

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.**

The debate (adjourned from April 14) was resumed on the motion of Mr. Kennett (Burwood) for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech, and on the amendment of Mr. Jones (Melbourne)—

That the following words be added to the proposed Address—"and respectfully desire to inform Your Excellency that this House regrets the failure of the Government to foreshadow amendments to the recently enacted Constitution Act 1975, with specific reference to section 48 of that Act relating to the qualification of electors, which enactment caused a significant change in the law, despite the assurances of the former Attorney-General that the measure did not involve any changes in principle or practice."

Mr. HUDSON (Werribee): I am grateful for the opportunity of speaking on behalf of the electors of the new electorate of Werribee, whom I deem it a great honour to represent in this Parliament. I express their loyalty and my own loyalty to Her Majesty Elizabeth II, Queen of Australia, and to her representative in this State, Sir Henry Winneke. I congratulate the members who have been elected to this Parliament for the first time.

I wish to speak to the electorate of Werribee, most of which formed part of the electorate of Gisborne prior to the electoral redistribution and was and still is represented by Mr. Athol Guy. The electorate occupies an area of some 400 square miles, taking in the whole of the Shire of Werribee, a small portion of the City of Altona, the Shire of Melton without the Toolern Vale area, and the Deer Park section of the former Deer Park electorate which was held previously by the present member for Keilor, Mr. Jack Ginifer.

Most of the electorate is rural in nature with centres of population about developing areas of Werribee and Hoppers Crossing, Laverton, Melton and in Deer Park. Basically, it is a commuter electorate with

these major centres of population being greatly in need of some general industry.

On behalf of my constituents, I commend the federalism initiatives which were mentioned by His Excellency in his Speech on the opening of this Parliament. I commend them because they could be the beginning of a new era of balanced government in this country. If these initiatives and policies are expanded continually to take care of the anomalies which exist at each level of government, this great country of Australia will continue to prosper and we will build a quality of life which could not be achieved anywhere else.

In order to achieve this, these sorts of philosophies must gravitate to the State Governments, and through them down to local government, then to progress associations and community service organizations. In the early days, the very reason for the existence of local government was to make roads to provide access from one place to another. Today, local government has a vastly different role. Instead of being a road-making authority, it has now become more a social welfare administration left mainly to its own devices to finance the ever-increasing load that has been foisted upon it and with little or no say in its own destiny.

I am afeared for its existence in the not-too-distant future because of the ever-increasing work load that has been thrust upon it and because of the continued extraction of its teeth by overriding Government instrumentalities. I am also afeared because of its very limited financial resources and because of the increasing time involvement demanded of volunteer unpaid councillors who administer its functions. It is rapidly approaching the stage when councillors will comprise only retired persons and public servants. I do not question the abilities of public servants or of retired persons, whether they

be retired businessmen, farmers or wage or salary earners. It will be a sad day if the young and vigorous businessman or the dedicated private enterprise wage earner is debarred from having a voice in local government because of the financial burdens of large time involvement. I am not advocating payment for councillors—far from that—but I am advocating a complete overhaul of the financial structure of local government. I am advocating the return of the teeth that have been extracted from it and an increased State Government responsibility and a greatly decreased local government responsibility in social welfare. I am advocating a greater control for local government on the planning of its own destinies.

These are remedial measures which are needed now. I urge the Government to review the whole scene of local government before it is too late. Many of the major problems, apart from the problems of local government finance today, facing those municipalities particularly those which are on the fringe of the metropolitan area and developing at a rapid rate, arise from decisions made by State Government planning authorities which override some of the decisions of local government.

The co-ordination of these various planning authorities into one co-ordinated planning authority representative of local government, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, the Housing Commission, the Country Roads Board and perhaps every department which has a planning authority in its own right, would help solve the problems. I feel a co-ordination of these planning bodies would greatly increase the departmental planning efficiency and reduce the financial burdens, the time involvement and the frustrations that local government has over planning.

Within the Werribee electorate, the Shire of Melton and the Shire of Werribee have a number of planning

problems and planning decisions which have been made in the past by higher authorities and which have been extremely frustrating and, at times, have shown a total disregard of the wishes of local government.

On 23rd November, 1974, the then Minister for Local Government and Minister for Planning issued a statement on behalf of the State Cabinet concerning the satellite city of Melton. The Minister stated that the basic objective for Melton was to experience moderately accelerated development at a rate which could readily be absorbed without destroying its special charm and character or its people's sense of identity. That was a very soothing statement for those people who lived west of Melbourne. For many years the people living west of Melbourne have felt that perhaps they have been classed as second-class citizens in many ways and this was a soothing and welcome statement, particularly that portion which referred to the satellite town readily absorbing the population without destroying its special charm and character or its people's sense of identity.

This statement was followed by a further statement with the development of a co-ordinating committee to plan the Melton satellite city. Guidelines were laid down by the State Government. A programme was evolved which should be finished by the end of 1976. Although it is a comprehensive programme, it is not exhaustive and in order to assess some of the critical issues, it was divided into six categories. The six categories were public involvement programme, social planning and needs programme, population, employment and housing study, physical planning studies, land programme budget and implementation programme, and regional resources and impact study.

It is a matter of concern that to date all planning studies in the Melton investigation area have proceeded without the knowledge or appreciation of the effects of the proposals beyond the boundaries of the Melton investigation area.

Melton is situated within the Werribee River catchment area and it is of paramount importance to the people who live within the catchment and to the catchment itself that the State Government make available ample funds to carry out a regional resources and environmental impact study or, as the Director of Conservation calls it, an environmental assessment study.

The Werribee River catchment is an extensive catchment, and one which rises about 50 miles north of Melbourne in the Great Dividing Range. It is funnel-shaped and it discharges into the sea at Werribee South, some few miles south-east of the town. A number of water storages exist in the Werribee River catchment and they include Pykes Creek reservoir, Lake Merrimu, Djerriwarrh reservoir, Exford weir and some smaller diversion weirs. At the outset these water storages were constructed to serve the irrigation districts of Bacchus Marsh and Werribee and not to provide an urban water supply. As a consequence the water supply for Werribee is imported from outside the catchment area.

In recent years the urban growth within the catchment has increased dramatically until it has reached the stage where it is growing faster than the Melbourne metropolitan area. To keep pace with such growth there must be a parallel increase in the water supply and a greatly increased system than exists at the moment. It is a complicated system and it will have to be increased considerably so that there is an abundance of water from these reservoirs. The second stage of the Lake Merrimu project is designed to take care of this need but this could have a detrimental effect on the Werribee River.

It is therefore of paramount importance, and I say this again, that a prompt and expert planning of water resources management study take place to deal with the problem of water supply and for other problems

Mr. Hudson.

such as flood protection, drainage, river improvement, waste water disposal and effluent disposal.

Without such a study and the necessary remedial measures taken, the once beautiful Werribee River could become an open drain for the reception of waste water and sewerage effluent. Once the fastest flowing river in Australia and one of the geological wonders of Australia it has been reduced to a non-flowing state for most of the year. During wet times, when the run-off is at its highest in the catchment area, it becomes a raging torrent which causes flooding in its lower reaches, mainly because of the water that is released from the weirs at critical times. Surely this in itself is enough for an environmental assessment study.

The State Rivers and Water Supply Commission multi-objective planning of water resources management study was intended to do this but so far it has proceeded with little vigour and it may only do the assessment in a small way. It appears to me that the study is concerned mainly with the question of how much more water can be removed from the Werribee River.

The Melton Sewerage Authority treatment plant which is to be close to the banks of the Werribee River is in itself enough reason for an environmental study, particularly because of the small size of the effluent disposal land area and because it does not appear that there is a final plan of just how much land and what size the treatment plant will be, and I cannot find out.

This is a matter of concern to residents because the treatment plant is alongside a number of National Trust classification sites, including Strathulloh, Exford House, Eynesbury House and the landscape classification of Cobbledicks Ford.

Whilst it is acknowledged that it is technically possible for effluent to be treated to a drinkable water standard, the experience of Werribee, with its

close proximity to the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works sewerage treatment plant, is that although such treatment is technically possible it is sometimes not economically possible or politically expedient. Therefore, the Government must give assurances that the standard of effluent disposal from the Melton sewerage treatment plant and the standard of odour control are of the highest degree and that unlike the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works sewerage farm, all treatment equipment will be amplified at a rate sufficient to keep ahead of the development within Melton. This will require significant and prompt Government funding but it will negate the problems of overloading and the subsequent odour problems which have been experienced with the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works sewerage farm.

In summing up, I urge the Government to do all within its power to preserve our three-tier system of government, which I sincerely believe is the best and fairest system of government in the world today. To do this the Government should give to that third-tier of government—that is, local government—the abilities, the financial resources and the teeth so that we can give a fundamental democratic right to the man in the street to enable him to have a direct voice in the government of this great nation of Australia. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and honorable members for the opportunity of speaking on these matters.

Mr. CATHIE (Carrum): The Address-in-Reply debate gives honorable members the opportunity of ranging widely over the whole field of Government services and over the state of the economy. In the Government's programme much emphasis was placed upon the future of free enterprise, the private sector and the need for the private sector to grow and develop.

That is a naïve view. It is certainly one that believes that the private sector alone can solve the

economic ills of the Australian people. But such a view ignores too many factors. It ignores the whole factor of stagflation, that unusual but very difficult balance and combination of both inflation and unemployment, which bedevils nearly all Western economies at present. It certainly ignores the uncontrolled foreign investment of the past, the influx of this money, the consequent effects that this had on the economy and the present repatriation of profits abroad. It also certainly ignores such factors that bear upon the working people of this community that today it is almost impossible for a worker, with the present rates of interest, to purchase a home; that is gradually getting more and more out of his reach.

I might agree with this emphasis upon the Government and the Government's connection with private enterprise if it meant that the Governments of Australia—all Governments, State and Federal—would participate in stimulating productivity and certainly in entering into competition in vital economic areas, particularly those which deal with natural resources and the natural wealth of our nation. Instead of putting emphasis, as the Government's programme does, upon the private sector of the economy, I would rather emphasize the necessary expansion of public works to create employment opportunities for the people of Victoria at present.

Such avenues are not open to many people in the electorate that I represent. Certainly the recent closure of a meat processing factory in Chelsea has meant that one of the last few avenues of employment open to people who are living more and more in an area where they can only commute out of their dormitory suburb are being dried up. I know from the number of young people who have come to me for assistance in finding employment how difficult it is for them to obtain any decent job. The other day a