

This motion is unusual in its form, and arose from the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition in this House. It is presented to enable new members to make their maiden speeches on a debate as broad as the Address-in-Reply debate normally is.

On behalf of the Government I welcome new members of the two parties concerned. Every new member will have a contribution to make in his or her own way, and I am sure will add to the proceedings of this House. The motion is designed to ensure that new members recognize that the contributions they make will be assessed and replied to; in other words, the speeches will not be barren but will produce replies from the Ministers affected.

The Hon. W. A. LANDERYOU (Doutta Galla Province)—I am indeed encouraged by the last few words of the Leader of the House and I join with him in welcoming new members to this House. I look forward with great interest to the contributions from both sides of the House, and leave is granted with pleasure.

The sitting was suspended at 12.53 p.m. until 2.8 p.m.

The Hon. CLIVE BUBB (Ballarat Province)—Mr President, it gives me immense pleasure to be able to make my maiden speech on what is really for me a most auspicious occasion, and to express publicly to the electors of the Ballarat Province the deep sense of honour and privilege which I feel in being able to represent them.

As many honorable members will know, prior to my election to this House, I was involved in the field of industrial relations. It is an area of interest and concern to me and an area of interest and importance in terms of its effect on our economy. It is only fitting that I should speak on this subject.

This country has experienced too many strikes, particularly in essential services. The man in the street is sick and tired of militant union action. We have seen concerted action by unionists in key industrial areas aimed at bringing down the centralized wage fixing system. We have seen action by self-

interest groups which have the industrial muscle to take what they want. We have seen a total disregard for the welfare and well-being of this community. More importantly, we have seen a total disregard by certain unionists for their fellow workers. In many cases the work-mates receive only quarterly or half-yearly wage indexation movements through the same wage indexation system which these people are seeking to break down.

For more than 70 years, Australia has followed a centralized wage fixation system, which has served the Australian workers well. It has distributed wage increases on the broadest possible base. It has protected the needy and to some extent it has restrained the greedy. It is little wonder that certain elements within the trade union movement would like to see it thrown out. They obviously only care about themselves.

As a community we have a curious industrial logic. If everybody gets a rise, it is a rise that does not count. It is only the pay rise that nobody else gets that really counts.

This curious logic has reflected itself in ongoing claims and has become the source of the leapfrogging exercises that have plagued the system for years. I shall give an example. Victoria's railway workers are claiming equality of wage rates with their comrades in New South Wales. If granted, this will undoubtedly lead to a claim by the New South Wales railway workers for restoration of relativity, the basis of their claim simply being, "Our pay used to be \$10 ahead of that of the Victorian workers. They now get the same as we do. Therefore, we must be \$10 behind".

So long as this mentality prevails there is no hope of industrial sanity in this country. There will be no hope for industrial sanity so long as there are men who are prepared to push these and similar claims; so long as there are men who are prepared to push claims without regard for the interests of other sections of the community; so long as there are men who do not want industrial peace; and so long as there are men who want to use disputation in order to get their own way.

As an industrial practitioner, on many occasions union officials have said to me, "We will serve claims. You get the employer to make an offer." That is the way in which they see the game being played. In that situation "meaningful negotiation" obviously means concession by the employer, but I ask, "Why should an employer have to make an offer just because a claim has been made? Why should not the union be asked to justify its claim?"

The Telecom dispute has raised this fundamental question. Telecom's refusal to negotiate was referred to the Full Bench of the Australian Arbitration and Conciliation Commission. That is an example of how deeply this mentality is ingrained in the system. For 25 years we have operated on the basis that if one puts one's hand out, someone puts something in it. However, like all good things, I believe that system must come to an end.

As a community, we must recognize that we pay for increased wages. Obviously, we pay in one of two ways: We pay in the form of increased prices; or we pay in increased unemployment benefits. We just cannot ignore the inflationary effect of wage increases.

It is time that men of good will on all sides of the industrial relations triangle made greater efforts to improve relationships. It is time that an education programme was launched by governments and employers to show clearly the dramatic effects of continuing industrial disputation; to show the fine balance that exists in the current economic recovery; and to show the fine balance that exists in our ability to compete in export markets.

The future of this State and this country is far too important to be allowed to be sabotaged by a small, self-interested minority, a self-interested minority that looks only at next week's pay packet, a self-interested minority that includes people who do not have the interests of this country at heart, people who would wish to see a way of life in this country that is not really wanted by the great majority.

The Hon. Clive Bubb

The area of industrial relations is one in which I have been trained and it is an area of great concern to the average man in the street. The abuse of union power is one of the most talked-about subjects today. It is a subject that will involve governments more and more. It is particularly interesting to note that this Government has promised secret ballots on strike issues, a measure that clearly has the support of a broad cross-section of the community. The details of the proposal have not yet been announced, but a succession of trade union leaders has been saying that it will not work. It will not work because they will not let it work!

There is nothing more democratic than a secret ballot. There is no more basic civic liberty than the right to freedom of expression, free from coercion and intimidation. A similar issue caused a national stoppage less than a month ago and is now raising its head again.

These are just some of my concerns in this difficult and complex area of industrial relations—difficult and complex because it involves people. People are the key to the future industrial climate of this country. It is time for men of integrity and common sense to put themselves forward for office within their organizations. It is time for these men to exert their influence on their fellow men to join in a common goal of setting this country on the road to economic prosperity.

The Hon. E. H. WALKER (Melbourne Province)—Mr President, I begin by offering you my congratulations on your election to the presidency of the Legislative Council. I am sure you will maintain the traditions of fairness and impartiality so ably exhibited by your predecessor.

I point out that I believe history will offer you an unexpected and special niche. I predict that you will be the last member of the party to which you belong to hold that position. That comment is not meant in any way to reflect on your capacity or character—I merely refer to the likelihood that you will be replaced by a member from the Opposition side of the Chamber