

Mr. RICHARDSON (Forest Hill) : I should like to commence my contribution to this debate by taking the opportunity of offering you my congratulations, Mr. Speaker, on your reelection to the high office in which you have served 'this House with such distinction. I also wish to convey the loyalty and allegiance of the people of Forest Hill and of their representative to Her Majesty the Queen. I should also congratulate the previous speakers in this debate, all of whom have made memorable contributions.

It is a great honour to have been elected as the representative of the people of Forest Hill and I take my place in this Parliament with pride, mindful of the responsibility and the obligation which I owe to those whom I represent, to the Parliament and to the State of Victoria.

Forest Hill is a new electorate, comprising mainly the northern half of the former Syndal electorate which was represented by Mr, Ray Wiltshire, whose service to the people and to this Parliament spanned twenty years. A smaller proportion of the electorate was, until the recent redistribution, part of 'the electorate of Scoresby which has since been abolished. The former member for Scoresby is now the member for Wantirna and the present Minister of Housing. He has served the people of his electorate with dedication and considerable distinction.

I am privileged to succeed those gentlemen and to be a member of the party which constitutes the Government.

It is clear from the legislative programme outlined in the Speech of His Excellency the Governor when opening this Parliament that the Government has a sympathetic and active concern for the well-being of the people of Victoria. At this time of economic difficulty and declining productivity the term "quality of life" could become hollow and meaningless were it not evident from the past record and firmly stated intentions for the future that this -Government is committed to a continuing programme to foster an environment for living. It is concerned with creating and maintaining opportunities for the individual to achieve success and fulfilment.

The Government's concern is for all sections of the community, embracing the young, the old, the disadvantaged, the disabled, the migrants, the business community, the rural community and those who are dependent upon that community for their livelihood. We have identified the twin evils of inflation and unemployment as matters of fundamental concern. The Government is pledged to full co-operation with the Federal Government in the fight against these common enemies.

The blight of inflation strikes hardest on the elderly and those on fixed incomes. This problem is particularly relevant in the electorate of Forest Hill wherein there are two large and most successful geriatric and retirement centres, namely, the Inala Village, which is conducted by the Salvation Army, and Strathdon, which is conducted by the Presbyterian Church.

Since zero population growth is no longer an academic supposition but a looming reality, we are faced with a steadily ageing community in which an ever-increasing non-productive proportion will be dependent upon a correspondingly decreasing productive proportion of the total community. It is quite conceivable that ultimately the community might need to allocate more of its resources to the care of the elderly than to the education of the young.

In both the short, and particularly the long term, the community cannot hope to maintain its accepted way of life without a steadily increasing level of productivity, coupled with complementary technological development.

Unless this occurs, the productive sector will not be able to support the ageing non-productive sector by which it will have become outnumbered.

In December of last year the people rejected overwhelmingly the Socialist alternative, a handout, dependent society based on big government and big handouts. The people rejected this attitude of government because under it they had suffered. In March of this year the people of Victoria reaffirmed this rejection, again overwhelmingly, and the Hamer Government was returned to this Parliament.

Liberal Party Governments around Australia now have the task of picking up the pieces and restoring the economy and lifting our standard of living. It is the task of Governments to foster an environment in which individuals may engage their enterprise and flourish and grow by their own efforts. It is the task of Governments to facilitate and encourage individual and community enterprise and to avoid, wherever possible, dominance and control.

Australia is the most urbanized nation in the world, and the pressure on its urban environment increases daily. The pressures on the individual, particularly on the suburban woman, often become unbearable. As the urban boundaries expand there is a clear need for many urban services to be extended beyond the traditional fundamentals of transport, education, water supply, sewerage, kerbs and guttering and so on. There is a need for child-minding centres for both working mothers and for the group which is often neglected in popular discussions—the mothers who choose to remain at home with their children. There is a pressing need for adult education facilities to enable many suburban dwellers, again particularly women, to find personal fulfilment outside the home.

The questions may be asked: From whence should these community facilities emerge? Should they be provided by some all-seeing, all-knowing, impersonal, big Government bureaucracy which hands out money and counts community progress in terms of dollars dished out? Should the community hand all initiative to government and bureaucracy and accept a continuing inflation rate of nigh on 20 per cent? The very essence of the philosophy which members of the Government party embody is a rejection of such an impersonal, centralist proposition with all its accompanying Orwellian implications.

The impetus for the solution of the sorts of community problems that I have touched upon must come from the community. From the community should emerge the establishment of child-minding centres, art classes, literature clubs, public libraries and so on. The Government has a role, but a supportive one, to assist, for example, through the Council of Adult Education, local government and other bodies. All too frequently the question is asked, "What is the Government going to do for us?" The answer should be another question, "First, what are you going to try to do for yourself?".

Earlier I spoke on the need for concern for the elderly. I should like to conclude by referring to the needs of the very young and mention an establishment with which my wife and I are associated. I refer to the Forest Hill Residential Kindergarten for Emergency Care. This is a unique institution which is conducted by graduates of the old Kindergarten Teachers College, now the Institute for Early Childhood Development. It is a residential kindergarten capable of housing up to twenty residential children and an additional twenty day children. It is maintained with a minimum of Government assistance and a wealth of community enthusiasm. With some regret I must admit that it lies across the road from the boundary of my electorate. However, it is within the historical district of Forest Hill and my personal interest in it and long association with it make me regard it

as being within my personal province.

The Forest Hill Residential Kindergarten for Emergency Care provides a unique service for, regrettably, too few children. The service is for children who are in impossible domestic situations. An example would be the case of a father being in gaol and the mother being left at home in difficult circumstances with a number of children. She could be under severe mental strain and on the verge of a nervous breakdown; or it could be worse. We have examples of the mother in fact cracking and starting to mistreat the children. There could be an impossible domestic situation in which the mother and father attacked each other in front of the children. The residential kindergarten provides a refuge and emergency care so that the children can be removed from that impossible environment and something done to restore the domestic situation. Although there are areas in which success has not been achieved, during the many years that the institution has been established its record has been sound and it has achieved much success.

Another avenue in which this residential kindergarten provides assistance for day children is in specialized preschool care and education for over-active, hypertensive children, children with some personality problem that can be best handled in the specialized care of people at the kindergarten.

I imagine that most honorable members enter this Parliament with a grand vision of the future which, by their efforts, will be achieved. I must confess to my own grand visions, many of which may be shared by newly elected colleagues. The solitary item of such idealism which I will confess is that by the time I leave this Parliament there may be many more residential kindergartens for emergency care throughout the State. All, I hope, will be small so that they do not achieve the stamp of institutionalism. All, I hope also, will be created by interested, concerned individuals from particular communities and maintained with Government support as community enterprises to meet the sudden but continuing needs of little children in our complex society.

Finally, may I place on record my commitment to the service of the people of Forest Hill, to the State of Victoria and to the Commonwealth in all my endeavours while I am a member of this Parliament.