

to my attention by the school committee. A widow with three children at high school earns \$2 a week in excess of the allowable income level and therefore does not qualify for the allowance. Because she earns a total of \$104 a year more than the allowable income, she will receive not one cent from the State but instead is deprived of allowances amounting to \$730. She would be \$620 better off if she did not work. Another widow has three children, two at high school and one at primary school. She cannot manage on the pension of approximately \$65 a week because her rent costs \$37 a week. She works full time and earns \$110 gross and thereby forfeits the pension. But she still does not qualify for assistance because she earns too much.

A man with seven children and earning \$117 gross a week does not qualify for assistance although a man with seven children and receiving unemployment benefits of \$117 a week would qualify. A man who, as a result of an accident, receives \$107 a week in workers compensation does not qualify for assistance although he would if he were receiving unemployment benefits.

This matter should be considered by the Minister of Education and the Government as a whole. Some assistance should be provided for these people. The Federal Government staggers eligibility for benefits from the maximum grant for those earning \$4,300 a year and smaller allowances for those earning more with the allowances cutting out when the income is \$6,000 a year. The all or nothing eligibility system of the State is unfair in many cases.

I am proud to represent the electorate of Geelong North in this new Parliament. I trust that during its life we can enact legislation which will benefit people in all walks of life in Victoria.

Mr. COX (Mitcham): Mr. Speaker, I begin by congratulating you on being re-elected to your office and wish you a further rewarding three years.

I take the place of the previous member for Mitcham, Mrs. Dorothy Goble, who served the electorate for three terms from the time the seat of Mitcham was created. Mrs. Goble served the electorate well and had many admirers, and during the March campaign I found many who regretted her decision to retire.

The boundaries of Mitcham electorate were previously wholly contained in the City of Nunawading, but since redistribution the boundaries incorporate a small section of the City of Ringwood and the Tunstall subdivision of the City of Doncaster. Cities in the eastern suburbs have grown rapidly since the early 1950s and services such as roads and sewerage lagged behind housing and require immediate and urgent attention. Education facilities have for many years been a prime concern but as communities develop and basic needs are met, other demands and higher standards put on the Government pressure which Governments of earlier days would not have contemplated.

The eastern suburbs of Melbourne form one of the most politically sensitive areas in Australia and despite much comment about commuters living in dormitory suburbs, Mitcham community participation is alive and well. I entered this Parliament to represent the people of Mitcham, small business people, manufacturers, the many community group and city councils which are committed to making Mitcham a progressive and sensitive place in which to live and where the policies outlined in the Governor's Speech are of concern.

The Governor referred to "a better way of life" and "higher living standards" by the use of the magnificent resources of Australia, especially human skills. I believe at present there is an imbalance of attitudes to employment.

My previous occupations gave me the opportunity to observe industry over some years. Many parents have

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not wanted to accept that all children are not high academic achievers, and pride and respect for those whose skill is with their hands can be unfashionable. For this and other reasons we suffer a shortage of people in necessary trades and in trades of precision and high skill.

I should like to see the various industries and commissions and the Minister attempt to make the application of physical skills more attractive and available as a fruitful, rewarding alternative to being academic dropouts who become frustrated and have no real course to follow. I direct attention to an article in the *Nunawading Gazette* of 26th May under the heading, "Apprentice policy is slated". The article states—

A prominent Box Hill educationist last week called for a new deal in the apprenticeship system.

Box Hill Technical College vice-principal (technical), Mr. Norman Ohlhoff, charged the Federal and State Governments and industry with neglecting the vital apprenticeship requirements.

Mr. Ohlhoff went on to say that he firmly believed that—

our economic salvation lies in developing our technological know-how and that means nurturing, guiding and promoting our youth, beginning with the apprentice who is the backbone of industry.

But the apprentice, he held, had been ignored both by the industry and the government.

The article continued—

Mr. Ohlhoff said that if the country was to gain the full benefit of the apprenticeship system the apprentices would have to be helped acquire not only further skills in their respective trades but also in communication and management.

Mr. Ohlhoff said he saw no reason why the Government should not extend financial benefits to students at technical colleges that are now available to university students.

Following on this theme of education, the appointment of a second Minister to cover the area of special education is to be applauded. In past times, handicapped children have been seen to be different from others but, with the Education Department becoming more involved in this field, they should not be seen as special

children, with special schools, and with special administrators, but as part of an extension of the Education Department with teachers proficient and understanding who will work in the local community—ultimately possibly attached to the local primary school—so that those people handicapped will identify with ordinary people. They should not be seen as special but to be totally assimilated as ordinary members of our community. The other week in my electorate I attended the opening of the charity quest conducted by the Nunawading and District Retarded and Spastic Children's Association, the first prize being a new car donated by a local dealer. A similar quest last year raised \$34,000.

Many service clubs and other bodies have been working vigorously over a sustained period to establish a training workshop for handicapped people who are no longer children and need to be equipped with some skills so that they can join the work force. At present 25 persons are being trained in temporary facilities, but now, with a grant of \$144,000 from the Federal Government and fund raising, a property with a building of 33,000 square feet of floor space has been bought for \$200,000. I should like to stress that it is to be a training facility, and not a sheltered workshop, where the handicapped will remain. They will move on once they are proficient.

A magnificent effort by a group of self-starters will enable the facility to expand its scope to have 80 people in training by July and ultimately 150 to 200 when fully operative. Vacancies exist at the moment for handicapped people and I believe Government departments and industry can play their part by assisting with employment after training. The community at large has a concern for them, but more specifically Government departments, industry and commerce, could employ many

more trained handicapped people if the employers gave sympathetic consideration.

Transport is a problem for people in wheel chairs, and I submit the possibility, at the design and building stage of new rail carriages, of a mechanism being installed to operate a small ramp on at least one door of each carriage. To cite an instance, I know a quadraplegic who made his way by public transport from Warracknabeal to Heidelberg and then into the Melbourne Town Hall for a service club meeting. On reaching the Melbourne Town Hall, he found that he could not get inside because of the front steps. I suggest that the Public Works Department should consider the installation of ramps, which could be carried out quite inexpensively, in existing public buildings, and provide for this facility at the design stage of proposed new public buildings. Similar action should be taken concerning other buildings used by the public.

In his Speech, the Governor also referred to the proposed new Victorian Health Commission to bring together the various departments and to give priority to the development of geriatric centres and nursing homes. When I was a councillor, I considered that the Department of Health needed a change to cope with the needs of a modern society, and I support the Minister with enthusiasm. On the need for geriatric centres, a constituent has written to me, stating, *inter alia*—

I would be grateful if you would be able to give me your help in some way. My father who is a widower lived on his own. He had a bad fall over the Easter break and the result of this has been that I have had to take him in with me at my home.

I have been on my own since late March, as my wife is overseas and will not be home until the end of May. I am finding this too much for me to cope with, as of course I am working during the day.

The main trouble with my father is that he has Parkinson's disease in his legs, and although he has walking aids he needs to

Mr. Cox.

be helped in walking. He has fallen down in my home more than once and just has to stay there until someone comes and helps him up. Also he has very little control over his toilet habits and we have trouble every day with this and during the night.

This instances the need for more geriatric centres, and I strongly urge that one be developed in the eastern suburbs as soon as possible.

Nunawading City Council was one of the early councils to have a social welfare department and a qualified social worker. With the complexity of departments, it is obvious that today services should be available conveniently at local level.

The State Government is regionalizing, and I should like to see the fullest co-operation at inter-departmental and Ministerial level so that all State Government services can be consolidated on a regional basis in one regional complex—a complex that will be an adjunct to municipal facilities and within easy referral distance, particularly for old people or women with young families so that they do not have to face up to a trip to the city, which under some circumstances can be an ordeal. By localizing a complex of services, the dispensers of that service take on a new mantle and are seen to be part of the community.

The needs of the aged and frail aged is a mounting problem, and the proposed geriatric hospital and hostel in Nunawading is only part of what the community will require. Many families are genuinely distressed by having to cope with an elderly dependent relative in a home not capable of servicing all requirements, and this causes enormous social stress to every member of that family. But this does not mean we should neglect services that will keep elderly people in their own homes.

Family and social stress is also caused by alcohol, and many millions of working hours are lost through this disease. There appears to be a definite need at local level for families to discuss this problem

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as a preventive measure before a person becomes a confirmed alcoholic.

A facility which is taken for granted in community life is library services. There is a continual need to create awareness in the whole community of the usefulness, stimulation and pleasure that a library service can provide. A modern library service is used by people in different ways at different times of their lives. Difficulty in reading at all ages can cause personal frustrations and isolation because people have difficulty in expressing themselves. They are frustrated in developing their interests, of changing their lives, and are grossly disadvantaged in an age when communication is vital to existence.

A library is a community focal point, not only for readers, but also for music, maps, displays of hobbies, historical matter, handcrafts and many other community activities. In practical terms, there should be for everyone a library nearby where reassurance and guidance is freely available, and where information of all kinds can be produced.

No age group, occupational or national groups, housebound people, or people with young children should be discriminated against in their access to this vital community resource. In Hobart, which I visited recently, the city library has extended its services to include talking books so that people who cannot read for various reasons have available to them books on tape to help them to a fuller life.

Women's organizations have become more influential in recent times to focus attention on anomalies and unfair discrimination. In my electorate a Women's Advisory Council has grown from an International Women's Year seminar, and I intend to assist them in removing valid areas of injustice and discrimination against the women of the community.

Town planning, planning schemes and conservation go hand in hand and are vital for orderly State development and to set standards that will endure and not be only of immediate convenience. It is much harder to resist pressure for immediate expansion rather than give way to well-organized pressure that in the long term will disadvantage the community at large. As community standards rise, planning of other days is no longer acceptable. Organized town planning may be seen by the individual as an intrusion on his personal rights, but we must recognize our responsible role for the future and for those who come after us.

I look forward to the new federalism policy and the operation of the proposed State grants commission, which I hope will give financial relief to local government and ratepayers, pinpoint areas of deprivation and assist accordingly.

Also, briefly, I should like youth and family recreation facilities to be expanded—particularly cycle paths, not only for recreation but also for practical transport—promoted jointly by local government and the State Government and its authorities.

I should like more low-rental flats to be provided for the elderly, through local government and Housing Commission agreements, where councils supply the land and the commission constructs the units in surroundings conducive to quiet living.

The Labor Party traditionally has seen social welfare and organized labour as part of its domain. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that I have come to this House to talk and act on issues that affect people; to be a constant reminder to the House that we are a Government for people. People at all levels of the social and employment strata—the needy, the wealthy, the poor, the deviants and the misfits—are all entitled to be represented and to be helped if need be.

Many people who do not want to be involved trust that we, as members, will guide the State for them. Some years ago, through necessity, I was a member of the Furniture Trades Society. Today I still have no objection to responsible organized labour, but I sometimes despair at the brinkmanship engaged in by union leaders, and employers, and the many thousands of dollars lost by hard-nose negotiators who will not compromise or progress by lesser degrees.

I also represent thousands of commuters who travel to the city each day. It is predicted that there will be a considerable return to rail transport. We must prepare for this by improving present services to encourage their use and to cope with public needs.

I shall conclude, Mr. Speaker, by expressing my thanks: To the Opposition for the courtesy of silence which they have extended to me; to my new colleagues who have already contributed to the debates in this Chamber; and for the welcome that I have received from the House staff and the other established members.

I am aware that each member has electorate priorities and difficulties and I hope that by constructive compromise we can all contribute to the welfare and advancement of the State and community at large.

The State will always be faced with serious and compelling problems and the Parliament should sift out important demanding issues and not be pre-occupied with trivia which have no lasting concern.

I will endeavour to become a more effective representative for the electorate of Mitcham, to contribute to constructive government by being involved in committee work and debate, by listening to debate—from both sides of the House—to keep Victoria the most progressive State in Australia.

Mr. Cox.

Mr. WILTON (Broadmeadows): I join with other honorable members in congratulating those members who have made their initial contribution to the debates of this Parliament. However, I should like to make one point, as one who has keenly supported the long-standing principle set out in the Standing Orders of this Parliament, regarding honorable members reading their speeches. This has never been accepted in this Parliament. Although I do not want to embarrass any honorable member, I make the point that I hope those honorable members clearly understand that the generosity which has been extended to them when they have had to go through this rather difficult period of making their initial contribution and they read their speeches is not a practice which is normally accepted in the House.

I should like to advert to your predecessor, Mr. Speaker, who quite frequently stated that in that type of situation—reading of speeches—we would be debating by proxy, and that would be to the detriment of the debating standard within this Parliament.

I wish to point out to the House that I could not find any reference in the Speech of His Excellency to what the Government is proposing in the area of law reform, particularly in relation to bail.

The Statute Law Revision Committee brought down a report on this topic which was ordered by this House to be printed on 11th March, 1975. That report contains some positive recommendations concerning reform which should occur in relation to bail. Under the heading of "Recommendations" on page 14, the Statute Law Revision Committee recommended—

That the whole concept of bail and its application be recast so as to ensure that an accused person is prima facie entitled to be released unless evidence supports the refusal of bail.

As all honorable members would appreciate, the important point is that at that point an accused person

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