

Albert, the mountains and the beach. It is regrettable that the media continue to paint the Latrobe Valley as the strike capital and pollution centre of Victoria.

In recent years, under the present Government, the industrial relations record in the Latrobe Valley has been excellent. I hope that during the next few years the image of the Latrobe Valley will be improved because teachers and professionals are desperately needed to work in our schools and so on.

Mr PESCOTT (Bennettswood)—Mr Deputy Speaker, I join with those honourable members who spoke before me in congratulating the Speaker and yourself on your election to the important positions you hold in this Chamber. In the few days I have been sitting here I have had confirmed in my mind that those who praised the work of the Speaker in the previous Parliament did so with good cause.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Government on its re-election to office last month. As the Premier stated, it was a milestone in the history of Victoria for the Labor Party to have achieved this result, and the challenge to live up to the task for the next four years is great indeed.

For my part, I am deeply honoured to be standing in this place as the representative of the people of Bennettswood and shall work as hard as I can on their behalf.

I should at this stage mention my predecessor, Doug Newton, who represented the electorate energetically for the past three years. I am sure the constituents of Bennettswood would wish me to record their appreciation for the service he gave.

Similarly, a great deal of service was given by the active supporters of both parties during the campaign and I pay tribute to all those who helped me win the seat, especially my family and my electorate committee who gave me the fullest support.

Bennettswood is an electorate on the eastern side of Melbourne, which is predominantly residential. More than half the area is in the north-western section of the City of Waverley and the rest is divided between southern portions of the cities of Box Hill and Nunawading. Although there are relatively few businesses in the district, there are a relatively large number of schools, several communities of senior citizens such as the Salvation Army's Inala Village, and a few small private hospitals. Most of the streets are tree-lined, and this, together with a number of open spaces and parks, gives support to the concept of the Garden State of Victoria.

One corner of Bennettswood has been neglected badly by all previous Governments and I plan to do what I can to improve the conditions under which many residents of the Ashwood/Jordanville area live. I mention these contrasting aspects of the electorate I represent because they form the setting against which the families I represent are working to make their contribution to the future of Victoria. I shall touch on aspects of the work of honourable members in this place which sometimes encourage, but sometimes restrict their work along the way.

I am sure all honourable members believe in the importance of the individual and that the family is of fundamental importance to our community.

I need not go into a long discussion of the differences of approach between both sides of the House and how those values should be upheld. Suffice to say that there is a role of Government which determines whether an individual can express herself in the most fulfilling way—and from the fulfilment or achievement of individuals can come some of the ingredients which, together with Christian principles of love and compassion, go towards binding together our families, and through them, our community.

I ask what role Governments should play in the lives of the people of Victoria so that all citizens can feel that they have a purpose in life—and I would like to draw on some of the experiences I had during eleven years with the Department of Foreign Affairs, most of them working overseas as a representative of Australia. In several of my first years in that capacity I worked in areas associated with the United Nations and spent some time at the

United Nations headquarters in New York. There, I was struck by the constant reiteration of the boldest and highest of principles, such as, that every citizen regardless of race, colour, sex or creed should have freedom of opportunities, freedom of the press, freedom to work, and so on.

I heard the representatives of countries whose Governments covered the whole spectrum of political opinion all say that they believed in such ideals. I learnt, indeed that words are cheap. I learnt that the constitutions of Eastern bloc and some Third World countries guaranteed freedoms along the lines of the United Nations charter but these freedoms were being continually denied by the interpretation of respective Governments in power. I learnt that individual liberties exist very rarely in the world today.

Following my return to Victoria four and a half years ago—as I am the father of four wonderful children—I have naturally continued with a concern I had built up abroad that the State of Victoria, where I was born and raised, should hold on to liberties in the real sense because they are so fundamental to all activities of human endeavour. And yet, there have been gradual changes to our lives in recent years, the fullest extent of which have not been felt by our community.

I find at the most basic level of the family unit that in Bennettswood the economic conditions of this State have meant that whole households have been out of work for long periods and some of the young in those households prefer to receive the dole to trying to find work. I say this not as a method of making a cheap political jibe at the current Government but because I believe Governments of both persuasions, should take a share of the blame.

In the post-war period Governments have been too interfering, too willing to enter areas where they had no right to be. Government red tape has strangled more commercial enterprise and initiative than we know of in our community so that heaven knows how many opportunities to create wealth and employment have passed by.

At present we have the ironical situation where socialist Governments throughout Australia are striving hard to link closely with large corporate enterprises on the one hand while on the other they are in fact the political wing of the trade union movement. In an ideal world these two interest groups should be able to live in harmony; but that is Liberal Party philosophy. Under socialist theory, enshrined in the Labor Party platform, the encouragement of large commercial interests in pursuit of higher profits is anathema to the objective of levelling the big business bosses and creating opportunities, somehow through enterprises run by the State.

How the old Labor Party stalwarts would turn in their graves if they could see their modern Labor Party counterparts travelling overseas to see bank after bank around the world to borrow money to run Victoria, and to see the trade union movement being wrecked by those of their number who choose regularly to flout the law! Would they really have believed that a loose interpretation of the law by a Labor Government could mean that some unions can actively deny the rights of others to work! What sort of “social justice”, to use Labor Party language is that?

Governments should nurture and protect those who are, or who become, weak. Unfair action by large corporate bosses or by the collective endeavours of a larger number of individuals should be treated in the same way.

It is of no use for Governments to strive to create opportunities with an economic ten-year plan if governments are not going to back the right of an individual to work. How long will it be before individuals will again be free to choose whether or not they want to join a union when they turn up for work at a building site? As I said earlier, all honourable members would consider they believed in the importance of the individual, but if the role of government representing the State is exercised in the wrong way, we will all be the losers in the end.

I lived for eighteen months behind the Iron Curtain in East Berlin, and there almost everybody to whom I spoke believed they were free. Indeed they were, until they stepped out of line. I was once told that the freedom of an individual to travel outside East Germany was never discussed at the ruling party's Congress because only issues of importance were raised there.

I first heard about consensus politics when I was in East Berlin and I ask, Sir, how you think I felt when I heard the Prime Minister of my own country talking about the same ideals with the same related notion that those who do not agree with him are possibly acting against the best interests of the people of the country, whose collective views are, of course, interpreted by its rulers.

How depressing it must be for those talented people who are denied top positions in the bureaucracies in eastern Europe because they do not belong to the ruling party. It cannot be long—say a decade—before that could be the norm in this State at the rate at which our State public servants are being politicized. I am vehemently opposed to this trend which began in earnest in Australia during the Whitlam years and which, it would seem, is almost impossible to reverse now it has started.

These extreme examples from eastern Europe serve to show that interpretation of such things as freedom and opportunity are linked absolutely with the role of government. I believe that almost without knowing it there have been drifts in the community's perception about what rights Governments have, to the extent that there is now an unhealthy expectation in some quarters that Governments are there to provide and that the rights of people carry few, if any, obligations.

Governments from both parties have responded in a well intentioned manner to the short-term needs of the people. However, with hindsight are we not in danger of breeding higher expectations than we can afford to pay for? Governments should, as I have said, nurture and assist—not get into the position of having to take over.

The citizens of Victoria living in Bennettswood are, in the end, no different to any other group in the State. They look to the Parliament to provide a framework within which they can pursue their personal goals. Like most communities in the world, they are powerless against the effect of international crises and against such things as the catastrophic effect our living standards are sure to suffer through the recent 20 per cent devaluation in our currency.

I have not touched on the immediate things with which we all deal from day to day—education, transport, housing, health—because my theme has been common to each of those areas. However, I shall be working hard to ensure an improvement in the standard of each and to monitor the values I have outlined which are dear to us all.

I thank the electors of Bennettswood for the trust they have put in me and look forward to being an effective and efficient representative on their behalf. I also thank the House for its consideration during this speech.

Dr COGHILL (Werribee)—In commencing my remarks may I join other speakers who have congratulated you, Mr Speaker, on your election to this high office. As other speakers have said, it is a re-election which is very well justified because of the high respect you have gained with your performance in the chair during the life of the previous Parliament.

May I also again pledge my loyalty to the people of my community, the Werribee electorate, to the people of Victoria and to the people of Australia. They are the people whom I was elected to represent in this place.

I turn now to the Governor's Speech, in which he clearly indicated his Government's philosophy and ideology; the commitment of the Government to the achievement of economic and social justice by the application of reason, of logic and of the scientific method of evaluating the evidence, drawing conclusions and acting in accordance with the findings.