

Many recent investments in Swedish factories have aimed at improving the working environment.

Those comments are particularly applicable to Australia at present.

Sweden's withdrawal from the European "Snake" removed the steady upward pressure on the krona that particularly hurt such Swedish export industries as pulp and paper which write their contracts in dollars.

I am merely attempting to point out that there are tremendous difficulties inherent in Australia's present cost system. The rural sector of the community is probably suffering more than any other because it is forced to accept the world price for its commodities. The basic problem is how to get around that one factor. If a commodity is being produced for internal consumption the price can be adjusted upward, but wool-growers are producing a commodity of which only 10 per cent is used within this country and 90 per cent is sold on the world market. In that situation it is almost impossible to increase the local price.

The beef industry exports half of its production and the other half is consumed locally. That creates a situation where it is difficult to bring the producers' income up to parity with the income of the rest of the community. All honorable members are aware of the difficulties being experienced at both the State and Federal levels in reaching agreement on returning a reasonable amount to producers.

The basic reason why the rural sector is facing such a difficult time, apart from the drought, is that farming incomes have been stationary while costs have doubled or trebled in the past four or five years. The main problem of this nation is increasing costs and the largest component in those costs is the cost of labour. Labour costs have risen out of all proportion to increasing production.

The SPEAKER (Sir Kenneth Wheeler): Order! The honorable member's time has expired.

Mr. Birrell.

Mr. BIRRELL: Thank you for your patience, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. REMINGTON (Melbourne): I come into this Parliament at a critical time in the history of this State, and in a critical environment affecting the whole of the community. Business confidence in this country is at an extremely low ebb. There has been a drop in retail sales; unemployment has reached its record peak since the tragic days of the great depression. We have a dollar of diminishing value, and it is still devalued by about 17 per cent. Our general economy is being affected by the fall in value of the American dollar because payment for many of our contracts is written in U.S. dollars, and so we are receiving less for payments for our exports than we would have if the dollar had been stronger.

In another instance, the basket of currencies to which the Australian dollar is tied has appreciated so that it is now costing us more to import goods to Australia. Not only are we in severe economic difficulties in Australia, but there is a great lack of confidence in politicians as individuals and as parties collectively. There is little confidence today in the Parliamentary system of this country. For my part, I trace that lack of confidence to the very violent action that was carried out against the Parliamentary democratic system in Australia on 11th November, 1975. Since that time there has been a diminishing standard, and certainly a diminishing confidence in the Parliamentary system. Political organizations make policy speeches promising electors reforms and concessions which in many cases are impractical to carry out. This in many cases has been reflected in a general lack of faith in the country itself.

I accept the grave responsibilities that have been placed upon me since my entry into Parliament. I acknowledge the friendly and fraternal greetings, and respect, that I have received from most members, or from all members who have spoken to me

in this House. Nonetheless, I would not be honest if I did not acknowledge that it is indeed a strange atmosphere in which we work. There is almost total unreality. It reminds me of the hectic days of the depression in the 1930s when that great country of America was in economic disaster and people went out and drank champagne, danced the Charleston, and pretended there was nothing happening. When we say that the economic situation in this country is bad, it is primarily the responsibility of politicians and political leaders not to take the sort of attitude that I see reflected in this Parliament, but to accept fully the grave responsibility that we, as politicians, have been entrusted with by the people who voted for us. We should fully accept and recognize that responsibility.

One could not help but be concerned at the situation which has evolved at a political level in this State in recent times. I single out no particular party to apportion blame in that regard, but one would be foolish if one did not accept that the charges and counter-charges, the inquiries and the findings of inquiries, were not doing great harm to the Parliamentary system in this State. This is reflected in a general air of no confidence by the Victorian community.

One can say, without being too political in this speech, that one is concerned to read the editorial in the *Age* this morning, a paper which the Premier gave credit to yesterday for being a great paper. The editorial, in its final analysis, is calling for the resignation of a Minister in this State. This is indeed a serious time for us as politicians to pursue our duties, to see that we give proper leadership to the State of Victoria, and that we take a leadership role in bringing confidence back to the community and in bringing back a degree of respect to the community itself. If a community has not any respect

for its Parliamentary system, very soon that community has very little respect for itself.

I believe a politician, or a leader for that matter, who has no sense of history, does not have a great sense for what is happening today, or he cannot possibly understand what is likely to happen in the future. However, before going back into history and relying on it for lessons to be learned, perhaps I should deal more specifically with the electorate which I have the honour to represent. It is a diverse electorate which is different from most electorates. From one section of my electorate to another it is totally and entirely different. Recently I have been involved with a group of people who are endeavouring to have a community health centre established in Flemington. They have carried out research and have put submissions to the appropriate Minister to have this centre established.

One of their research documents is worth reading. It states that housing in the area of Flemington is generally poor, consisting largely of old dilapidated Victorian villas or high-rise Housing Commission accommodation. The document states that there are houses which are so dilapidated that they are dangerous or are inaccessible at the front entrance; they have collapsed stairs and verandahs. The elderly people in these houses usually have relatives or friends to deliver weekly food supplies by the rear entrance. Many of the elderly occupants never leave their flats or houses.

When one looks further into that area, one considers the medical facilities—there has been a lot said about doctors—and we see how doctors apply themselves to looking after the under-privileged people. According to the 1976 census there is one doctor for 5,272 people in Flemington, and no dentist. The people of Flemington share a dentist with the neighbouring area of Kensington, hence

there is one dentist for 16,263 people. When one quotes figures, one must quote comparisons.

In the same census, the figures reveal that for Doncaster-Templestowe, of which I was at one time the mayor, there is one doctor for every 888 people. However, in the poor and under-privileged area of my electorate, these great noble medical practitioners are represented at the rate of one for every 5,272 people. In the City of Doncaster and Templestowe there is a dentist for every 2,774 people, but in the poor and under-privileged areas of my electorate these professional people turn out at the rate of one dentist for 16,263 people.

As this is an Address-in-Reply debate, Mr. Speaker, I must look at the Governor's Speech. In the words that are placed in his mouth, and not of his mouth, he said—

In my last Speech to you, I pointed out that the Government intended to maintain its emphasis on improving the quality of life of all Victorians.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, what quality of life is there for the elderly people who are living in the circumstances that I have described in a part of my electorate? What quality of life is there for migrant people with a sick child at 2 a.m.? All honorable members felt compassion for a figure in this community whose mother died recently, but who feels compassion for the migrant people of my electorate who have little or no health facilities available for them during the day, let alone during the night?

The party which is wanting to develop a community health service went to the Government and said that there are salaried doctors who are willing to serve in this centre. We were told that this was not Government policy. Why must people, when they talk about the great free enterprise system, the right of the individual, adopt a policy of a closed shop and not allow

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salaried doctors in this centre? Of course the professionals will not come to this area.

This morning, when carrying out the responsibilities of my electorate, I visited the Dendy Park High School. I went through the old building with the principal and teachers, and I saw paint hanging from the roof in strips of about a foot to fifteen inches long. In the domestic science room I could see that water had run down the wall to the floor, and upstairs I could see where water had run out on the floor. I was told that there are children at the school who go to school without breakfast. In this greatly under-privileged school, which is recognized as such by the Government, where there should be a staff of 35.5, there are almost three fewer teachers than the number required. To cope with the situation because there are not enough teachers to teach all students, children must be sent home. I wonder where the quality of life is for those people?

The Government has stated that it will spend \$80,000 on the Dendy Park High School, but nobody can tell the school when that will occur. No contracts of any sort have been let. These are the difficulties that are faced by the people who live within a section of my electorate. During my visit to the school, I also inspected the new part of the building. It is a very good building and is a tribute to whoever provided the finance for it. In the building is a beautiful library, but of course it is a library without enough books; there is a limited number of books to service the numbers of boys and girls who attend the school. I do not know who did the contracting for this building, but whoever it was did not do a particularly good job, because when I went up the stairway I found the stairs weak and dangerous. I thought I was walking on a trampoline! The Public Works Department has inspected the school and said

that this should not have happened. I suppose when a boy or girl is hurt there will be an inquiry.

It is not only in the part of my electorate to which I have referred that people are concerned. In the Carlton area, which is totally different from the area about which I have spoken, the environment is threatened by the tragic Freeway F19, which starts seemingly nowhere, finishes somewhere and spills traffic out like porridge over a carpet without any co-ordination or planning and without any apparent concern for the environment of the people. The people who reside in the area have told me that the trucks start rumbling at 4 a.m. and finish at midnight. The people in North Fitzroy, when asked what the traffic noise was like said, "It is not bad. Most of us move back from the front room to the back of the house, and some are using ear muffs."

This is the quality of life people are so concerned about. Even in the more prosperous East Melbourne area of the electorate of Melbourne there are professional people whose problems are certainly not the same as those of people in Carlton, Kensington, North Melbourne and Flemington, but who nevertheless, fear they are threatened in one way or another. They wish to preserve the historical environment of that section of the city and are determined to keep out development and bulldozers. They want to preserve their environment but have not assurances of being able to do so. There is no protective legislation.

I learned as a union leader that it is a tragedy that rational approach to problems does not always achieve results. In the banking industry in 1974, when a logical and reasoned approach was put forward, no result was achieved, but once the workers were marshalled together at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl and 14,000 marched the streets of Melbourne we got results. Last year we could not get action from the Hamer Government and the banks on bank

security so we put 6,000 members in the Melbourne Town Hall and spilled them over to the City Square. On that occasion the crime prevention people got assistance through the Police Department and the best support they had ever received from the Government. The arguments had not altered—nothing had changed for the bank workers and nothing had changed in relation to proper security in banks, but when forcible action was taken, justice was received.

It is a pity that in a lot of cases in our society we have to rely on protest demands and demonstrations to get any form of justice. I said earlier that if we do not have a leader with a sense of history it is difficult for people to understand the present and take steps to safeguard the future.

An examination of the history of Melbourne emphasizes what a wonderful heritage we gained when Governor Bourke called for a master plan of this city and Hoddle set it out with wide streets and provision for parklands. When the goldfields ran out in about the 1870s and the speculators came back to Melbourne—I do not know whether there was a Housing Commission then—they went out into the community in land subdivisions and lobbied the politicians to develop a good transport system. By the end of the century Melbourne had one of the best tram systems of any country in the world, and from the point of view of individuals and industry itself, this city gained immensely.

The detailed planning and foresight of people in those days allowed Melbourne to become the hub of the State and make a contribution to a great country. One would have thought because of those benefits we would have been orientated to planning as a community but something went wrong somewhere along the line and we developed *laissez-faire* type of planning—planning by pressure or planning by demand. Who

are the few beneficiaries who obtain benefits from these circumstances? It is the developers and the speculators who push up the price and reap huge rewards to the detriment of the general community as a whole.

When I researched this speech and looked at all the books and read the speeches by the planners and technocrats, I discovered that there are millions of words on planning but little reference to the involvement of ordinary people in planning objectives. The system seems to be to draw up a plan in great secrecy—as the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Housing are doing at the moment—and detailed plans are presented by professionals and technocrats. Then the community is attacked with those plans. How silly it is.

One would have thought that if the Government had gone to the community, in the case of Freeway F19, stating that there was a problem associated with bringing commuter traffic from Doncaster and Templestowe to the city, and asked the community to contribute, we would not have had to desecrate the Yarra Valley, and the people would not have had to take to the streets to preserve the environment. It is logical and sensible that rather than allow an adverse situation to develop we should engage in consultative planning and involve ordinary people. I am not a planner and, unlike a number of other honorable members, I did not attend university. The things I have learned are basically common sense. It is the use of common sense and the way one sets objectives and pursues those objectives that is responsible for the difference between success and disastrous failure.

Not only should the physical aspects of planning and the necessity to involve people in it be considered, but there is also the important aspect of economic planning. There is no point in drawing up wonderful transport plans to achieve great things if

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we do not properly assess the consequences of those plans and consider what is required to implement them.

I do not intend to buy into the argument of the Melbourne underground rail loop. If I did so, Mr. Speaker, I would take so long that you would tell me that I had exceeded my time. Irrespective of the merits or demerits of the underground rail loop, there was not proper economic planning in relation to the cost involved in providing the underground facility for Melbourne. The resources readily available to the Minister to provide a proper public transport system have been drained. That is an example of failure to plan properly.

My examinations of the Coombs report revealed that it acknowledges the concern of governments, unions, administrators, and technical people regarding the necessity for proper economic planning to properly assess, from an economic point of view, what is practical and what is impractical. It is all right to be critical, and I guess we can all be critical as professionals, but success is to endeavour to be objective and to inspire people to some better way of doing things compared with what has been done in the past.

I recognize a number of problems in our present economic situation arising from not carrying out and carefully thinking through economic planning and planning of other matters, whether it be railways, transport or whatever. Planning in those areas has failed because of the over-involvement of the specialist and the insufficient involvement of the ordinary members of the community, the people who pay for the costly projects in which we are involved and who sometimes suffer the consequences. There is a co-ordinating committee in this State but it does not seem to achieve its objectives.

In matters of planning one person—perhaps the Minister for Planning or the Premier—should be responsible

for making various Ministerial statements. Shortly, two Ministers, the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Housing, will be making Ministerial statements to Parliament. Although there is some consultation, the very manner in which those plans are formulated means that there must inevitably be conflict. Would it not be more efficient and more effective if one person made Ministerial statements taking into consideration the economic and financial consequences of the action involved?

I reiterate that I accept my elected position with a natural feeling of pride and a mixed feeling of humility. Many outstanding people have represented the electorate of Melbourne. I refer, for example, to my friend and immediate predecessor, Barry Jones. He was a man of keen social awareness and a brilliant academic who made a great contribution to the electorate of Melbourne, and indeed to the State of Victoria. I am sure that everyone associated with the Federal Government knows he has arrived in Canberra.

I accept my responsibility and will draw on my own background, embracing not only the good upbringing I have received from my own family but my experience in life, whether in the infantry in the Australian Imperial Force, in my work for many years as a white-collar union leader, in my experience in local government and in a more conservative sense on the board of the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria council and as a bank manager.

My total concern in life is to see that this State and this country develop to their optimum capacity for the benefit of all our people. We have a wonderful country, rich in resources, with a good primary production industry and a work force that is hardworking and efficient.

Mr. LIEBERMAN (Benambra): I have pleasure on this occasion in reaffirming, on behalf of the people of Benambra, their loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen and to note on

the occasion of the Silver Jubilee Year the loyalty of country people, so evident in the acclaim they gave Her Majesty. I also wish to inform the Governor that he is highly regarded by the people of Victoria, particularly the people of Benambra. They wish him well. I should also like to congratulate the new member, the honorable member for Melbourne, for his maiden speech which I enjoyed. I am sure that he will make a significant contribution to this Parliament.

Mention was made in the Governor's Speech of the importance of recovering economically and of the positive factors that are emerging in Victoria and in Australia which indicate that we are at last turning the corner. In addition to noting the matters to which His Excellency, The Governor referred, there are many matters of concern which all of us must try to tackle positively. I refer specifically to the need to increase capital investment in Victoria and in Australia and also the need to attack positively the problem of unemployment, particularly youth unemployment.

It has been on my mind for some time that this House should give some thought to the problem of awards and wages in Australia and how they can best be reviewed. Whether as employers, public servants, or employees, it is about time that all Australians looked at the system of fixing wages and the relationship of the wages structure to productivity, to the benefits to employees in the expansion of the businesses in which they are involved. We must review policies and try to get out of what I regard as the mentality of the depression era. This can be detected throughout Australia in the thinking of many industrial leaders as well as that of union leaders, and in many, if not most, industrial awards. Australia must shake itself free of the Monday to Friday syndrome which pervades and holds back the development of Australia and diminishes the returns, not only to employers but also to