

Mr. RANGLES (Brunswick).—This is the first Budget debate I, as a member of this House, have listened to, and the Budget is the first one I have perused in detail. The feature of the Budget for which the Government takes the greatest credit is that, in all Departments of the Public Service, a larger increase in expenditure has been provided for than in pre-war years. If a Labour Administration were in office and was budgeting for such an increase, the Opposition would undoubtedly be attacking it on the grounds of wasteful expenditure, irrespective of the objects of the expenditure or the sums to be spent.

I do not suggest, however, that expenditure on education, on the police, on agricultural development or on water supply, transport, health, and a variety of other activities over which the Government has control should not be higher than in pre-war days, because in Victoria, under a succession of anti-Labour Administrations, those services are, in comparison with similar services in other States, the worst off in the Commonwealth. As a result, Victoria has a big leeway to make up if it is to provide for its citizens services equal to those enjoyed in other parts of the Commonwealth and if it is to provide employees in its Public Service with conditions and wages comparable with those granted to Government servants in other States.

It is, therefore, with satisfaction I notice that the sum to be made available for the payment of teachers' salaries is £1,000,000 in excess of the vote approved for the financial year 1948-49. The conditions of teachers, as were those of members of the Police Force, were bad in comparison with the terms of employment of members of the teaching services and police forces of other States. The conditions of Victorian public servants are still unfavourable when compared with those of New South Wales. I observe that £500,000 additional has been allocated for the police, and that is due to the wage increases granted by the Police Classification Board. Not long ago this State was losing its most qualified public servants to the Commonwealth and to private enterprise, because conditions prevailing

elsewhere were more attractive. Young people, educated and alert of mind, were seeking careers everywhere but in the Victorian Public Service.

It may be thought that I am complimenting the Government upon its reversal of the starvation policy of its Tory predecessors. I am doing nothing of the kind. All the improved conditions are the direct result of the operations of the independent tribunals created by the Cain Labour Administration to determine wages and conditions in the various services. I feel sure that if the Government itself was the sole arbiter of those wages and conditions, not only would there be no increase in remuneration, but doubtless a Cabinet sub-committee would be appointed to decrease the number of teachers and police, and at the same time to increase their hours of work and reduce their salaries.

We have all observed the benefit of independent tribunals. Living allowances are now paid to students in the course of their training, and scholarships worth £169 per annum are granted. The Government also grants scholarships to kindergarten and pre-school trainee teachers in an effort to overcome the acute shortage of qualified personnel which is, without doubt, retarding the opening of many kindergartens. Unfortunately, no living allowance is paid to those students, with the result that the people most interested in this work cannot take advantage of scholarships because they are unable to exist; they have no finance behind them.

During the course of the Budget debate there has been much ado about the Wonthaggi coal mine; it was to be closed, and it was not to be shut down. The Government must realize that so long as coal can be won at the State Coal Mine, and while the Government is prepared to import coal from overseas, the Wonthaggi mine is a paying proposition, irrespective of the deficit on its operations. There has been much ado also in regard to petrol rationing; it has been on, and it has been off. Now, we do not know where we stand. The Premier himself was convinced at the Premiers' conference that petrol rationing was necessary.

Over-night, the Government decided to increase railway and tramway fares. If the Government would consider the co-ordination of all transport, both passenger and freight, I have no doubt it would find that the increased fares and freights are both unnecessary and uneconomic. We know that it is necessary to induce young people to live away from the heart of Melbourne. Therefore, the increased fares impose an unjust burden on those who can ill afford to bear higher charges. The imposition of heavier transport rates is a blow at the Government's decentralization policy—something to which I personally believe it pays only lip service.

The housing situation is one over which I am deeply concerned; the ill-effects of the housing shortage are being felt severely in the constituency I represent. I would like to feel assured—at present I am not—that the Government will take all steps necessary to overcome this tragic shortage. At present there is an acute shortage of housing tiles, yet the potteries in Brunswick are working at only 60 per cent. of their production capacity. I heard it stated during the debate this afternoon that pottery in the form of sewerage pipes is to be imported. Those articles can be made in this country; they can be made in the electorate I represent. I ask: Why are they not being made locally?

As this is my first contribution to the deliberations in this House, I hope I shall be excused for saying, in conclusion, that I shall do everything in my power to represent the electors of Brunswick with the same zeal and enthusiasm as did my predecessor, the late James Jewell.

Mr. CURNOW (Ivanhoe).—The debate on the Budget has been remarkable in many ways. We have witnessed the shedding of many crocodile tears by those members who call themselves the United Country party. I assume that they hope that the country people will not perceive their perfidy. They must realize that the party members associate openly and closely with members of the Socialist party. We have heard members of the Opposition use some extraordinary phrases. The Leader of the Opposition employed the term "squandermania" in

relation to the Budget. He referred also to the party to which I have the great honour to belong as the Liberal—"City" party. Such remarks in casting slurs and sneers at another party do the Leader of the Opposition little credit.

The honorable member for Benambra became excited in his rage and fury about matters in the Budget relating to country people. I was surprised that he repeated the slur made by his Leader so frequently by referring to us as the Liberal—"City" party. One might be excused for thinking that the record became stuck on a cheap gramophone. Incidentally, I think the honorable member did a very grave disservice to many country people who are really hard workers. I refer to the dairy farmers. For many years, they have been faced with the problem of selling their products in competition with synthetic substitutes that are creeping into the world's markets, and they have been at great pains to meet the competition successfully. They are trying to increase the consumption of milk and butter throughout the world, yet the honorable member for Benambra, who represents a country electorate, said that one product of the dairy farm is "the drink of death." While dairy farmers are striving to advertise the quality of their product the honorable member does his best to decrease consumption. I am surprised that the honorable member for Allendale, who is a dairy farmer, should support that comment. I am wondering what the Honorable Trevor Harvey, M.L.C., will say to the honorable member for Benambra for casting such a slur on the product of dairy farmers. In the course of the debate members listened to something much more pleasant, and I wish to pay tribute to the honorable member for Brunswick, who made his maiden speech. He contributed many valuable points for the consideration of honorable members.

The attack of the United Country party upon the Budget was paltry and vicious and devoid of all constructive thought. It displayed no national outlook, and the comments of almost every Country party speaker were designed to create cleavage between city and