

The Hon. M. J. SANDON (Chelsea Province) - -Mr President and honourable members, I come to this House seeking to make my contribution to improving the lifestyles and life chances of average Victorians. I consider that for some time our society has had widespread and structured inequality. I seek to make my contribution to redressing that problem. If one takes income and wealth as two determinations of inequality, one gains some insight into how pervasive is the determination of one's chances and lifestyles.

Income determines the amount of education one receives and, as a result of that, the sort of job one will obtain. It has an impact on where one lives and how one lives. It has an impact on what type of leisure one engages in. In other words, one's income is quite pervasive in determining the life chances one will experience. It is not too strong a point to state that one's self-determination bears a direct relationship to income. One can say that in influence over one's environment, the undemocratic capacity to pay is- extremely influential.

Many social and economic ills exist in the community. I do not consider that 'the former Government can be blamed for those ills. However, its ability to tackle those issues was not as diligent as it should have been. It is my proposition that the former Government was more concerned with maintaining privilege for the greedy, as opposed to fighting unemployment and poverty for the needy. Maladjustment of income is an aspect of society that is becoming more prevalent. The Roman Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace has recently suggested that more than 2 million Australians are at, near or below the poverty line. The Federal Government's social welfare unit has put that figure at 1 million Australians. Whichever figure one adopts, this matter is a national disgrace and scandal.

In the area I represent, the City of Chelsea, a recent needs report stressed that one in three of the residents are living in dire circumstances. All too often, poverty is increasing. It is something to which Parliament must respond. The way in which honourable members respond will determine the sorts of lives that we and our children will enjoy.

This House must face up to a number of important factors and problem issues. Poverty is not the only issue. Parliament must address the concentration of the media in so few hands, the domination by large corporations, whose main interest is themselves and not the sovereign State, the amount of pollution in Victoria-the state of Port Phillip Bay is a disgrace-and taxation. Professor Matthews recently suggested that the major issue at this time is not so much whether the rich will pay the same amount of taxation as the poor, but whether they will pay taxation at all. Other issues that must be dealt with are nuclear weapons, the rights of women, and the democratization of the work force.

Honourable members must face up to these factors; unless we do, the democratic way of life will falter. This House must make a positive response to these problems, for any institution that does not work for the betterment of mankind is ultimately sterile.

For the past six years I have worked for an organization that has been the subject of recent debate in this House and the other place. I worked for the Municipal Officers Association as a Federal industrial officer and I am proud to have spent that time with that organization. It will fit me well for the Parliamentary career that I am about to embark upon. The Municipal Officers Association is one of the most important, progressive, and effective white-collar organizations in this country. I have spent the past six years getting to know the men and women who work in statutory authorities in Victoria. I have seen the commitments they have made and which they make continually to ensure that the goods and services in this State are the best they can

provide.

I have enjoyed immensely being involved in industrial relations. I have enjoyed the change that has taken place. All too often, one finds that negotiations have not taken place. I commend the Leader of the Government in this House and the leader of the Industrial Relations Task Force for the change that has now taken place. I know that employers in statutory authorities are delighted that at long last they can approach the Government and seek to reach solutions and amicable agreements that they were not able to reach hitherto.

Victoria has experienced immense industrial problems in the past. If one gathered statistics of man-days lost in Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania and South Australia and added them together, one would find that the man-days lost in those four States would not equal the man-days lost in Victoria. Something has been drastically wrong. I have noticed that people are not sitting down, consulting and giving and taking. I am delighted that the new approach has been adopted.

In recent times the Municipal Officers Association has been the subject of criticism because an agreement has been negotiated whereby some employees will receive the back-dating of an agreement and others will not. Most of that criticism has been unfair and one-sided. It has 'been telescopic because it has failed to realize that there is no compulsion on employees to join a union. One's basic right to become a member of a union still exists, unlike other areas I could mention, such as banks, which have been large supporters of conservative forces. Compulsory unionism operates in that area. If one is employed in a bank as an officer, one has no choice, but is forced to become a member of the union. That is an agreement that has been signed by the banks and the respective organizations. Can one use that test in the Municipal Officers Association of Australia and say there is compulsion? Of course one cannot. The criticism that has been directed in this area has been most unfair. One clearly has a choice whether or not one wants to belong to the Municipal Officers Association. That is important, because in the final analysis who will provide a salary for me as an industrial officer, when I am employed; who will pay for the indirect cost of servicing claims; who will pay for the costs of servicing members, who will pay for the aircraft costs? It is the members who will pay, and of course the members should, but they should receive the benefits, and to suggest that someone should receive a benefit without joining a union is utter nonsense.

I come to this place hoping that it will take a positive line on the problems I have mentioned. I, for my part, will ensure that my contribution will be as objective as possible. I would like to quote the words of C. Wright Mills:

I shall try to be objective, but I do not claim to be detached.