

Mrs. WEBER (Nunawading) - I support the request of the honorable member for St. Kilda that the Government should grant full restoration of the salaries of temporary women employees of the Government. Although these women are called temporary employees, many of them have been employed ten, fifteen, and up to twenty years in the Public Service. It is a disgrace to all of us that the present position should be allowed to continue, particularly when all other employees of the Government have had their salaries fully restored. The women concerned are no longer young. The matter is one that we should not pass over lightly. The subject has been brought up again and again, but the request has been dismissed because some thousands of pounds are involved. The position must be faced, and we should not postpone facing it any longer.

The honorable member for Coburg objected to any more professorial residences being built on the grounds of the University of Melbourne. I also object to them. I feel that the grounds are for the community, and surely, if we require those grounds, the professors can live elsewhere. There is a great need for a small clinical hospital to be built near the University. The professors, the masseurs, the physical educationists, and the doctors need such a hospital, and it could be erected. The proposed site for the great new institution is just as noisy as the one now occupied by the Royal Melbourne Hospital. As we are situated we should not for some years contemplate the demolition of that hospital and the undertaking of the heavy expenditure involved. Outer suburban hospitals should be erected. I want one in my electorate. Such institutions could be built in various outlying districts. We must remember that when people visit patients in the city hospitals their fares mount up considerably, and the sufferers' friends cannot afford the expense. We could easily have hospitals on something like the lines adopted for the bush nursing hospitals, in which the cost is from £450 to £500 a bed. Nearly all of the leading hospitals that have been built in the last ten years have cost at least £1,000 a bed. If hospitals could be erected at a lower cost the money saved could be used for their maintenance. This afternoon the Leader of the Opposition objected to the rebuilding of any more hospitals if their maintenance was not assured. Looking at Hansard recently I noticed that as far back as 1907 he had advocated the adoption of a contributory scheme. New South Wales has had such a scheme in operation for more than four years. In Victoria, we have had one for two years, but the Government has taken no notice of it. Early last year I was present at a deputation which sought £2,000 from the Government for publicity for the scheme. The question was discussed in the House whether a hospital tax or a lottery should be introduced, but the scheme of which I have spoken was not supported. I have had experience with it, and I know that we were hindered in our efforts to advance the project. At the end of last financial year the Royal Sydney Hospital, which corresponds to the Royal Melbourne Hospital, received £10,000 from this simple contributory scheme; the Children's Hospital received £6,000, and each of the women's hospitals in Sydney, which correspond to the Queen Victoria Hospital for women and children and the Women's Hospital in Melbourne, £3,000. I know that there is a feeling among hospital committees that if such a scheme could be furthered the Melbourne hospitals would get, not a few hundred pounds, but thousands, as the New South Wales institutions do. Whatever we do in regard to national insurance, we should also promote the contributory scheme in connexion with hospital treatment. The two things can work together. If we could save money in this way surely the social services would benefit.

I think that the Premier dealt well with the deputation which waited on him to-day in connexion with the Government grant to infant welfare centres. Some of the medical women who addressed him mentioned to me afterwards that if all of the nurses attached to the various centres were to receive the same amount of salary a big obstacle would be overcome. Much dissension has been caused through the nurses receiving different salaries. If the municipal councils agreed to

do their share and equalize their payments towards the maintenance of the institutions, the Government could do its part, either to find the amount necessary for the salaries of the nurses, or to meet the expenditure on maintenance. This could be done on a fifty--fifty basis. It would be interesting if we could calculate what the cost would have been to the Government if, during the past 20 or 30 years, the members of the various committees associated with the baby health centres and other social services had been paid salaries. These committees act in an honorary capacity, and they love their work, but we seem to overlook the work they do. They are giving better service than they would if they were being paid large salaries, but their anxieties should be relieved.

The honorable member for Coburg also referred to housing. I am anxiously awaiting the report of the Housing Investigation and Slum Abolition Board. The subject of housing has been before the Government for many years. I have followed it closely because I have been connected with the Playgrounds Association of Victoria. We feel that where slums occupying 2 or 3 acres are abolished there should be substituted a supervised playground, or "community centre" as it is called in other parts of the world, instead of permitting flats or small houses to be erected, as has been suggested. An honorable member said that we should not emulate Chicago, but perhaps he did not know that Chicago established the first supervised municipal playgrounds in the world. That city has spent £30,000,000 on supervised playgrounds and has provided a further amount of £1,000,000 per annum for their upkeep. The playgrounds have reduced juvenile crime there in the last ten years by 60 per cent. The people regard those playgrounds as one of the greatest assets in the city. A similar plan could be adopted here in a small way, and the people now occupying slums could be moved to outer suburbs. This must involve a reduction in railway fares. Every one of us advocated that during the election campaign. Fares must be reduced before the beginning of the new year. At that period people wish to know what their expenditure will be; so during this session we must face the fact that railway fares must be cut down. That should be the first thing; then the housing scheme could be proceeded with. In Tunstall, in my electorate, there is an area of about 100 acres which could be used for the purpose, and I do not think there is a better district for the experiment.

The honorable member for Kew referred to the question of education. I have been greatly interested in the new ideas of visual education. It was stated that the Commonwealth Government had offered to help the State in establishing a visual education bureau. I should like to know whether the Commonwealth expects the State to contribute a certain amount. I suppose it does, but we should follow the matter up. It is not often that the Commonwealth offers to do anything for the State, but we should adopt the scheme if possible because it has been considered by experts as one of the most progressive means of educating children, particularly those in the country.

The dental and medical treatment of school children has also been referred to. As most honorable members know, a sum of £100,000 has been raised by mothers' clubs for the provision of certain extras for school children, and those who are engaged in the work feel that they have a right to a place somewhere in the education system where their work will be recognized. They set out to give the children something more than the Government could afford to give, but the money they raised has had to go in renovations and other things for which it was not intended. It is easy to excuse their indignation when they realize that their money has not been used in the way they intended it to be. I do not think they will be able to raise more money in the future but rather less, unless we support them as they should be supported.

Nutrition has also been referred to. I should not like to see us follow the example of England in one direction. In some districts in England they have placed the people in better houses, but the rents have not been satisfactorily arranged. The people were called upon to pay such high rents that their families have suffered from malnutrition. Victoria should profit from a knowledge of such mistakes. It is of no use placing children in better homes and giving them improved environment unless they get better food also.

One honorable member this afternoon referred to the growth of the Independent party, and to upheavals that had been taking place to provide accommodation for Independent members. During the election I was referred to as "the little ferret who was always nosing around doing everything." Perhaps, on the present occasion, the sooner I retire to my own little burrow the better it will be for honorable members generally.