

Mr F. P. SHEEHAN (Ballarat South) - As previous first timers have said in respect of the electorates they represent, I welcome the opportunity of representing the people of Ballarat South in this place. Unlike many honourable members I have attained this privilege after a few circuits of the track, as it were. Some commentators have tried to liken my efforts to a legendary Scottish spider. My attempts to discover the origins of this story have come to nothing and interest in finding out waned very rapidly.

At this early stage I place on record my gratitude and thanks to some people, especially to my wife and family for their patience and support, to my campaign committee and the very large number of workers who contributed to my win.

Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on your election to office. Already I have come to admire your patience, wit and willingness to accommodate the mood of honourable members and the vagaries they so readily display.

I take the opportunity of congratulating the Premier and the Cabinet for the magnificent campaign they fought prior to 3 April, and, more importantly, of congratulating them on the capable, smooth and efficient manner in which they have taken the reins of Government.

Unlike my interest in the story of the spider, my interest in being part of the Government and representing the people of Ballarat South is high. During the election campaign, I was proud to be part of the Cain Labor Party team promoting the very positive policies that will be undertaken now that the Australian Labor Party is in Government. These policies are framed in the Governor's Speech.

I extend my best wishes to the Governor, His Excellency, Rear-Admiral Sir Brian Murray, and to Lady Murray, and I sincerely hope they will derive satisfaction from their time in office.

Before addressing myself to the issues that concern me and a large number of my constituents, I acknowledge the efforts of my predecessors in the electorate. The immediate past member was an extremely busy person, who suffered nothing more than the disadvantage of belonging to a party, in Government, that had lost impetus, that had become impotent and was lacking in direction.

The voters in the electorate I represent have displayed keen political judgment in voting to continue to be represented by a member of the Government. Mr Speaker, the people in the electorate I represent recognize that problems exist, but, in spite of these Problems, they are adamant that Ballarat is the best city in Victoria in which to live. I agree with them, and I know, as they know, that Ballarat under a John Cain Labor Government will prosper and be even better.

All honourable members will be aware that Ballarat has a proud history. It was at Eureka, in Ballarat, that our ancestors first fought to defend the rights and interests of all men. Mr Speaker, one of those who fought was a famous predecessor of yours. I refer, of course, to Peter Lalor, who was a former Speaker in this House.

Other notable Australians associated with the Ballarat Federal District include Alfred Deakin, James Scullin, John Curtin, Reg Pollard and in this House, of course, my own namesake, J. J. Sheehan, who was a former Minister of Housing in the previous Cain Labor Government some 27 years ago. After many years under Liberal administration, the Ballarat Federal electorate has returned to the care of the Australian Labor Party through my good friend, John Mildren.

Ballarat South electorate, which I am privileged to represent, is an interesting mixture. It combines three rural and three urban subdivisions. The rural areas, contain a wide range of farming activity, extending from grazing to small holdings and intensive farming.

The urban areas represent a broad spectrum of socio-economic interests together with a range of industry. Since I first became involved in the political life of the electorate the voters have shifted their support from the Liberal Party to the Australian Labor Party by approximately 12 per cent. To my mind this is due partly to their recognition that the former Government had run its race, and, to a larger extent, a recognition that a new Australian Labor Party Government had the positive policies to alleviate problems.

Ballarat has a large unemployment problem. Of course, it is impossible to be precise since figures are no longer available, at the direction of the Federal Government. However, on figures available at 31 January 1981, 3837 people were registered as unemployed in the Ballarat region. This figure represented 9.5 per cent of the total work force. This figure has increased in the intervening seventeen months. The area has witnessed the closure of several large manufacturing plants and, quite recently, a meat works closed eventually depriving the town of almost 300 jobs.

Figures and statistics can be meaningful, but they do little to reveal, in human terms, the hardship and suffering resulting from unemployment. I congratulate the Government for adopting, as a priority, the creation of work opportunities for people of all age groups, particularly the young. I welcome especially the Government's commitment to extensive construction programmes in welfare housing and schools.

With this priority of job creation in mind I look forward to an increase in apprenticeship programmes in all, trades, and not only the building industry. Harking back to housing recent figures indicate approximately 350 families on the Housing Commission waiting list in Ballarat. Therefore, the Government's house construction promises are doubly welcome. It is vitally important to increase the pitiful housing per capita amount of \$6 allocated by the former Government.

Ballarat has a proud history in industry and a strong engineering expertise within its work force. It also has a stable work force with a normally happy industrial relations record. These attributes were recognized by a survey conducted approximately two years ago by consultants employed by a local community group. Therefore it is a city upon which the Government's policy of developing regional growth centres can be truly entrusted.

Speaking to that policy, the Government clearly has in mind approaching the question of Victoria's development in a planned and organized way with vision and not in the ad hoc fashion of the previous Government.

The Victorian Development Fund will provide the basis, or springboard, for such planning and it is my contention that this initiative will be seen in later years as one of the most constructive and far-reaching policies of the Cain Labor Government. In fact, it is my belief that this initiative has the potential to become as well respected as the Commonwealth Bank, developed by a Federal Labor Government in 1912.

The Victorian Development Fund will marshal the financial resources of this State and direct them towards the economic and social priorities with programmes in the fields of housing, health,

education and transport. These areas of our community life are basic to our human existence. Because they are basic rights they are worthy of direct intervention from government to ensure that every effort is made to provide them for all our citizens. This is not possible where the prime motivation is profit rather than people.

I have already mentioned the difficulties we have in housing. In Ballarat we boast two large hospitals, the largest geriatric centre outside the metropolitan area and institutions to cater for the deaf, the blind and the physically and mentally handicapped. This Parliament has already heard debate on the problems confronting hospitals in financial terms and, unfortunately, Ballarat is no exception in this regard.

As an example, Ballarat Base Hospital finished the financial year 1981 with a deficit of more than \$144000. That some \$68000 of this was recouped in the next financial year is a tribute to the management of the hospital. However, the circumstances in which the hospitals have been forced to operate with inadequate Federal Government support is the cause of the present problems. Hospitals and their staffs have been fighting a losing battle for years and it is up to us to reverse this trend.

Ballarat is a city of education. We have a college of advanced education, a regional TAFE college, numerous secondary schools of both Government and non-Government administration and, of course, even more numerous primary schools. As in other electorates, we have problems with the buildings, especially those that have reached a great age. Recently, we have had a number of schools conducting centenary celebrations. As one can well imagine, such buildings, although they have great character, have deteriorated over the years and, of course, they are costly to heat and cool because of their design. Plans and specifications are currently being drawn up for refurbishing such a school building at a cost of approximately \$80 000. Then, we have the partly finished new schools. One school in our city has, for years, conducted its activities in a cluster of 48 portable class-rooms. I believe the school is currently working on its ninth or tenth development plan.

I am sure that much of the anxiety that has been created, and is still being witnessed, among parents, their children and the teachers in our schools could have been avoided if the previous Government had planned adequately and used available finances effectively. We know, however, that successive Ministers in the previous Government were very interested in confrontation with the unions to the detriment of providing educational opportunity for the children of Victoria. People throughout this State now have every reason to be confident that the present Government will provide the necessary direction and sound planning required, because it is committed to consultation with the people involved at the class-room and the administration levels.

I turn now to the commercial sector. This is another area in which the previous Government's lack of appreciation of the real needs of people was clearly demonstrated. Small business has borne the brunt of the previous Government's mismanagement and in Ballarat, as in other parts of Victoria, small business has gone to the wall. An officer of the Commonwealth's consumer affairs department told me recently that small business bankruptcies in this State are running at 1300 a year and increasing, and this figure does not include small companies.

Late last year we saw the extended trading hours fiasco, when the Thompson Liberal Government bowed to pressure from the multi-national supermarket chains and tried to force extended trading hours upon the business community. The Australian Labor Party supported

those opposed to extended trading 'hours at that time. Now that it is in Government, its members will strive to preserve the best interests of small traders for whom extended trading hours is a threat to their very existence. Perhaps, it is not inappropriate to remind the House that it was this issue that gave further impetus to the downhill run of the former Government. It was especially clear to us in Ballarat because of the people involved.

And now, if I may, I should like to address myself to transport. I look forward to the implementation of the Government's transport policies. It is a welcome change to see the emphasis placed on public transport and development in this area. Although I see a definite role for the motor car and motor transport - after all, it gave me my livelihood for many years as a motor mechanic - nevertheless recognize that traffic congestion, pollution, rising fuel costs and the disastrous road carnage are all related to motor vehicle use. Therefore, anything that encourages a shift of emphasis to public transport is welcomed by me.

Another aspect of this emphasis, of course, is its employment possibilities. Ballarat has a large railway workshop with a skilled work force. Unfortunately, this work force is now about half the size of what it was some fifteen years ago. It has been allowed to run down to the detriment of Ballarat and public transport generally. It is my conviction that such a facility and the skilled men who work there should be part of this newly emerging emphasis on public transport.

Obviously, capital will be required to update machinery and equipment, so that a strong new impetus is given to such facilities. I believe railway workshops will play a significant role in revitalizing the Victorian economy. I know the workshops have a vital role to play in rehabilitating the economy of Ballarat.

Before I conclude my remarks, I should like to draw the attention of the House to the need to rationalize the provision of adequate sewerage capacity in all parts of Victoria, both metropolitan and provincial. In Ballarat, I have inherited a legacy of confusion and mismanagement brought about by the previous Government's failure to provide adequate leadership. Some Ballarat people have been forced to outlay large sums of money they can ill-afford, to finance capital works the local sewerage authority should have funded from loan allocations and recouped through the normal rating processes. It will be months before the householders concerned receive justice, and none of this need ever have happened if the previous Government, through the responsible Minister, who I note is no longer a member of this Parliament, had done its job properly.

I have mentioned unemployment in Ballarat, and although sewerage and unemployment may not be considered to be related, in Ballarat they are. Our city has had several opportunities in recent times of attracting large manufacturing industries to the district, which would have provided employment for many hundreds of people and attracted money to the city. Ballarat lost this potential advantage because its local sewerage system is inadequate to cater for the effluent discharge from these industries. The previous Government blamed the local authority and the local authority blamed the Government, and while this pointless blame-shifting was going on, Ballarat lost jobs for its people and the economic advantage that would have occurred from a substantial inflow of capital. This must never be allowed to happen again.

In conclusion, I restate my pleasure and satisfaction at being given the responsibility of representing a city and district such as Ballarat. Ballarat is a city of flowers and friendly people-at least the election result indicates that 52 per cent of them are friendly. It is a city with a proud history and, with planning and patience, it has the potential to enjoy a great future. I look forward

to making a contribution to that future.