

The Hon. JEAN McLEAN (Boronia Province) - It gives me great pleasure, as my first formal contribution to the debate in this House, to second the motion for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech that was so ably moved by my colleague, Mr Sandon. The remarks of His Excellency the Governor of Victoria set out in detail the program of the second Cain Labor Government and in my remarks I shall touch on some of the matters referred to by him.

My first duty is to my party. Parliamentarians, except in the case of that very rare person, the true independent, are responsible to the party that endorses them. I acknowledge that and have no difficulty in so doing. Although I am not naive about the imperfections of the Labor Party, I would also claim that it is a great institution. Its policies are, in general, democratically determined. They represent the aspirations and interests of a great many Australians. For the first time, as they apply in Victoria, there will be in this House, after it is reconstituted on 17 July, the chance to carry them out without negotiating their acceptability with the Government's political opponents, who have until now, in some combination or other, always constituted the majority in the Legislative Council. This raises several important questions, which I shall deal with later.

It would be remiss of me, if, early in my speech, I did not acknowledge the electors of Boronia Province. I thank them and my campaign workers. This is a new seat created after redistribution. The elections resulted in an historic reinstatement of the Cain Government by a clear majority. The closeness of the elections resulted in considerable part from factors that were external to Victoria. Despite this, Victorians reasserted that they did not want a return to the mismanagement of the 27 years of Liberal rule in this State.

The Australian Labor Government in three short years did much to put Victoria back in the race. It opted for policies of economic expansion which saw Victoria as a pacesetter of economic recovery - the Victorian recovery from the depths of the Liberal induced recession of the time are taken into account. The progress made so far will permit the Labor Government to attack the crucial and central issue of employment.

In the past, a degree of economic growth would usually be accompanied by an improvement in general employment prospects. Although Victoria's employment performance is on the top of the Australian scale, the intransigence of the problems of unemployment shows that we have yet to deal fully with the problems of the technological displacement of work and the failure of a deregulated, market-based economy to come to grips with the real needs of the people. These needs are reflected in issues such as employment, living standards and equal opportunity of access to the basics of life.

I acknowledge the performance of the Government, as outlined by His Excellency, in the field of job creation but I add that the greatest issue that still confronts the Government is employment. This applies especially to the young who are numerically the largest section of the community who are unable to find work. This has resulted in vast problems of alienation, at huge social cost.

The scope of a State Government is often limited by external circumstances but if, by the end of the Parliamentary careers of members of the House, all young Victorians are in employment or educational training, or a combination of both, the Government will have done something to overcome the psychological and physiological problems arising from the rejection inherent in unemployment-including the drug problem-and something of value will have been achieved.

In saying this, one cannot let the employers' responsibilities go unnoticed. There has been an

amazing twist of logic which has blamed the education system, the training system or the young people themselves for the high levels of unemployment. Employers must accept much of the blame. The process of recovery has led to a general increase in profits and the community has every right to demand that employers convert those profits into effective employment programs. Unions have exercised a high level of restraint and they are also watching with interest any evidence that employers are playing their part.

A related problem is the reconstitution of manufacturing industry in this State. Again, this is an area in which I can propound Labor's superiority in economic affairs. If local manufacturing industry and heavy engineering is in decline, Victoria is in decline. We now seem to be on the threshold of reversing the trend. The trade union movement is correctly calling for Government intervention to restore the viability of industry and restructure it so that it is dynamic, expansive and competitive.

Oddly, I find myself sharing common ground with some Australian industrialists who have little enthusiasm for tearing down what little protection is left of our industrial base. I am frankly unimpressed with the performance of the market and am apprehensive of the effect of the free marketeers on Victorian and Australian industry.

In the course of pursuing this market ideology and removing the underpinning mechanisms, such as tariff protection, Australia has allowed itself to be designated the quarry and sheep run of the Pacific rim region. Its minerals are exported according to formulae that benefit multi-nationals.

At the same time, our manufacturing industry has been handed over to nations where near slave-labour conditions allow the accumulation of huge profits at the expense of our own workers. Often these nations are also characterized by repressive military domination, tame company unions, or no trade unionism, low wage regimes, and such institutions as export processing zones which exploit the host nation as well as nations like our own.

My basic proposition is that foreign interests and contradictory Government policies have seriously undermined our manufacturing industry.

The trade union movement has been a leader in applying research in the field of industrial development. The metal trades unions have recently published a call to substitute a policy of import swamping with import replacement. In so doing, they are calling for the replacement of imports with Australian-made goods, a build-up for our exports, and the modernization of industry.

This obviously seeks reversal of a trend where the technology gap between Australian and overseas nations is widening. That trend can, I believe, be reversed by broadening our own base of technological research and innovation.

Innovation is also necessary in the employment field; that is, in determining employment policy. I refuse to accept the term "alternative employment" - a term that tends to suggest second-rate, stopgap employment for those who cannot get a "proper" job. Many areas of employment categorized as "alternative" are, in my view, legitimate parts of the employment mainstream. This includes the many fields covered by the cultural activities categorized as the arts. One of these fields is public radio. Because of Labor's innovations and recognition of the value of communications we now have nine public radio stations in Victoria covering a huge variety of interests, and radio stations are creating employment of great value to the community at large.

To allow young people to enter these fields, they must be encouraged to stay in education. Australians have free access to tertiary education and are assisted with living allowances if their lack of family means requires it. However, we also need to encourage and assist the young to stay in secondary education to bridge across the tertiary field. Courses should be more relevant, accessible and exciting. The youth guarantee will assist the implementation of this approach.

My house is constantly full of young people who have found much of what is taught in our educational system to be boring and moribund. If we want our young people to be usefully educated, we must expand the imagination of our educational curricula, laying the way open to a wide range of socially valuable employment.

Another area I believe that many of my colleagues would expect me to touch on is Victoria's status as a nuclear-free State. The principled position taken by the Premier was an electoral asset in my campaign, and the campaigns of all Labor candidates. This approach must be maintained and developed in the months ahead.

We must proceed down this track without strictures from foreign governments. Access by nuclear-powered or armed ships is not just a foreign, external question entirely in Federal jurisdiction. As the sorry history of nuclear accidents has shown, the nuclear cycle question touches directly on matters of health and safety, which are State questions. The nuclear-free zone policy reflects the growing concern of Victorians about the dangers of the nuclear industry.

I look forward to the Cain Government acting to exploit every possible constitutional channel to keep that policy active and in place, and reject these ships, as did the Governor of New York. The stand of Premier Cain, when he clearly rejected the MX missile tests, shows that our Government recognizes that if we do not continue to show such concerns the rest of the political agenda could well be irrelevant.

I became a member of the Australian Labor Party because of pre-eminent concern for such questions. I do not hide or apologize for such parts of my life as opposition to conscription or to aggression against the peoples of Vietnam. My politics have not changed and I shall continue to work for justice for people who are oppressed, whether in Australia or elsewhere.

I think that when members of this House are able to interject, they will challenge my view that legislative powers and the right to destroy governments are not legitimate prerogatives of this House. We shall argue that out later, but I shall not resile from that principle, which I believe to be absolutely inherent to the Labor Party's view of constitutional change in Victoria.

Stands must be made, and Parliamentary preferment gives members of the Labor Party the chance to make them, just as the New Zealand Prime Minister David Lange has sparked a world wide response of support and admiration for the blow he has struck against nuclearization and war.

Strangely enough, and against all so-called political wisdom, there is evidence to suggest that a strong factor in my election was my identification with these positions.

I am glad to be one of a growing number of Labor women elected to this Parliament, in contrast to the Opposition's diminished female representation, and collectively we will work with the utmost enthusiasm and purpose in representing women's interests and concerns.