

of the Bill, that a further extension of time will be arranged if honorable members are not ready to proceed on that date.

The motion was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until Wednesday, September 30.

The sitting was suspended at 6.14 p.m. until 7.51 p.m.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

The debate (adjourned from June 17) on the motion of Mr. J. A. Taylor (Gippsland South) for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech was resumed.

Mr. FORDHAM (Footscray).—On behalf of the Opposition, I have much pleasure in endorsing the sentiments of loyalty to the Crown and expressions of thanks to the Governor for his Speech to Parliament so ably moved by the honorable member for Gippsland South and seconded by the honorable member for Gippsland West. I am conscious of the privilege extended to myself and to the electors of Footscray, whom I have the honour to represent, on being able to lead on behalf of the Opposition an important debate which allows a whole-hearted and full scrutiny of areas of community concern and areas where Government initiative is needed.

I am deeply conscious of the great Parliamentary traditions upon which this House has been founded and developed over the years. These traditions make Parliament the guardian of our democratic way of life and should ensure that our society is free from political, social and economic repression. As a fervent believer in democracy, I give my assurances to this House that I will do all that I can to ensure that Parliament retains its position in society. Parliament should be the ark of democracy and it is up to members of this House to ensure that it performs that role.

If Parliament is to retain the position which is given to it by the population of this State, and which is its right under the Constitution, I believe it will need to relate itself far more to the issues which the people of this society see as being relevant to them. I believe the Government has failed to do this and it is up to Parliament and Parliamentarians to restore this position. In this regard, the Government must give leadership by relating itself to the problems of the community. Members of the Opposition will do all they can to fulfil their important role in the Parliamentary process. We assure members of the Government and the public alike that we will bring forward the issues of great concern to our society and we will expose what we feel to be Government weaknesses and lack of initiative.

The theme of my brief address follows that introduced by the seconder of the motion, the honorable member for Gippsland West. I refer to the concepts of loyalty and alienation. These are very real and important matters which Parliament should discuss and I am thankful to the honorable member for introducing them. These principles are of great concern and significance because many people in our society find themselves in a position where they are claimed not to have loyalty to our institutions and to be alienated or estranged from their fellow man.

This is not surprising because it does not take long in a scrutiny of past measures and past performances to ascertain that the Government has effectively alienated or estranged large segments of our community. I am not referring only to the jibes which we have heard recently, both before and since the elections, with regard to groups such as teachers, conservationists and nurses; I am referring to a far wider proportion of the population.

It is my contention that the discord and disharmony which is so evident in our society today is a result of the failure of our social institutions

to adjust to our changing society, and it is my further contention that the Government, and by association the Parliament, must bear responsibility for its failure to relate to the problem of people feeling alienated and estranged from our developing society. This estrangement is related not simply to university undergraduates or narrow sectional groups—it is far wider and far more significant than this—but to the young and the aged, the worker and the migrant, people living in poverty, and students. These are but some examples, and I should like to discuss this matter at a little more length.

I have no intention at this stage of going into the many problems which beset our education system in Victoria. Undoubtedly, other speakers will canvass these particular matters. All honorable members know of the vast problems caused by the shortage of teachers, school buildings, and equipment; however, there are two other aspects of education in Victoria which I wish to discuss.

I believe an indictment was levelled at the Government recently when the Victorian Universities Admissions Committee announced that owing to the quota system which is now operating—a system which is a direct result of Government inactivity—4,116 qualified matriculants had been refused entry to Victorian universities. I might add that this is an increase on the previous year, when the number refused admission was 2,125.

When a teacher shortage exists, it is a mockery of the educational position today to accept this as satisfactory. In fact, the Victorian Universities Admissions Committee admitted that of the 1,200 persons expected to apply for Bachelor of Education and Diploma of Education courses at universities this year, only 1,000 could be admitted because of the shortage of places.

The second aspect of the educational problem that I wish to raise is that relating to educational opportunity, a matter which has

recently been brought to my attention. After examining statistics and research that has been undertaken in this field, I contend that for anyone to assert that equal educational opportunity exists in Victoria today is to utter a myth. For example, geographical location is becoming a criterion of the sort of education a child is receiving—persons in inner suburban areas and in certain rural areas are not receiving the education which is their due. There is also a tremendous problem of migrant children being deprived of proper education. The economic potential of parents is becoming a factor, and children of parents on lower incomes are not receiving the educational opportunity which should be theirs of right. Statistics indicate clearly that the theory of equal opportunity is not working out in practice. Children are not being educated to the optimum of their ability and this can only be termed as a disgrace.

In his Speech at the opening of Parliament on the 15th June, 1955, His Excellency the Governor stated—
In accordance with its policy of providing full educational facilities for all children, the Government will give the highest priority to the building of schools and the training of teachers.

After a period of fifteen years, we find the present situation in Victoria for which surely the Government can be indicated.

Another matter which further highlights, that groups of people are being estranged and alienated from the mainstream of society is the issue of housing. Once again, it is clear that the Government's housing policies have failed to meet the needs of the community.

On 31st December last year, the Housing Commission reported that 15,356 applications for home purchase were outstanding. Surely this is not a satisfactory situation. Recent studies show that high rents paid by people in the low-income group constitute a major factor causing poverty; again this is unsatisfactory.

The present situation of a five-year wait before an applicant for a Housing Commission home can be accommodated cannot be accepted. What does one tell a family who want a home—that they must have five children to get the house they are longing for, otherwise they must wait five years?

The Government, through his Excellency's Speech, expressed its intention of ensuring the growth of family welfare and the care of the needs of families. Great difficulty exists in the sphere of housing. I am well aware of the great social and financial difficulties encountered by young people on low incomes who are trying to bridge the well-known deposit gap in an endeavour to purchase their own homes. As a matter of paramount urgency the Government should purchase large tracts of land, subdivide them, develop them, and make the blocks available to people at the lowest possible cost.

I should also like to discuss the problems of kindergartens in our society. The significance of pre-school education as an essential element in the full development of a child has long been recognized by educationists and child care experts. What is the situation in Victoria? The report of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Pre-School Association estimates that of 70,000 children who begin school in Victoria each year only 50 per cent have had one year at a pre-school centre. Can honorable members say that this is a satisfactory situation?

Other problems concerned with pre-school education include a tremendous shortage of qualified staff. The voluntary organizations that have carried the burden of pre-school education for so long are now in great financial difficulty because of the greatly increased demand that has been made upon their services. Recent research and analysis suggest that "capacity to pay" is becoming a greater factor in determining whether a child will receive satis-

factory pre-school education. That is a principle of which I should like no part.

I should also like to highlight the plight of nurses. For far too long nurses, with their unparalleled sense of duty and concern for suffering mankind, have had to carry a burden that should not have been their lot. The burden should have been carried by a far greater proportion of our society. This has inevitably resulted in a grave shortage of nurses and has also caused the morale of the profession to fall and nursing standards to decline. In recent years this has been readily acknowledged by the Royal Victorian College of Nursing. Negotiations with the Government in an attempt to improve standards in the interest of the whole of the community have led to nothing but frustration, and a call by the nurses for the resignation of the former Minister of Health.

I also refer to the road toll in Victoria. In 1969, 1,011 Victorians were killed on the roads and 23,797 persons were injured. Over the years this casualty figure has been steadily increasing and the early figures for 1970 suggest that the situation has not altered. Obviously this is a matter of great concern, and there is a need for tremendous research into questions relating to drivers, roads and vehicles. Part of this important work has been undertaken by the Road Safety Committee, which has submitted a number of reports to the Parliament. What have been the results of its efforts? On two major issues, motor vehicle inspection and seat belts, the committee's recommendations were not accepted by the Government. The committee suggested that the present system of spot checks was inadequate and recommended an annual inspection of vehicles to overcome the tremendous toll of death and injury on the roads. The Government did not adopt the recommendations.

The committee further suggested that the Government should take the initiative and direct that drivers of vehicles owned by Government

departments and instrumentalities should be compelled to wear seat belts. Once again a major attempt to reduce the road toll was rejected.

The subterfuge which the Government has adopted as an excuse for not facing up to its responsibilities is unsatisfactory Commonwealth-State financial relations, and in particular the intransigence of the Commonwealth Government has been blamed. I am one of the first to acknowledge the tremendous problems now facing the Government, but it is the authority in this State responsible for negotiating with the Commonwealth Government. It must bear the responsibility for its admitted failure over the past fifteen years to achieve just rewards for Victoria. This point has been included in the Budget speech every year. In his 1969-70 Budget speech, the Premier and Treasurer said—

Nothing could illustrate more dramatically—and yet more simply—the wholly unsatisfactory financial position of the States as against the affluence of the Commonwealth. Nothing could underline with greater emphasis that this problem of State and Commonwealth financial relationships is the challenge of the 1970's. This indeed is the great challenge to be faced up to and met during the course of this the financial year 1969-70, for it so happens that this year sees the end of the five-year period covered by the present Commonwealth legislation dealing with tax reimbursement grants.

The honorable gentleman then added—

The impossibility of the position of the States is well understood.

However, once again the result was failure. There are some that hold that this growth of Commonwealth power at the expense of the States is desirable. I subscribe to the opposite view. I support the views of our founding fathers embodied in the Commonwealth Constitution. The issues are not simply financial but relate to the question of which level of government should be responsible to administer particular aspects of activities of the people of Victoria. In this regard I am a determined Federalist and will do all in my power to achieve that principle.

Mr. Fordham.

The power of the Commonwealth is growing because of its financial strength and a consequent erosion of the power of the States. The situation is even worse at the level of local government. I assure honorable members that I will strive to restore to the people of Victoria and the Parliament of this State their rights under the Commonwealth Constitution. I hope that, in the 1970's the Government will do as the Premier has said—it will give leadership to the community and ensure that these rights are restored.

These groups and aspects of our society that I have briefly mentioned are but a few of those that could be covered to demonstrate the tremendous problems that we face with the alienation of people from the Government of this State. As I have readily found in the brief time in which I have been a member of this Parliament, these are not merely hollow statistics or hollow statements. These are real issues that are being faced by the people of the State, and many of them have been brought to my attention. If the people to whom I have referred are the drop-outs of our society, and if they are the alienated, I am only too willing to identify myself with them, as I am sure will all members of the Opposition, and to work to overcome their problems.

I record my thanks to the people of Footscray for the great honor they have bestowed upon me in electing me to represent them in this Parliament and I shall do all in my power to further the interests of that community. I assure Parliament of my dedication to its work and look forward to working with honorable members on both sides of the House in advancing the interests of the people of Victoria.

Mr. KIRKWOOD (Preston).—I congratulate those honorable members who moved and seconded the motion for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech, and wish to be associated with their expressions of loyalty. I thank the electorate of Preston and