

Mr. CATHIE (Carrum) : The Address-in-Reply debate gives honorable members the opportunity of ranging widely over the whole field of Government services and over the state of the economy. In the Government's programme much emphasis was placed upon the future of free enterprise, the private sector and the need for the private sector to grow and develop.

That is a naive view. It is certainly one that believes that the private sector alone can solve the economic ills of the Australian people. But such a view ignores too many factors. It ignores the whole factor of stagflation, that unusual but very difficult balance and combination of both inflation and unemployment, which bedevils nearly all Western economies at present. It certainly ignores the uncontrolled foreign investment of the past, the influx of this money, the consequent effects that this had on the economy and the present repatriation of profits abroad. It also certainly ignores such factors that bear upon the working people of this community that today it is almost impossible for a worker, with the present rates of interest, to purchase a home; that is gradually getting more and more out of his reach.

I might agree with this emphasis upon the Government and the Government's connection with private enterprise if it meant that the Governments of Australia—all Governments, State and Federal—would participate in stimulating productivity and certainly in entering into competition in vital economic areas, particularly those which deal with natural resources and the natural wealth of our nation. Instead of putting emphasis, as the Government's programme does, upon the private sector of the economy, I would rather emphasize the necessary expansion of public works to create employment opportunities for the people of Victoria at present.

Such avenues are not open to many people in the electorate that I represent. Certainly the recent closure of a meat processing factory in Chelsea has meant that one of the last few avenues of employment open to people who are living more and more in an area where they can only commute out of their dormitory suburb are being dried up. I know from the number of young people who have come to me for assistance in finding employment how difficult it is for them to obtain any decent job. The other day a young Australian boy who had matriculated came to me. He does not know whether he will obtain a Public Service job for which he has applied. Twelve positions are available and the number of applicants has been narrowed down to 120. He might be lucky; I do not know. However, it means that another 108 young Australians will not obtain that secure employment.

We ought to be talking about the need to expand the public sector of the economy, to expand public transport and schools, to build hospitals and to provide low-cost housing and housing particularly for disadvantaged people who have fallen upon unfortunate circumstances. I realize, however, that these areas are not profit making. Nevertheless, they are areas of the greatest benefit to the community as a whole.

In representing the people of Carrum, Edithvale, Chelsea, Seaford and Frankston North, I am particularly concerned about poverty and about obtaining assistance for disadvantaged areas in my electorate. Only recently Mr. John Dunstan, in a thesis at Monash University, attempted to provide some criteria by which he could define what makes an area disadvantaged as against areas that are not. In doing so, he attempted to put together what he called a pathology index. In it I noticed that the municipality of Chelsea figured high amongst the areas in the greatest need. Mr Dunstan examined 55 local government areas in and around Melbourne. The City of Chelsea rated thirteenth of the 55 in the order of greatest need. After Chelsea came such municipalities as Footscray, Williamstown, Dandenong, Preston, Sunshine, Broadmeadows and Northcote. The

specific details of the pathology index point up the average sorts of problems that concern people in the community. These are the things Mr. Dunstan put together under the heading of. Pathology Index: Severe delinquency; wards of the State; severe crime; poverty; notifiable disease; mental health; family breakdown; infant mortality; general mortality and suicide. It is obvious from that analysis that there is an urgent need in Chelsea for the Government to support the demand for a community health centre. An immediate grant of \$130,000 would mean that such a service could be provided to the people of Chelsea and would include, as they recommend in their own plans, staff for stage 1. Their recommendations are: An administrator; a secretary; a social Worker; three community health nurses; a youth counsellor; a cleaner and part-time honorary counsellors.

That is the type of service that is desperately required and it would be quite easy to find a suitable venue. The committee suggests a large house in the Chelsea-Bonbeach area which could be renovated and added to. Car parking facilities could be provided at the rear of the premises.

I am equally concerned with the educational problems facing our schools. It is now only two days to E day when parents and teachers throughout Australia who are concerned at proposed slashes in Canberra aimed against the educational objects of our communities will take up a large deputation to the capital city. There is a widespread fear, because this deputation has been organized by such bodies as the Australian Teaching Federation and the Australian Council of State School Organizations. The fear has been expressed by those who have been intimately involved in the schools of this nation that we may well lose out on the libraries, the science blocks and the upgrading of selected school buildings, the very programmes upon which important initiatives were taken by the Federal Government in the years between 1972 and 1975.

I have a particular interest in the area of remedial English because for about four or five years after I left another place I spent part of that time on a research through a Karmel committee funds grant for innovations, examining what could be done in the area of remedial English. I should like to quote from a report that was compiled as a result of testing the intake of students into form 1 at Seaford-Carrum High School. I do not believe there is anything particularly special about this school. The sort of measurement suggested in the report about what is going wrong with our educational programmes can be multiplied many times throughout the secondary schools of the State.

The results of this survey were based upon tests undertaken on the basis of work done by the Australian Council of Educational Research. These phonic tests attempt to measure two aspects: The general level of word knowledge and general skill in the plain sense of comprehension and ability of students to understand their own language. The second test was a test simply of vocabulary. The results of those tests at Seaford-Carrum High School, involving the 155 students in form I, which was the intake for this year, show that 55 children or 35 per cent of that intake are retarded in the skills tested and 31 students or 20 per cent are described by the result of that test as being functionally illiterate. That is, they are so retarded in the basic skills of their own programme and language that they would not be able to cope with the fixed courses, curricula or even the language of the teachers whom they are facing in the class-rooms.

There is a very grave area of need in the whole area of remedial education. I hope the recent report in the Age newspaper that remedial courses would be hit by new requirements of qualifications is not true because this is an area above all where immediate expansion is needed and where some provision needs to be made for the particular needs described by the results of

the tests that I have indicated, at the place where it would be most beneficial. That is in the individual school and in the individual class-room.

The things that matter to the people of Carrum cannot be carried out by the private sector of the economy: they are in the public sector. The people of Carrum want cheap and good housing, better schools, and more adequate hospital services to be made available as close as possible to them. They want a fast, efficient and cheap public transport system, and a cleaner and more satisfying environment. These are things that the people of Carrum deserve. They deserve better Government services than they are getting at present. I can only hope that by giving me the honour of representing them that I will at least be able to assist them to get a better deal.