

system. Water is one commodity that we must conserve in a continent that is known to be the driest in the world.

It has been stated from time to time that it would cost some millions of dollars to carry out this piping work, and at present it could not be undertaken. However, owing to the seepage of water, there are some bad sections of the channel system that I should like to see piped. This work could be done progressively by setting aside a sum of money each year for that purpose. Whilst we measure the cost of such a scheme in dollars, I am doubtful whether one could assess the value of the primary produce that could be derived from the water that would be saved by such a scheme. The resultant increase in primary produce for our overseas markets would, in turn, prove of great benefit to the State, and indeed to Australia as a whole.

When natural gas is available for consumption, I sincerely hope that the Government, in its wisdom, will ensure that the price of gas is made uniform throughout the State so that business and industry already established in the country areas will be able to enjoy the same privileges as those that will be available to the city industrialists. Not one member of this Assembly would like to experience, in connexion with natural gas, the same difficulties as were encountered in trying to obtain uniform prices for electricity in this State.

I should like to make reference to the excellent work that is being carried out in the Lowan electorate by the Country Roads Board, which works in close co-operation with the various shires. The Board has done a magnificent job. It has provided two over-passes on the Western Highway, and it is always ready and willing to do its best in all areas. Now that the port of Portland has been developed, it is essential that some consideration should be given to the building of a heavy duty highway west of the Henty Highway,

Mr. Buckley.

somewhere between Nhill and Kaniva, to provide access from north-western Victoria and the south-east of South Australia to the port of Portland, which is a great national outlet for the shipping of wool, grain, and other primary products to overseas markets. I feel it is most essential to have the best rail and road links to this port to assist further in its rapid development. The rise in freight charges on the haulage of wheat by rail in Victoria has had a marked effect on wheat farmers, and I hope that freight rates will not be increased further.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I should like to thank the members of this House for the courteous hearing that has been extended to me and other new members of this Assembly during their maiden speeches.

Mr. MUTTON (Coburg).—Mr. Speaker, I join with other honorable members in expressing my loyalty to Queen Elizabeth II. I assure you, Sir, that it is indeed an honour for me to have been elected by the people of Coburg to represent them in this House. While I am a member, I will do all I possibly can to carry out the requirements of those people, impartially and faithfully, in the interests of democracy.

I should like also to avail myself of this opportunity of paying a tribute to the efforts of my predecessor. It is not often that a son has the opportunity of following his father into Parliament, and I feel justified in paying a tribute to this former honorable member. He was first elected to this House on 13th July, 1940, and he remained a member of it until 29th April of this year, thus giving 27 years of continued representation not only to the residents of Coburg but also to the people of Victoria in general. Any one who came into contact with my predecessor could not but be very impressed by his charitable approach and his kindness of thought. I hope that during my stay as a member of this House, no

matter how long it may be, I shall be able to emulate my father in thought, word and deed.

Other honorable members who have made maiden speeches in this House to-day have taken as their theme the probability of industrial expansion resulting from the discovery of natural gas and oil off the eastern coast of Victoria. I agree with the statement of the Premier last night that ultimately Victoria could become the "Middle East" of the Commonwealth. I am sure all honorable members will agree that that statement was not presumptuous but had a firm basis of reality.

The positions I have held since entering the political sphere have included membership of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, and I have had a fair amount of experience in the matter of water supply. If the State is to expand industrially as much as expected, there is no doubt that the existing water resources must be harnessed to cope with the development. The quantity of water used to-day for industry and irrigation has reached astronomical proportions.

In his Budget speech, the Premier stated that last year 2,000,000 acre-feet of water had been used for irrigation in Victoria. In other words, 500,000 million gallons of water were utilized in rural areas for primary production. In the metropolitan area also record quantities of water are being used. Some 69,000 million gallons of water have been used in a year, and as the population of the State, and particularly of the metropolitan area, continues to grow, the total gallonage available both for domestic purposes and for industrial pursuits must be increased.

Great industrial expansion is expected to take place along the shores of Westernport Bay. An article in the *Australian Newsletter* gives an indication of the large-scale industrial expansion that will take place in the near future—possibly in the next

four or five years. It is predicted that industries to be established will include a steelworks, an oil refinery, plants utilizing by-products of natural gas, a fertilizer plant, a nuclear plant and a sea water desalination plant. If this industrial expansion does take place within the next four or five years, much conscientious thinking will have to be put into the provision of adequate water supplies.

Major issues which affect the State can be categorized as population, decentralization and water conservation, and each has a direct bearing on the others. I am one of those citizens who believe that the discovery of the gas and oil deposits will assist the present Government and succeeding Governments to implement a policy that has been long awaited by the people of the State, namely, a sound programme of decentralization. If this eventuates, there is every possibility of enticing people away from the metropolitan area, to which they are attracted mainly by high wages and better working conditions than are available elsewhere. If some of the people can be encouraged to move to industries developing in country districts, the State will achieve a better distribution of population and will become more balanced.

At present, some 2,042,000 persons live in the metropolitan area. In their speeches, certain Government supporters have referred to the influx of people into their electorates. I point out that the population of the metropolitan area increases annually by some 50,000 people, and as a result many problems have to be overcome. If the Government is courageous enough to try to assist in the attainment of some form of decentralization to entice people into areas away from the metropolis, I am sure that the burden on the local governing authorities in the metropolitan area will be lessened.

An issue of *Time* magazine contains an excellent article on problems of water supply in the United States

of America. It states that it takes 770 gallons of water to refine a barrel of petroleum, up to 65,000 gallons to turn out a ton of steel and 600,000 gallons to make a ton of synthetic rubber. It states also that for all the modern appliances used in the home in an affluent era, home use of water still represents less than 10 per cent. of the nation's consumption. Nearly half goes to irrigation and another 40 per cent. for industry. I use those incontrovertible figures to emphasize to honorable members the importance of water supply in the industrial expansion of this State.

I notice that the Joint Committees of this Parliament include the Drainage Committee, and I consider that at some time in the life of this Parliament it would be appropriate if the function of that committee were extended to cover water conservation as well as drainage. It has been stated that in the United States of America water has become so important that it is far more valuable than all the gold held in Fort Knox. That is not a facetious statement; it is completely realistic. As the State develops, so does the strain on existing water resources. President Johnson has set up a Water Resources Council to study United States water needs and to oversee conservation, and has set aside up to \$275,000,000 for research and the development of an economical system for converting sea water to fresh water. I mention these figures to highlight the fact that if the Victorian Government is to assist in industrial development it must consider every means of co-ordinating existing water supplies and exploiting other sources.

The sitting was suspended at 6.27 p.m. until 8.2 p.m.

Mr. A. L. TANNER (Morwell).—It is my honour and privilege to speak to the motion for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor, which was so ably moved by the honorable member for Warrnambool and seconded by the honorable member

for Mitcham. The first statement I desire to have placed on the record in this House is the expression of loyalty to the Crown on behalf of myself and the electorate of Morwell. I should also like to pay my respects and those of the people of my electorate to His Excellency the Governor, Sir Rohan Delacombe, and respectfully wish him the best of health and happiness in the discharge of his duties for the rest of his life. I am deeply conscious of the honour and the responsibility which is mine as the elected member for the electorate of Morwell.

In other places I have expressed views which I am delighted now to be given the opportunity to express again publicly in this Assembly. I unashamedly say that I stand here most humbly to address this House. Honorable members have heard some wonderful orations during the past two days, especially yesterday. Those speeches impressed me personally to such an extent that, although I naturally have a certain amount of aggressiveness in my make-up, I feel a great sense of humility at the present moment, and therefore I do not think I can speak in my normal way on this occasion.

However, I think it is my duty to direct the attention of not only this House but also of all the residents of Victoria to the plight of retarded children and their parents. The parents are often forgotten when the problems associated with retarded children are spoken of. A little research has revealed that in 1884 these children, who despite their infliction are still citizens, were referred to as idiot children. Perhaps this was because of the ignorance of our forefathers. Let us be charitable and say that that was so and not believe that they were callous about it. In 1890 our forefathers went so far as to build an asylum for these children which was officially designated as an idiot asylum. We have come a long way since then, and we have realized that these children are not to be called by this name. They are merely people who