

went to financial institutions and said, "Will you lend us £1,000,000 on the security of our metropolitan rates?" Two such loans were arranged privately for £1,000,000 each, and there were three of £500,000 each. The sums raised by public subscription for new works were only £363,000 and £753,000. The remainder of public subscriptions went towards redemption of earlier loans.

That shows the importance of having liquid assets in the community. Unless we have such reserves of capital, future works must be financed out of taxation. That is the situation that Parliament must face, and the concern of members is that this work shall be done. On the basis of the present policy, I believe that it will be done.

Mr. FEWSTER (Essendon).—This Bill will satisfy honorable members who represent expanding districts bordering upon the metropolitan area. It proposes to extend the borrowing powers of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works by £5,000,000. Among the works to be carried out are the laying of water mains, £890,000; main and reticulation sewers, £2,200,000; and main drains, £1,000,000. The electorate of Essendon which I have the honour to represent is situated from 5½ to 7 miles from Melbourne, and in that locality development during the last few years has been rapid. In fact, it has not been surpassed in other areas in the metropolis. That development has imposed a terrific responsibility upon the Board to provide the necessary drainage, water, and sewerage facilities.

About three years ago, there were a number of vacant paddocks in the area but to-day it is difficult to buy a block of land. Therefore, serious problems of water supply, sanitation, and drainage necessarily arise. I give credit to the Board for its attempts to put in main drains and also to supply water to the recently developed residential areas. Repeated requests for improved water and sewerage services have been sympathetically received by the Board, but these amenities cannot now be

provided owing to lack of money; previously the excuse was lack of man power. I trust that this Bill will assist the Board to give to the residents in the areas I have mentioned the amenities that they should have, such as adequate water supplies, drainage, and sewerage facilities. The Bill will permit the Board to satisfy the needs of all developing areas on the perimeter of Melbourne, particularly those localities in which there is no sewerage scheme at present. I commend the Government for bringing down the Bill, and trust that it will receive a speedy passage.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Morton).—Order! The honorable member for Toorak is about to make his maiden speech. I ask members to observe the customary rule of permitting the honorable member to speak without interruption.

Mr. PETTY (Toorak).—The purpose of the Bill is to increase the borrowing powers of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works by £5,000,000, and also to increase its temporary borrowing powers by way of bank overdraft from £500,000 to £1,500,000. Doubtless the measure will receive the support of all members who appreciate the work that has been done by the Board over the years. It has a record second to none in the carrying out of the functions for which it was constituted; that is to say, the supplying of water and the providing of sewerage facilities throughout the metropolitan area. It is the duty of all members to examine carefully the expenditure of money provided by the Government, and also to look fully into applications for an extension of loan funds. The Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works has made application for authority to raise an extra £5,000,000 of loan money, which request must be examined critically.

We must be assured that the money provided will be spent on the functions for which Governments have in the past always provided money for the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. We must be satisfied also that the funds made available will be spent economically and with due regard to the interests of the

people of Victoria. Again, the Government must be assured, when it is authorizing the raising of loan money for expenditure by the Board that its activities will be directed to those areas in which increased facilities are most required.

These considerations, of course, presuppose that the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works will have efficient management, but I think all members will agree that this Board has proved over the years that it has been very ably managed and that its works and the spending of its funds can always withstand the closest scrutiny and audit. Over the years the Board has built up an enviable reputation, and this is undoubtedly due to freedom from political control in its administration, and also to the fact that it has been organized on practically a municipal basis.

The Board of Commissioners consists of men appointed by metropolitan municipal councils; they give their services in an honorary capacity to assist their fellow men and in doing a very big and worth-while job. That is one of the reasons why the Board has been so capably managed and organized in past years. The system under which the Board functions gives great opportunities to men who wish to enter into the widest sphere of public life—outside Parliament—that their own municipal councils can allot to them. It is undeniable that there are men of great ability in our community who are prepared to work in an honorary capacity, not seeking any emolument for the jobs that they do for their fellow men. We can look forward to a bright future for semi-governmental organizations such as the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works.

Where any activity is undertaken by a public authority, there will always be room for criticism. Some of the actions taken by the Board will be justified, while some will be unjustified. The main criticism that can be levelled against the Board is its failure to provide sewerage and water facilities to houses in the outlying metropolitan area. We all feel very deeply for those citizens who have gone to the outer suburbs to build

their homes, only to find after six, eight, ten, or twenty years that the necessary amenities have not been provided.

Members will see from the report of the Commissioners of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, which has been presented to them during the past week, that the Commissioners are aware of the difficulty of householders in new areas and the suffering created by the Board's inability to provide water supplies and sewerage to all residents in the metropolitan area. However, blame for failure to provide those amenities cannot be laid at the door of the Commissioners or of the Board itself. For some years after the last war, labour and materials were practically unavailable to enable the Board to carry on the huge job for which it was responsible. In the years prior to the war, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works was capable of keeping pace with the task of connecting water and sewerage to new homes. However, owing to circumstances created by the war, labour and materials became scarce, and in the post-war years a big back lag of work was built up. The Commissioners of the Board have found it practically impossible to overtake that lag even since materials and labour have become more plentiful. Their position has been greatly aggravated, as we all know, by lack of finance, and that is a crippling factor.

The Commissioners of the Board have laid down a plan to keep ahead of the requirements of Melbourne, which is developing so rapidly. In pre-war years, the planning of the Board for the provision of water and sewerage was never questioned, and those amenities were always available to homes built in the outer suburbs. To-day, the position is different and, unfortunately, it will be a number of years before the Board can overtake arrears of work. There is an obligation on members of this House to ensure that money is made available to enable the Board to overtake the back lag in the task of providing the necessary amenities to citizens in the outlying areas.

The Board has a comparatively brief history; it goes back only 60 years, but during that period its assets have increased from a value of £2,000,000 to

more than £40,000,000. At the time of its inception, the Board took over two reservoirs with a capacity of approximately 7,000,000,000 gallons of water. At present, it has five main reservoirs with a capacity of approximately 21,000,000,000 gallons of water. It is now building a reservoir which will have a capacity even greater than that of the combined existing water storages. I refer to the Upper Yarra reservoir, which will be able to store more than 30,000,000,000 gallons of water. That is an illustration of the farsighted policy of the Board; it indicates that this body is planning for the requirements of many years ahead. The Board has done its job adequately and well in the past, and there is no reason to fear that it will not be equally successful in the future.

In 1950, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works was constituted the town planning authority for Melbourne and the metropolitan area. Since then it has done a great deal of work; it has sent officers overseas to study town planning. Those officials have returned with plans and information which they have submitted to the various Government Departments concerned and the municipalities. The planning experts of the Board are reaching the stage where they will be in a position to submit a master plan for the planning of Melbourne, and it will be the responsibility of this Parliament, when that plan is submitted, to examine it expeditiously so that the experts may complete their job. One thing is certain and that is that the longer we delay the planning of Melbourne and the metropolitan area, the greater will be the cost. The ultimate cost of re-planning Melbourne will be gigantic, but Parliament will not be able to delay or turn down the plan in its entirety for the reason that the longer the job is delayed the greater will be the cost and the greater will be the problems to be passed on to posterity.

In conclusion, I shall summarize by saying that the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works has in past years proved itself to be a capable and efficient organization, and that it can carry out the functions for which it was formed,

Mr. Petty.

that is, the supply of water and the provision of sewerage facilities. Finally, while this Board continues to operate under the present form of administration of honorary Commissioners, appointed by the municipal councils of the metropolitan area, it will retain the confidence of the people of Victoria.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and passed through its remaining stages.

HEALTH (PLUMBERS AND GASFITTERS) BILL.

The debate (adjourned from March 11), on the motion of Mr. Barry (Minister of Health) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Sir THOMAS MALTBY (Barwon).—I should like to know why legislation dealing with the licensing of plumbers and gasfitters is administered by the Department of Health. I know that has been the case for a long time, but it is as irrelevant for the Minister of Health to administer matters relating to plumbing and gasfitting as it is for the Chief Secretary to control the Fisheries and Game Department, when, throughout most of the civilized world, fisheries and game laws are administered by either a Ministry of Fisheries or the Agriculture Department. I think the proper Department to deal with plumbers and gasfitters is the Public Works Department, which is a technical Department. It may be argued, of course, that the health of the people depends on good plumbing, but it also depends on many activities that are under the control of the Public Works Department, which employs all the necessary technical and engineering staff to supervise the work of plumbers and gasfitters. I consider that various activities should be sorted out and placed under the control of the relevant Ministers.

Brigadier TOVELL.—I think plumbing and gasfitting should be under the control of the Labour Department.

Mr. BARRY.—Cannot you fellows make up your minds where it ought to be, or are you divided as usual?