

Mr. WOOD (Swan Hill).- It is with great pleasure that I support the motion for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Governors Speech and to have the opportunity once again of affirming the loyalty of the people of the Swan Hill electorate to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. On behalf of the people I represent, I, congratulate His Excellency on the magnificent manner in which he and Lady Delacombe have faithfully and in a most dedicated manner represented Her Majesty throughout Victoria.

His Excellency and Lady Delacombe are certainly no strangers to the Swan Hill electorate. In fact, yesterday His Excellency visited Sea Lake to officially open the Sea Lake Agricultural and Pastoral Society's "back to Sea Lake" show. To my knowledge, the Governor has visited the electorate many times. Both Sir Rohan and Lady Delacombe have visited the City of Swan Hill on at least seven occasions. To me, the most memorable visit of His Excellency was when he visited Swan Hill in March, 1965, for the Swan Hill city celebration and invested me with the mayoral chain and robes of office. I have always been most impressed with the down to-earth manner of His Excellency and Lady Delacombe and their ability to put people completely at ease. Their friendliness and great knowledge of Victoria is well known to honourable members. It is with great regret that I note their impending retirement. The people of my electorate, as loyal subjects, wish them many years of happiness and sincerely hope they enjoy their well-earned retirement.

It is with pleasure that I speak this afternoon on behalf of the people of the Swan Hill electorate. Swan Hill is one of the largest Legislative Assembly electoral districts, covering an area of approximately 6,000 square miles and having a population exceeding 37,000. The capital improved value of property in the electorate exceeds \$200 million. Swan Hill is a rural area in which practically every class of primary production, except those of a tropical nature, is carried on. The Shire of Swan Hill is the largest wheat-growing municipality in Victoria. The Shire of Wycheproof, which is also in the electorate, is the second largest. This year it is estimated that the electorate will produce a record harvest. In the City of Swan Hill alone it is estimated that some 1.1 million bushels of wheat will be delivered to the silos. Other forms of primary production include dairying, dried fruits, fresh fruit, vegetable growing, fat lamb raising, wool growing, cattle breeding, pig farming, stone fruit, citrus fruit and seed production. It is unique in the production of lettuce seed. The district is one of the few places in the world where lettuce seed can be produced free of disease. Most of the seed is exported to the United States of America.

Because of the need for centres to service the rural areas, many prosperous, friendly and attractive towns have developed throughout the area over the years. The largest of these centres are Swan Hill, Kerang, Robinvale, Ultima, Sea Lake, Piangil, Wycheproof, Birchip, Manangatang, Nyah West, Nyah, Lake Boga, Berriwillock, Nullawil, Culgoa, Koondrook and Quambatook. I am certain that the wealth of the district and the buoyancy of the economy of these towns will always depend upon and be in direct preparation to the fortunes of the farmers.

Owing to the isolation of the towns, among other factors, Swan Hill electorate has been unable to attract larger secondary industries, but over the years it has managed to secure a number of smaller industries, the majority being mainly engaged in processing the primary products of the district. However, being blessed with a pleasant climate and very friendly people and also a most exciting historical background, the district is now strangely engaged in the tourist industry. Large sums of money, derived from private sources, local government sources and the State Government, have been expended to attract tourists and make their stay in the district more

pleasant and enjoyable. These developments have given a terrific boost to the economy of the district and in some ways have helped to soften the blow of the recent rural recession.

One of the major tourist attractions in Swan Hill is the pioneer settlement. The success story of this establishment is doubtless well known to honourable members. Last year more than 200,000 people visited the folk museum, which is known not only throughout the State but also overseas. Many other ancillary tourist attractions, which have been established in the city and surrounds, help to entertain tourists and induce them to remain longer.

Kerang, the second largest town in the area, is also attractive and most friendly. It has an historical background. Recently an historic water tower was converted to an attractive lookout tower adjoining the reptile park. The centre page of the Sun News-Pictorial this morning featured the ibis rookery, which is world famous. The rookery and associated breeding grounds are the largest in the world.

The third largest town in the electorate is Robinvale. After the last war, land around the old town, as it then was, was opened up for soldier settlement in the form of dried fruit blocks. Robinvale town was laid out and developed to service these "ex-service blockies" as they are known. It is a pretty and very friendly town, which can boast more public amenities than any other town of comparable size. At an estimated cost of \$1 million, a sporting complex was recently completed and a cultural centre is in course of construction. A most interesting tourist attraction is at present being investigated, that of an outdoor Aboriginal museum. It is envisaged that this exciting project will depict the life and culture of the Aborigine before the arrival of the white man.

Other towns working in means for attracting and entertaining tourists include Quambatook, with a unique idea involving a model farm, and Wycheproof, where large sums of money from both private and local government sources are being spent on projects aimed at tourist promotion for that area. The natural tourist attractions in the Swan Hill electorate include the miles and miles of lovely rivers and creeks flowing through the area. In fact there are more than 340 miles of River Murray frontage and more than 650 miles of other river and creek frontage.

Water has always played a major part in determining the fortunes of the area. Last year the electorate had very low rainfall with a resultant loss to farmers, especially dry farmers. Early this year water storages were so low that there was some doubt whether there would be enough water to satisfy irrigators' needs this season. However, as honourable members are aware, since then there has been a period of heavy rainfall. Parts of the Swan Hill and Kerang shires have been saturated, causing serious flooding.

The Kerang Shire Council has advised me that at the peak of the flood some 250 square miles of land were flooded to some degree. Many farms were completely inundated, and for a time it was touch and go whether a section of the township would be flooded. I should like to pay a tribute to the organizations and people involved in helping to minimize flood dangers in the Kerang and Swan Hill districts.

In Kerang, to handle the situation, and in the absence of a flood control authority, a committee was formed to take charge. It comprised representatives of the Shire of Kerang, the Borough of Kerang, the police, the Victorian Railways, the Postmaster General's Department, the Country Roads Board, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, the Salvation Army and the ladies' welfare group, who supplied food at all hours to workers. Later regular officers and men of the Australian Army worked untiringly.

The committee met twice daily and for a long time maintained a 24-hour service at Kerang shire offices, under headquarters control of the Shire Secretary, Lindsay Rundle, and operations in the field generally were taken over and controlled by the shire engineering staff led by the Shire Engineer, Peter McDonald, and officers of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission under the engineer in charge, Ian Anders. Army personnel were commanded by their officers.

Swan Hill already had a civil defence organization which was formed about nine months ago. The group was led by the controller, Peter Simmons, with Inspector Alan Knowles as co-ordinator. This organization also did a magnificent job and maintained a 24-hour-a-day seven days a week communication and headquarters group for more than one month. It was assisted by New South Wales flood boat crews and Victoria Police boat crews. The volunteers were fed at all hours by the Swan Hill Red Cross Ladies Auxiliary Service Group and the Seventh Day Adventists mobile kitchen.

I am proud to have been a member of both the Swan Hill and Kerang committees, and to these committees and the many volunteers of all ages, including children, from all walks of life who worked untiringly I should like to extend the thanks of the Government.

The final cost of damage caused by floods in my electorate has not yet been assessed. Many applications for assistance are pouring in to the Premier's Department. The shires have spent a great deal of money on flood control. The Shire of Swan Hill estimates that the total cost of the floods will exceed \$300,000, and at 1st October the Shire of Kerang calculates that it will have had to spend \$55,000.

As my electorate is within a vast river and creek system, it always faces the risk of flooding. Rainfall charts of the 1870s show that districts in my electorate experienced at least four high rainfall years in succession. With full storages, the area will be in further trouble if it receives above average rainfall next year. It is understood that the Public Works Committee will conduct an inquiry into flood relief and control, but, as yet, no terms of reference have been determined. A statutory authority should be established to organize a plan to control completely the flow of the rivers in times of flood. When the waters reach flood height, certain pondage areas should have been predetermined to take the flow of water from the rivers. Large tracts of forest and marginal land are suitable for conversion to temporary pondage areas. It was suggested recently that the authority should have complete control over these areas, although people would still be allowed to farm or graze stock there on the condition that in time of flood the land would be used for ponding flood waters. The people would be compensated for land lost for this purpose. The proposal should be seriously considered. Representation will be made by the farmers of the area to the Premier, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission and at the inquiry, and the case for a plan to minimize flooding will be submitted.

I wish Sir Rohan and Lady Delacombe many years of health and happiness, and I once again affirm the loyalty of the electors of Swan Hill to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.