

fically to Freeway F19; grandiose cultural complexes—and I refer to the Arts Centre; and unnecessary undergrounds—I refer to the Melbourne underground rail loop? Who can justify the estimate of \$1000 million spent in excess on these projects, and I do not mean the total amount of money that has been spent; I mean the amount of money that could have been saved and still allowed the required facility to be completed? I also suggest that the money spent on the underground rail loop could have been better spent on building a rapid transit link from Melbourne to Dandenong and perhaps another in the other direction. That would have cost less and been more useful because we would not have needed freeways centering on the city; it would have moved traffic to the extent that freeways in the metropolitan area would not have been necessary.

Of course we want an art gallery, but \$15 million built us a brilliant art gallery; \$200 million has already been poured into a mud hole south of the Yarra, and that is gross irresponsibility. Who can justify the unnecessary expenditure—and it is a conservative estimate—of \$1000 million, when waiting lists for simple rental housing remain at unconscionably high levels and the net stock of such housing owned by the State is actually reducing?

Housing is a critical problem in Melbourne Province, and I pay tribute in passing to those groups such as the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Collingwood-Fitzroy Rental Housing Association, which have worked hard to gain what little assistance they can from this Government. I could say a great deal more about the problems and issues that we must face within my province and within the State generally. Suffice it to say that, although I accept my role as representative of all those who live within Melbourne Province, I shall be working principally with those who are without power, whose needs are great, and whose lot has been worsened by years of neglect by the Government. But the real work for change cannot be undertaken until the party to which I belong takes its

rightful place as the party of Government in Victoria. I look forward to that day, and claim as my main goal in this place the electoral success of the Australian Labor Party. I thank the House for its attention and look forward to working amongst my colleagues in the years to come.

**The Hon. J. W. S. RADFORD** (Bendigo Province)—Mr President, I congratulate you on your election to the position of President of the Council. Other honorable members and I know that you will continue to carry on the great traditions that are associated with the office.

As the new member for Bendigo Province, I should like to acknowledge the great work that you, Sir, as the former member for Bendigo Province, and also the Honorable Jock Granter, Minister of Water Supply and Minister of Forests, who previously represented the Bendigo Province, have done.

The Honorable Bruce Reid has very ably represented Bendigo Province within its new boundaries over the past three years and I look forward to working with him to advance the causes of those who live in this province.

In seconding the motion for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech. Mr Reid referred to many facets that apply to Bendigo Province and Victoria. I endorse his remarks.

I should like to acknowledge the important role of local government. There are 22 municipalities in whole or in part within the boundaries of Bendigo Province and, as honorable members can appreciate, representing so many councils is an important factor in the duties of a member for the province.

The province has a great variety of sizes in local government and I have had many representations, some of them conflicting, regarding the interim report of the inquiry into local government. In particular, I urge the State Government to be wary of a suggestion in the interim report that all councillors should retire every three years.

I should like to draw the Council's attention to the fact that the drift to the city has been reversed in Bendigo Province and that the number of voters in the province has increased by 3737 in the past three years. The efforts of the Victorian Government in State development and decentralization are bearing fruit and I hope the Federal Government will co-operate in providing even greater reductions in Telecom charges than at present. Telephone charges, in particular those outlined, are a disincentive to decentralization of industry in the State.

I am sure that honorable members in this Chamber will join me in wishing the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association, which was formed recently by an amalgamation of the Victorian Farmers Union, the Graziers Association, and the United Dairy-farmers of Victoria, all the best for the future. Mr Miles Bourke, its president, and the two vice-presidents, Mr Jim Tehan and Mr Bill Pyle, are assured of the support of all in their important work. As a former office bearer in both the Victorian Farmers Union and the Graziers Association, I shall be glad to assist them.

I now wish to devote some time to a subject very dear to my heart, namely, soil conservation. As a farmer owning undulating to steep cropping and grazing land in the 460 millimetre, 18 inch, rainfall area of north-western Victoria on both sedimentary and granitic soils, soil conservation has had to be an integral part of my management to ensure continuing productivity. My association with soil conservation goes back over many years as I was an elected landholder member of the Avoca River Soil Conservation District Advisory Committee for some eighteen years.

It was indeed gratifying that the Minister for Conservation was reported in the *Herald* of last Wednesday 11 July and the *Sun* of the following day, 12 July, as drawing the attention of the public to the seriousness of the problem of soil erosion and dry-land salinity in Victoria and the need for an injection of Commonwealth funds to

*The Hon. J. W. S. Radford*

support programmes conducted by the Soil Conservation Authority. Many Victorians, particularly city dwellers and, I respectfully suggest, a high percentage of my fellow members in this House, would be quite unaware of the enormity of the task of soil conservation in this State.

Today, little more than 100 years after white settlement, gully erosion in the rising crop and pasture lands in the foothills to the north of the Great Dividing Range averages half a kilometre of eroded gully for every 1 square kilometre of land. This density of gullying increases at its worst extreme to 2.8 kilometres of gully a square kilometre or 4.5 miles of gully a square mile of land. Erosion in the forms of sheet erosion, gully erosion, tunnel erosion, and soil salting affects 9600 square kilometres of crop-land alone in this State. Additional to this are the problems on lands used only for grazing.

Thirty-five per cent of all Victorian land used for agricultural purposes needs the construction of erosion control works. Altered farm management practices are required on a further 23 per cent to prevent serious soil loss. That is, 58 per cent of all Victoria's agricultural land requires treatment for some form of land degradation problem, as reported in the Collaborative Soil Conservation Study, 1978.

Honorable members should understand that it is impossible to farm much of Victoria's land without some loss of soil due to either water or wind erosion even though management practices are highly conservation orientated. Management of farmland prone to erosion must be aimed at reducing loss of soil to levels consistent with the tolerance of any particular soil type to sustain that loss without affecting the productivity of the soil resource.

The conservation of the soil resource in this nation is essential not only for today but to enable it to be used by future generations. It is this resource that produces more than half of Australia's export earnings.

The cost of ensuring that Victoria's soil resource remains productive has been estimated by a joint Commonwealth and States study at \$122 million. This is reported in the Collaborative Soil Conservation Study, 1978. Of all the States, Victoria has the third largest percentage—58 per cent—of its cleared land requiring soil conservation treatment. Victoria has the second highest average unit cost of erosion control works at \$2100 a square kilometre because of the intensity of erosion. That is a frightening amount.

The size of the task of achieving soil conservation can be more easily understood when one remembers that Victoria has the highest population density of the Australian States. Twenty-seven per cent of the national population lives on less than 3 per cent of the mainland continent, which is Victoria. This places a heavy burden of responsibility on the Victorian Government to minimize degradation of this State's land where generally topsoils are less than 150 millimetres, or 6 inches, deep.

Because Victoria has the highest population density—16.46 persons a square kilometre, as shown in the *Victorian Year Book* 1978—the demand for land is high. This makes it more difficult and costly for Victoria to maintain land under uses and managed so that future generations will have some options for alternative uses to those for which land is being used today. The retention of options for future generations should be a most important planning and conservation aim. The Government has shown the importance of retaining such options in the studies being completed by the Land Conservation Council on Crown land. More stringent option retention is required in relation to freehold land. Far too much of Victoria's prime agricultural land is being lost to irrevocable uses such as urban subdivision.

Victoria's high population density contributes to the maintenance of comparatively high capital values for land. Substantial investment in soil conservation is justified for land resource asset

maintenance. No other State in Australia has produced information showing better returns to both Government and private investment in soil conservation. An economic study of the Eppalock catchment soil conservation project showed that the benefit to cost ratio was that for every \$1 spent, \$2 were returned when discounted at 8 per cent, and an internal rate of return of 25.4 per cent. All Government "on-costs" were included. This excellent return was obtained in a catchment where grazing is the main land use. Returns to capital invested in soil conservation where land use is more intensive could be even higher.

The Minister for Conservation, the Honorable Vasey Houghton, recently tabled in Parliament Report 1 of the Commonwealth—States Collaborative Soil Conservation Study, titled "A Basis for Soil Conservation Policy in Australia". I understand that a copy of this and a review of it by the Standing Committee on Soil Conservation will be supplied to honorable members. I strongly urge all honorable members to study these important documents and in particular those recommendations which are directed to the State.

I urge this particularly in view of the disparity between the estimated cost of the task ahead for Victoria—\$122 million—and the present annual appropriation for soil conservation of \$5 million. I hope Government party members will support the Minister for Conservation in achieving larger State appropriations for Victoria and allocations of Commonwealth funds to aid the State in its soil conservation programmes.

Although Victoria is a small State compared with other States of the Commonwealth, its population is scattered and the recent increases in fuel prices are placing a disproportionate burden on those who live outside the metropolitan area without ready access to public transport. I welcome the assurances of the Minister of Transport, the Honorable Robert Maclellan, that the Government is looking at ways of lifting some of this burden as fuel costs are adding to the inflationary cost spiral.

Liquefied petroleum gas conversion of motor vehicles is seen as a way of cutting petrol consumption and those who live in the country would welcome a statement from the Minister for Minerals and Energy, the Honorable James Balfour, on plans to make liquefied petroleum gas readily available to country users.

Many councils have written to me asking for the removal of anti-pollution devices fitted to motor vehicles due to the increase in fuel consumption that they cause. I urge the Government to look again at these controls. Perhaps greater encouragement should be given to the use of diesel engines as they are more efficient than petrol engines.

Two previous speakers have mentioned the role of unions and a gratifying example occurred in the handling of the last wheat harvest, where there was notable co-operation between the growers, the Grain Elevators Board and the unions involved. The record harvest was handled in a worth-while manner with little disruption. When one considers the problems that have taken place in New South Wales, Victoria can be grateful that common sense prevailed, at least in this area of union activities.

**The Hon. D. E. KENT** (Chelsea Province)—As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted in 1976, I recognize that it is a privilege to be a member of a House in any Parliament. Most of us should be aware of—some may have forgotten—the difficulties that must be overcome before one can obtain membership. In that regard let me firstly express my appreciation to those to whom I owe the greatest thanks—the members of my party who chose me to contest the Chelsea Province, and the electors of Chelsea who elected me to this place.

Mr President, I realize that you entered this Parliament as the youngest member at that time. I am sure you have matured since, and I congratulate you on your election. When one looks back at the history of this place, one realizes that you represent great tradition. I will not delve into your breeding. You have referred to the name

of Grimwade, which is high on the list of the pastoral industry establishment families in Victoria, those people who formerly were represented in overwhelming numbers in this House because it was not until 1950 that adult franchise was introduced for the election of members to this House. The forefathers of this House would rest in peace in the knowledge that a true representative of their class has once again been elevated to this high position. I feel confident that you will carry out your duties with impartiality and distinction.

I have a few more words to say in regard to you and I take the liberty of doing so on this occasion. I know how interested you are in the breeding of livestock and, particularly, in performance testing. It shall be my role, along with that of other members of this House, I hope, to subject you to the same criterion that you apply to cattle—performance testing. I will not embarrass you by referring to that other measure of reproductivity which you value so highly. I will, in private, inform other honorable members if they wish to be informed about that measure.

It is a great joy to me to be back in this House, despite the frustrations, difficulties and obstacles to be faced. It is at least a place in which one can be involved in pursuing the objectives which are vitally important to me—a change in the whole philosophy and economic structure of our society.

Firstly, I might mention that I find myself in several unique situations. I do not know whether it is a reflection on the House or a reflection on me in comparison with other members who have left this place involuntarily, but I am the first defeated member of the Legislative Council to be re-elected to this place since 1934. That covers a period of 45 years, which is considerable. One might well say that I am here because I could not get anywhere else, and I readily admit that there are more powerful, more influential, and more desirable Houses of Parliament for those of us who really want to change society, but the goodwill and atmosphere of this place could not be better—I acknowledge that.