

Speech to His Excellency the Governor, and then allowed the Treasurer to make a different Budget speech. There is no incentive for the people of Victoria to accept the challenge.

The Hon. B. D. SNIDER (Higinbotham Province).—It is my privilege on this occasion to join with previous speakers on the motion for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor, and to echo and reaffirm the expressions of loyalty to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. Honorable members will not be indifferent to the feelings which I have at this moment, feelings which have been shared by other honorable members on both sides of the Chamber. I find myself in the curious position, after nine years of Parliamentary service, of having to make my maiden speech. Whilst it is said that opportunity only knocks once, I am not so concerned about opportunity knocking the second time as I am concerned whether to-night I shall be able to respond to the opportunity with the same vigour and, I hope, the same competence with which I believe I was able to respond on the first occasion.

I have looked forward to this occasion for some little time. At the outset, I am conscious that as a representative of the Higinbotham Province, I follow in the footsteps of a distinguished and able Parliamentarian in Sir Arthur Warner. I am equally conscious of the fact that I share the representation of the province with an equally distinguished colleague in the acting Leader of my party in this House, Mr. Lindsay Thompson. I hope I may, in the days to come, not suffer too greatly by this comparison. It is proper that the message from His Excellency should be conceived in a note of confidence, and I congratulate my colleagues, who moved and seconded the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-Reply. I should like also to take this opportunity—my own first opportunity in this House—to congratulate

Mr. Clarke and Mr. Hewson, on their maiden speeches. Judging by the quality of their contributions on their first occasion, this House has just cause to hope for greater contributions from those honorable members in the future.

I believe the note of optimism in the Speech of His Excellency the Governor was justified, because it was conceived in the knowledge of the history of this Government and its progressive legislation, and the amount of legislation which had been enacted in this House on behalf of the Government on a great variety of subjects which affect the lives of people in their various occupations. I believe this confidence was also justified for the reason that none of us would want to admit to a lack of faith either in our country or in our State. I am well aware that many faults can be pointed out, and that people may have different points of view on many subjects. It is easy and comfortable to have another point of view especially when one is not faced with the responsibility of having to put that point of view into practice. The overriding factor is the sure knowledge that when the lot of Australians is compared with that of the residents of so many countries overseas, we have a great deal to be thankful for. Many of the points that are raised—I do not wish to transgress the forms of the House by being provocative on this first occasion—are matters of perspective and of relativity. What an honorable member from one side of the House may consider to be of importance and critical on one occasion may, compared with something else, appear not to be so critical or so important at a later date.

To-day, in Victoria, a great complexity surrounds every challenge—whether the challenge is to be met by the Government, by commercial enterprise, or by individuals in their daily occupations. I remind honorable members, having regard to statements which have been made in

this House to-night, that the Premier, who has set the lead for this State and given leadership to Victoria, has been quite consistent in his approach to the question of taxation. He has been consistent to the point of pursuing his point of view and the Government's point of view through the highest courts not only of Victoria, but of the Commonwealth, and no one could ever suggest, whatever difference of opinion might arise whether this course of action or that course of action might be the better one, that he has lacked consistency in his approach.

The imposition of State taxation is already normal practice in at least two Federations in what we know as the Western world to-day, and the Prime Minister has said that the essence of the Federal system is that the States should raise their own finances. While I am not disposed to-night to indulge in a technical debate on the subject of finances generally, I wish to remind honorable members of a fact which sometimes escapes the attention of the public. In all the things which the State Government has to face—the Government of the day no matter what its political complexion may be has to face them—one item, and one item alone, reminds us that the situation in which we find ourselves, results not from our own action, but from the action of the Commonwealth Government. We should remember that on loans obtained from that Government which are tax collections lent back to us—on those loan funds alone—we pay an interest bill of £7,500,000 annually. I direct the attention of the House to this matter because it is as well that we should dwell for a moment on what this sum of money represents when translated, in the sphere of education, into hundreds of classrooms and thousands of students. Those who are sometimes quick to say that this money can be done without are not always equally prepared to face up to the fact that, without the money, essential jobs cannot be carried out.

The Hon. B. D. Snider.

Earlier I referred to the complexity of modern business. I know that the attention of the House has recently been occupied a great deal with the complex problems of companies' operation in the field of modern financing methods. I think the Government has made it clear, both by its legislation and through the words of its spokesmen, that it has not condoned, and does not and will not condone practices which are designed to fraudulently take money that belongs to the public. But in this matter there are one or two problems to which the attention of honorable members could well be directed.

Reference has been made, both inside and outside of the House, to the role of company auditors in modern-day company practice. I believe their role is a difficult and complicated one, because the basis of their analysis must, in the first instance, be the figures that are supplied to them. Very often this problem is complicated still further by systems of stock valuation; in such speculative areas as land subdivision, valuations must be particularly difficult. But, it is not the technical details of the auditors' problems as such with which I am concerned. I am concerned with another aspect of the problem which faces auditors, who have been described as the watchdogs of shareholders' interests—and, when we speak of shareholders, we are speaking of the public. They are acting under the handicap that their published reports are not privileged. They face the difficult situation of knowing that, when they direct the attention of the responsible authorities, by means of a written report—whether the report be made to company directors, to a Government agency or to shareholders at large—to what might appear, from their examination, to be something of a fraudulent nature, it might nevertheless be something that could not be proved in court according to the requirements of law. In the performance of what they conscientiously believe to be their duty,

they expose themselves to the risk of libel action and other forms of action, which are better known to the lawyer members of this House than they are to me. This must surely operate in a restraining sense even to the most conscientious of them. This is a matter which must at some time be given more attention.

I have been equally concerned with the question which has been raised from time to time of a sharebroker acting as a company director. I know many members of the Stock Exchange, and I have found them to be men of capability, of competence and of essential integrity, but I am bound to wonder about the realism of the situation in which some of them must find themselves. On one day and under one cloak a stockbroker who is a company director may attend a Board meeting at which decisions are made which are of vital interest to the company, which may affect the future of that company and which could conceivably have some effect on the value of its shares on the Stock Exchange. On another day and under another cloak, the stockbroker may be asked by his clients to tender advice on the desirability or otherwise of acquiring shares in that particular company, and even though he may be conscientious and a person of integrity, I do not know how he could cut himself in two and shut out of his mind the knowledge which he, as a company director, acquired on the previous day, so as to advise his clients, to the best of his ability and with the best intention of impartiality, on the question of their share purchases.

I am not certain whether, in raising this problem, I am dealing with a question which should be a matter of personal decision on the part of individuals who find themselves in this position or whether I am dealing with a matter which should be the subject of regulation either by the Stock Exchange or by Act of Parliament. I am not certain, because I am well aware of the ramifications of the question which is posed. I believe

that this situation, which is fraught with all the elements of conflict of responsibility, must be resolved at some stage.

I make these observations perhaps because the atmosphere regarding them might be regarded as topical. In the days which are to come I hope to make other observations concerning a variety of subjects. I say very simply that I come to this House with respect for the other person's point of view, with the willingness to listen to another political viewpoint, however wrong I might think it to be. On this occasion, which is a very solemn one for me, I can ask no more or no less than that Almighty God should give me the wisdom and the capacity to make fitting contributions to the deliberations of this House. Moreover, I trust that they will be made in a constructive sense, in what will, I hope, be an atmosphere of goodwill among my colleagues in this House and in the knowledge that we are divided only in our political points of view, and that whatever we may accomplish together in the days to come will be with the sole objective of bringing about the betterment of the citizens of this State.

On the motion of the Hon. A. W. KNIGHT (Melbourne West Province), the debate was adjourned until the next day of meeting.

ADJOURNMENT.

MALLACOOTA NATIONAL PARK:
TOURIST DEVELOPMENT.

The Hon. L. H. S. THOMPSON
(Minister of Housing).—By leave, I move—

That the Council, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday next.

The motion was agreed to.

The Hon. L. H. S. THOMPSON
(Minister of Housing):—I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

The Hon. ARCHIBALD TODD
(Melbourne West Province).—From time to time, matters come to the notice of honorable members by way