that is prone to be selfish and to pay these values too little respect. We live in a community that is all too ready to say that Aborigines, single mums, or unemployed kids, are enjoying a good wicket, I suspect few of us, though are anxious to trade places.

We also live in an era where some who invoke the banner of individual freedom appear to give that word a strange content, like Humpty Dumpty saying to Alice in *Through the Looking Glass*, "When I use a word . . . it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." They appear to believe that individuals should be free to cheat on taxes even though others must pay more, or that companies should be free to cheat their customers or their employees. On the one hand, they seem to have little respect for some of the fundamental freedoms which distinguish a truly free society, such as freedom from arbitrary arrest, and freedom from detention without trial, which are constantly being challenged under the banner of police powers.

Freedom of association and the right to withdraw one's labour, matters which go to the heart of whether an individual is or is not free, are being challenged by so-called "essential services" legislation.

So, I shall be a strong supporter of individual freedom in this Parliament, but I shall not support those who seek to manipulate the content of individual freedom for unworthy ends.

We need to come to this place with an open mind and a willingness to think problems through, without preconceptions or prejudices, but with our values intact. The ideals we stand for and the values we hold should remain for ever, but their practical expression must change from generation to generation in the light of new experiences and new developments. To paraphrase the words of Senator Edward Kennedy: "Programs may sometimes become obsolete, but the ideal of fairness always endures. Circumstances may change, but the work of compassion must continue. It is surely correct that we cannot solve problems by throwing money at them, but it is also correct that we dare not throw out our problems on to a scrap heap of inattention and



indifference." The poor may be unfashionable but they have needs nevertheless. The middle-class may be angry but they have not lost the dream that Victorians and Australians can advance together.

On the road to Parliament, I have listened to elderly people concerned about economic security and independence. On the road to Parliament, I have listened to a couple who were too frightened to mow their own nature strip because they live on Pascoe Vale Road and have too often seen trucks turning their front fence into matchsticks.

On the road to Parliament, I have listened to families who have been involved in accidents—work accidents, traffic accidents—and who have sometimes been incapacitated by those accidents. They have innocently put their affairs into the hands of a firm of solicitors and later found themselves owing those firms thousands of dollars while being told that their cases were not worth taking to court.

I shall make it my business in this place to ensure that an independent mechanism is set up for hearing complaints made against lawyers to replace the present self-regulation, which is a farce and a joke.

For me, the road to Parliament has come through the electorate of Pascoe Vale. Pascoe Vale is a predominantly working-class electorate. In 1986 more than 40 per cent of the adult population had an income of less than \$9000 per annum and only 3.2 per cent had an income in excess of \$32 000. The most serious problems confronting the electorate are the problems surrounding Pascoe Vale Road, the Essendon Airport, and the proposals for a short-cut along the Tullamarine Freeway that would cut up Strathmore yet again.

I shall be working in this place for the resolution of these problems. I shall also be working to see a linear park established along the Moonee Ponds Creek, traffic management measures in problem streets such as Cumberland Road and Derby Street, improvements to the Glenroy West Primary School oval, improved access for residents sandwiched between the Moonee Ponds Creek and the Jacana railway line, and clubrooms for both the Pascoe Vale Swimming Club and the Pascoe Vale Soccer Club.

As someone who was born in Pascoe Vale, who went to primary school at Pascoe Vale North, and who has lived in Pascoe Vale virtually all my life, I hope to bring to Parliament an awareness of the concerns within my community and of the opportunities for improvement. I do not want anyone to underestimate the seriousness of these problems; however, we should also recognise that we have a great deal going for us in meeting those challenges. We have leadership whose natural instincts are for cooperation rather than confrontation, leadership that is ready to be honest with the Victorian and Australian people and ready to take them into its confidence, seeking mutual understanding and common effort, rather than leadership that engages in propaganda designed to set Australians or Victorians against and apart from each other.

There is more goodwill, too, internationally than I can recall in my lifetime. If one thinks of the global offer of help that went to the Soviet Union when its astronauts were experiencing problems re-entering the earth's atmosphere or of the global concern about the fate of whales stranded in the Arctic ice, there certainly seem to be more of the shared values of humanity, and fewer of the things that have divided us, than ever before.

Members of this Parliament have been given responsibility by the people of their respective electorates to work for the well-being of the people of those electorates and of their children; we do so in a climate of considerable opportunity. I thank the people

of Pascoe Vale for placing their confidence in me and I hope I shall be able to do justice to that trust.

On the motion of Mr ELDER (Ballarat North), the debate was adjourned.

It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until later this day.

## ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I propose to the House that Terence Richard Norris be appointed Chairman of Committees. I move:

That Terence Richard Norris, Esquire, be appointed Chairman of Committees of this House.

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs)—It is with great pleasure that I second Mr Terry Norris as nominee for this very important office. I believe his experience, background and character admirably fit him for this important duty.

The SPEAKER—Order! Does the honourable member for Dandenong accept the nomination?

Mr NORRIS (Dandenong)—I accept the nomination.

The SPEAKER—Order! Is there any further proposal?

Mr W. D. McGRATH (Lowan)—I have much pleasure in proposing to the House that Bruce James Evans, Esquire, who has been the member for Gippsland East for 26 years, is someone whom the House would treat with some recognition and respect after so long in service.

He has been Acting Chairman on previous occasions in this Parliament and I venture to say that everyone in Parliament who has experienced the courtesy of his chairmanship would appreciate and honour the respect he has shown as a Chairman of Committees in this Assembly. It could be said that he is almost the father of the Parliament after 26 years. It would be a fitting reward if this Parliament were to elect him as Chairman of Committees. Therefore, I move:

That Bruce James Evans, Esquire, be appointed Chairman of Committees of this House.

Mr McNAMARA (Leader of the National Party)—I have pleasure in seconding the motion for the nomination of the honourable member for Gippsland East as Chairman of Committees of this Chamber.

As my colleague, the honourable member for Lowan, has just stated, the honourable member for Gippsland East is the longest serving member in this Chamber and he is a member who is regarded with great respect on all sides of the Chamber. The honourable member has had a long and distinguished career in Parliament and prior to entering Parliament.

The SPEAKER—Order! Does the honourable member for Gippsland East accept nomination as Chairman of Committees?

Mr EVANS (Gippsland East)—I have great pleasure in accepting the nomination.

The SPEAKER—Order! Are there any further proposals? The time for proposals has now expired. The ballot will now be proceeded with. I ask the Clerk to ring the bells.