

The Hon. K. M. SMITH (South Eastern Province) - Mr President, thank you for the opportunity of making my maiden speech during the debate on the motion for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor made to the 51st Parliament earlier today.

His Excellency the Governor, the Reverend Dr Davis McCaughey, and Mrs McCaughey are respected throughout Victoria, particularly in the South Eastern Province.

I should like to offer my congratulations to you, Mr President, on your election to the Presidency of the Legislative Council after 27 years of serving the constituency of the South Eastern Province, the same province that I have the privilege to represent. I am sure you have earned your new position by your knowledge of the Parliamentary system, your strong representation and the respect that you have earned from your Parliamentary colleagues for your fair-mindedness, evenhandedness and your expected impartiality.

I should like also to congratulate the retiring President, the Honourable Rod Mackenzie, who, during his term in the chair, showed he was a man of great character and principle. Although he would have known the consequences of voting against his own party, he was still prepared to vote on his principles, and I can only wish him success in his future time in this Chamber.

My own success in the last election resulted not only from the hard work of my campaign committee but also from work done during the past eighteen and a half years by the man whom I succeeded, the Honourable Roy Ward. Having had the privilege of knowing Roy for many years through our involvement in the Liberal Party and through his fine representation in serving the people of the South Eastern Province in a manner that they deserved, I have found him to be an honest man who would always give a straight, call-a-spade-a-spade answer to the many questions that I asked.

Of course, Roy is well known outside Parliament for his exceptional contribution to the Red Cross over many years and for his involvement as an international sports administrator, particularly in the field of badminton. However, he has never been too busy for his constituents. He had the added responsibility of being the Liberal Party Whip in this place, a position that he held with a great deal of esteem until his retirement. I wish Roy and his wife, Joan, a long, happy and fulfilling retirement together.

South Eastern Province is a large electorate that covers some 5638 square kilometres and includes the Lower House seats of Dromana, Mornington, Berwick and Gippsland West. It is an electorate diverse in nature and with great potential for the future. It has a long history dating back to 1890.

During my term in this House, I shall endeavour to ensure that the areas that have been neglected over the past six and a half years receive some of the services and facilities they need, the same services and facilities for which they have paid but which have been denied to them.

In conjunction with my Lower House colleagues, I shall try to ensure that Western Port, which has long been ignored by the government, is allowed to flourish. I am not talking of inappropriate industrial developments such as that which the government tried to foist on the people of Crib Point - -an ammonia-urea plant - but of an autonomous port authority similar to the Geelong authority, of a mariculture industry and of tourist-related activities that can all go hand in glove with the protection that ecologically sensitive Western Port deserves.

I do not support the extremist activities of either the non-caring "develop at any cost" people or the greenies, who would like us to live in the trees, so long as we do not eat the leaves. I believe in properly planned and carefully thought out development. It can work; there is a balance, but it is a fine balance.

As I mentioned earlier, the government has neglected many areas of my electorate, and it should be condemned for that. However, this is not the time, although it is the place, to raise all these issues; but it is certainly a time to look to the future.

The future of South Eastern Province will relate to the government's commitment to promises that it made during the election campaign. I refer to the promises of more schools, more hospitals and nursing home beds, more preschool centres and senior citizens' clubs, of finishing roads and starting construction of new roads, of better police stations and more police to man them, of new courthouses and of a stop to the government's revolving door system of imprisonment.

The people of South Eastern Province seek better public transport, of which there is very little on the Mornington Peninsula or in the remainder of the province. The government will have to keep its promises to the people of South Eastern Province and Victoria generally. I intend to ensure that the government does that.

Having represented the people of the Shire of Hastings for the past five years, I am well aware of the cutback in Federal and State funding and the effect it is having on local government. Roads are literally falling apart before our very eyes, but road funding continues to be cut back. Rate dollars must be spent at an escalated rate to try to maintain the roads. The present course cannot be allowed to continue. Both State and Federal Labor governments, having ripped the tax dollars out of the motorist's pockets, must give them back not only for the repair and maintenance of roads but also for the ongoing construction of new roads, particularly the Mornington Peninsula freeway. Plans for its construction have lain dormant for the past four years and it must be completed for the benefit of the area, which is rapidly expanding.

The new Cain government must quickly address the current debt problem. My constituents and the majority of Victorians are concerned for their future and their children's future. They know that that indebtedness has escalated rapidly over the past six and a half years. They know that the economy is out of control. That is why they voted so convincingly for conservative members of the Upper House. They voted for a House of review to be allowed to do its job of not allowing debt-increasing legislation to pass through the House. I note that honourable members on this side of the House have been entrusted with that duty, and they will not let the people down.

There will be no more WorkCare-type legislation forced through the Council. Those times are over. Responsible government begins here, not in the lower House.

During my earlier days as a small businessman, I was aware of the tremendous opportunities available to me if I was prepared to work long and hard, but times have changed. Small business people now find it more difficult to make a reasonable living because of the government's intervention in their businesses. Their sense of pride and achievement has been stripped from them. They have no incentive to create more jobs or to expand and improve their businesses. They have been crushed by more and more restrictive government red tape.

Of course, that is forcing the doors of many businesses to close. It is forcing many small business people to lay off their workers, and leading them to lose all their desire to carry on the tradition of

small business that came to this country with the First Fleet. Honourable members on this side of the House realise that if there were more incentive for small business people to employ the hundreds of thousands of unemployed people out there in Victoria, the State's unemployment problems would be gone overnight. Surely that is a far better scheme than the government's plan of employing more and more people in an unproductive and overburdened Public Service, particularly as it has done that over the past six and a half years, during which time 30 000 additional public servants have been put on the payroll, but there has been no improvement in any area of government.

As I said before, the South Eastern Province is a very large part of Victoria. It boasts the largest number of voters of any province in the State. It comprises 143 000 people who are looking for a better go from the government, fewer government taxes and charges, better public transport, more hospitals and nursing home beds, better protection by improved law and order, a better education system where the kids learn the basic five Rs - the normal three Rs being "reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic", and also the important two Rs in growing up, respect and responsibility. They are looking towards the Legislative Council to give them some hope for the future.

In my time in this House, I hope to see that my constituents get what they are looking for. The potential for the South Eastern Province in the tourism industry is extremely high. Year-round tourism is most important to Victoria's economy, and the South Eastern Province is right on Melbourne's doorstep. The province is a delightful and diverse area. It has the hills and the heritage, the sand and the sea. We have the penguins and the giant earthworms, which is one of our highlights. We have the protected waters of Port Phillip and Western Port bays, and the rugged coastline of Bass Strait. We also have the world famous surf beaches; the provincial racetracks of Mornington, Cranbourne and Pakenham, and numerous picnic racetracks; the international motor bike grand prix on Phillip Island next year; and some of Victoria's best golf courses.

We have national parks and State forests, the coal mines of Wonthaggi and the history of Coal Creek. In fact, we have it all in the South Eastern Province, all except government support and encouragement. We already have that support and encouragement from local government in the area. Local government has recognised the potential and has been prepared to support tourism on a local level, but now it is up to the government to do something for it.

Mr President, as you will know, I have come from the grassroots, from the noble profession of plumbing. I believe there are four of us in the House now. My principles in life have been honesty, integrity and loyalty. I believe I have a lot to offer to this Parliament and to the people of Victoria, and in the years to come I hope that I will leave my mark as did my predecessor, Roy Ward.

In conclusion, I should like to thank my family; my wife Dawn, and my three sons, Matthew, Adam and Nicholas who have supported me in my quest to enter Parliament. I wish to thank my Legislative Assembly colleagues, Robin Cooper, Alan Brown, Rob Maclellan and Ron Wells, who have all been ready to offer advice and support during the election campaign and before, and their respective campaign chairmen who saw to it that we were all working as a team.

A special thanks must go to the grassroot members of the Liberal Party, including those from my own branch of Balnarring-Merricks, who at every election do the mundane tasks that must be done.

Finally, I thank all of the people of South Eastern Province for the trust that they have placed in me to represent them in the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Victoria.

I look forward to making a positive and worthwhile contribution to Parliament and to the Kennett Liberal team.