

In conclusion, I should like to say once again that it has been a great privilege for me formally to second the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-Reply. This will always be a memorable day for me. I trust that we, as members of this Chamber, will at all times work for the benefit of Victoria as a whole.

**The Hon. J. M. WALTON** (Melbourne North Province).—Mr. President, in adding my contribution to this Address-in-Reply debate, I remind members of the growing importance in our community of local government. Most people throughout the community—and, indeed Governments—are placing further responsibilities on municipal councils. Many of these local bodies are accepting those responsibilities, but frequently it is to the detriment of other works that councillors were elected to have carried out for the benefit of the people. Municipal councils were formed primarily to deal with roads, sanitation and various other matters that the State and Federal Governments cannot handle because they are not close enough to the people. At present, those in municipal life are being asked by the Commonwealth and State Governments to do various things. For example, councils are requested to make available large pieces of land for housing purposes, and to provide parking spaces on big tracts of valuable land in close proximity to industry, shops and centres of commerce. I mention all these matters to prove that local government to-day is growing rapidly in importance.

However, the method by which municipal representatives are elected is still not democratic. I strongly believe, and will take a great deal of convincing otherwise, that every person who is liable to the laws of a city should have the privilege of taking part in the selection of a candidate at a municipal election. Why is it that the owner of a property is entitled to vote whereas another person who resides in the same house and who contributes considerably to its upkeep is precluded from voting? Why is it that our laws permit one man to have three votes and another only one

vote? We live in a democratic country; this Parliament is a democratic institution; yet our statute-book contains laws that allow the things I have just mentioned. The Government should legislate to provide for adult franchise for municipal elections. It necessarily follows that, if a municipal councillor is elected on an unfair franchise, the trusts, corporations and Boards of which he is a member are also not elected democratically. In this connexion, I mention the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, various cemetery trusts, the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board, and all other Boards and trusts consisting mainly of members who are municipal councillors.

One of the main problems facing our society to-day is the demolition of habitable homes. All members of my party believe that local governing authorities should have authority regarding the demolition of dwellings in their areas; at present they have no control whatever in this matter. They had such power in the past, and I have had the privilege of seeing municipal councils preventing good homes from being destroyed.

His Excellency the Governor stated in his Speech that a new Ministry of Local Government and Town Planning would be established. Members of my party agree that there should be a Ministry specially dealing with local government affairs. I should like provision to be made for the establishment of regional councils so that where, for example, four municipal councils adjoin one another and have common problems, they may be permitted to integrate their activities and, by combining their resources, reduce their financial and physical worries. An instance that comes to mind is the disposal of garbage. Some cities are favoured with large holes in which garbage can be placed. Other cities have to pay large sums of money for the deposit of their garbage in those places. One city may be favoured by having large and costly workshops containing expensive equipment, but that equipment may be used for only two or three hours a week. If the other councils in the district were allowed to use

that equipment, I am sure municipal expenditure could be reduced by up to 25 per cent.

Our system of municipal government is here to stay, and it is of ever growing importance. In my opinion, councillors have far too heavy a burden placed upon their shoulders, and do not receive sufficient sympathy from the State and Federal Governments. Councils are expected to provide traffic officers who, in effect, carry out some of the work of the Police Department. Municipalities are expected also to maintain important highways used by large transports which travel interstate. Vehicles of this size cause undue damage to the roads, which were not designed to carry such traffic.

The financial resources of municipal councils as a whole are very strained, and I trust that this year the Government will see its way clear to make more grants to municipalities. I emphasize that, in my view, if the Government takes action to provide for the formation of regional councils, the expenditure of individual councils may be reduced by up to 25 per cent. Finally, I urge the Government to legislate for the election of municipal councillors on an adult franchise.

**The Hon. R. W. MAY** (Gippsland Province).—Speaking on behalf of Country party members, I deem it an honour and privilege to be able to support the motion. As a comparative newcomer to this Chamber, I express my congratulations and those of all the members of the Country party in this House upon the excellent contributions that have been made to the debate this evening, as they have been of a very high standard. May I be pardoned for digressing for a moment in extending to the new members of this Chamber my congratulations upon their election.

On behalf of my party I wish to reaffirm our loyalty to Her Gracious Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. That loyalty has always been the motive behind the work of honorable members for the well-being of the people of Victoria. Her Majesty is the living symbol that binds one country of the British Commonwealth of Nations to another, no matter whether its people be white

or black—that binds one with the other, and each to us, in this great Commonwealth of Nations that has played so great a part for the well-being of mankind. May it ever continue to stand as a bulwark and a monument, not to suppression and fear but to peace and equality. So long as that Commonwealth remains as such, the world at large will be able to look upon it with continued admiration.

I was particularly pleased, together with all the members of my party, to learn from the Speech of His Excellency the Governor of the programme envisaged by the Government in the matter of housing. The fundamental requirement for the successful functioning of democracy lies in the home life of the people, and the basis of that home life rests upon the character of the individual. Part and parcel of a great housing programme is the need to ensure that there is at all times an adequate supply of water. The provision of a good water supply is a pressing problem throughout the country; it is one to which we could at once direct our attention and our energies. There is great scope for a practical approach to this problem.

Not only does adequate housing impress a vast influence on the home life of the people, it is essential, both in the city and in the country areas. If we want real decentralization, and if we establish more and more homes in the country, work and workers will surely follow. There is great need for further industrial development in country areas. I have in mind particularly the Latrobe Valley, where there has been great development, and that expansion is still going on. There is need in that part of the State for further extensive home building. I was pleased to learn of the expansion of the assets of the Housing Commission so that there may be development of that important organization, which was established by a Country party Government.

We listened with great interest to the Governor's Speech. It was fitting that His Excellency should have prefaced his remarks by referring to seasonal conditions and to their effect upon the