

I want to refer now to a matter which is important to those of us who believe in democratic institutions in Victoria. If our democracy is to survive we must preserve those democratic institutions that are in existence.

The Hon. G. L. CHANDLER.—Does Mr. Kent believe in the Upper House?

The Hon. D. E. KENT.—I do not, but we have to use the forms of society in which we live to the best advantage to make our society more democratic. That is why we need a franchise which recognizes the equal merit of every citizen, irrespective of whether he lives at Walpeup or Buchan South.

Electors in some areas are regarded as having only half the worth of electors in other areas. This is an offence against human dignity. The only real differences I can discern between people is in their character and in my opinion, one of the most important characteristics for a person to possess is love of democracy and the rights which one extends to one's fellow man.

Acting under the guiding hand of the Government, His Excellency stated some views on the right to express different opinions and the responsibility of the Government to protect the citizens of the State. It is significant that these two matters should have been linked. The greatest danger to the citizens of the State does not come from those who dissent from Government decisions and who want to show their dissent by getting together and demonstrating in the streets, as the farmers did eighteen months ago when they caused a great degree of inconvenience to the people of the city. I do not hold that against them because they were making a genuine, if misguided, attempt to put their case to the people of the city. They should have put their case to the responsible authorities in the Government in Canberra.

I strongly support the principle that citizens of the State are entitled to protection at all times, and not particularly or specifically at times of demonstrations. Anything which can be done to improve the efficiency of the Victoria Police Force in preventing crime rather than allowing circumstances to develop in which crimes occur—and then considering that a great job is done by a high detection rate—will effect a considerable saving in costs to the Government and the community. Citizens should be protected from the fear of violence in their homes and in the streets.

It is unfortunate that the need for law and order has been equated by some people with suppression of the legitimate aspirations of many people, some of them young and some more mature, who believe that, basically, the economic and social system under which we live still supports many fundamental injustices. These people feel that one of the ways in which they can express their frustrations and dissent is by making their presence felt in the streets amongst the citizens of the community. That is much less violent than many of the methods which our society has used in the past to grind people into subjection and to suppress the right of free speech.

I thank honorable members for the generous manner in which they have listened to my address. I assure you, Mr. President, and all honorable members, that I shall do all in my power to serve the interests of the electors of the Gippsland Province and of Victoria for the betterment of this State and for the advancement of the Australian nation.

The Hon. R. J. EDDY (Doutta Galla Province).—It gives me great pleasure to associate myself with the remarks which have been reiterated in this Chamber by the various speakers who have contributed to this debate on the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor. I take the opportunity of

voicing my congratulations to and praise of His Excellency for the way in which he presented his Speech to members of both Houses of Parliament in this Chamber on the 31st August this year.

I intend to relate most of my remarks to the Doutta Galla Province. I ask honorable members to excuse me if I cover many matters which have already been dealt with by previous speakers. In his opening remarks, His Excellency stated that, during this session, measures of importance to the State and to the well-being of the people would be submitted to Parliament. No measure of importance to the well-being of the State has been brought before the House up till now and I shall be surprised if any of the measures which are still to be brought before the House are for the good of the State.

His Excellency also said that action would be taken to prevent and control pollution. Honorable members have heard much about pollution in this Chamber. The Minister of Public Works has made statements in this House and to the press concerning the Government's intention to provide higher penalties for pollution offences, but nothing has been heard about these penalties being applied. A firm situated in the province of Doutta Galla, Nonferral Pty. Ltd., is causing a great deal of pollution in the Thomastown and North Reservoir areas to the annoyance of local residents. People have had to leave their homes because of the fumes emanating from the premises of this firm. The company has been taken to court by municipal health inspectors on three occasions, but the penalties imposed on it are so small that the management only laughs and fumes continue to come from its premises.

The Hon. W. M. CAMPBELL.—Is that the fault of the Government?

The Hon. R. J. EDDY.—Of course it is the fault of the Government. Only the penalties laid down by law can be imposed on the company. For twelve

months the Labor Party has been trying to have the penalties increased, but they are still too low.

There has not been a great deal of activity within the Ministry of Social Welfare, particularly towards helping local government authorities to provide welfare services. I hate having to remind the Government of the lack of subsidies for municipalities to provide social services. I have mentioned this matter before and shall continue to do so until something is done. In my maiden speech in this Chamber, I referred to the costs which municipalities must bear to provide welfare services and the inadequacy of Government subsidization. The then Minister for Local Government promised that the subsidies would be examined with a view to improving the position. That was more than twelve months ago, and nothing has been done. The Government pays a \$2 for \$1 subsidy to municipalities for infant welfare centres, but puts a ceiling of \$6,000 on the subsidy it will pay. The result is that the local municipality must find \$10,000 while the State provides only \$6,000 for a project which costs \$16,000. This has been the situation since 1958 and there has been no increase in the subsidy since then. The least the Government should do is to contribute to the costs of infant welfare centres up to the sum of \$10,000.

The present subsidy for an infant welfare sister is \$1,900 a year. Until recently, the salary of a fourth year nursing sister was \$4,017 a year. I understand that recently these sisters received an increase in salary, and now their salary will be much more than \$4,017. However, the subsidy has not been increased in line with the increase in the salary. The Government should consider providing a subsidy related to the salaries of infant welfare sisters.

In the area which I represent, one of the municipalities has home help workers who traverse its district caring for the aged and the sick and

helping young mothers. The Government provides a subsidy for the wages of these women based on a maximum salary of \$24 a week. The subsidy which was set in 1961 has not been increased since. The salary of a full-time home help worker in the municipality is \$60 a week, but the Government subsidy is only four-fifths of the ceiling wage of \$24. This assistance is insufficient for local municipalities and I strongly urge the Minister to further examine the subsidy for home-help services with a view to increasing this form of help. It should be the Government's responsibility to provide this kind of service throughout the municipalities of this city.

In referring to housing, I shall speak mainly on housing requirements for people on lower incomes, especially pensioners. This problem has been thrown back into the lap of local government because the Housing Commission does not provide sufficient low rental units for pensioners. The commission asks councils to provide the land on which it will build low rental units for eligible people who reside in the particular municipality. However, not sufficient low rental units are being constructed to house people, particularly elderly citizens, who are forced to abandon their homes because of freeway construction or road widening projects, such as those now taking place in the municipality of which I am a councillor. For these reasons, the Housing Commission and the Government should make an endeavour to ensure that a sufficient number of low rental units are provided for elderly citizens.

Health services have been mentioned on a number of occasions and, again, I point out that insufficient hospital beds are available to meet the demand. The Government has not progressed with the times. Today municipalities in the outer areas of Melbourne are developing rapidly, but all the main hospitals

The Hon. R. J. Eddy.

are situated within the Golden Mile of Melbourne. The Government has made no provision for hospitals to be constructed in the northern suburbs. Large housing estates are developing in the areas of Craigieburn and Campbellfield, but the hospital nearest to people living in these areas is the Essendon and District Memorial Hospital, which is a maternity hospital. Other patients must be brought to hospitals in the city. If they are in a serious condition it is possible that they may pass away on their journey to the hospital. I suppose the same could be said for those people who live in your area, Mr. President, although the Box Hill and District Hospital is reasonably close.

The PRESIDENT (the Hon R. W. Garrett).—The Preston and Northcote Community Hospital is much closer to the people mentioned by Mr. Eddy.

The Hon. R. J. EDDY.—That hospital is a long way from Craigieburn and Campbellfield.

The PRESIDENT.—It is closer than the city.

The Hon. R. J. EDDY.—That is so. I now wish to advert to education, which is of great concern to all honorable members. Last night Mr. Elliot informed the House of the education situation in the Melbourne Province. Being the president of a high school advisory council in my province, and president of a primary school committee, I take a great interest in education. I shall refer to certain schools in my province which have been mentioned in a recent report published by the Victorian Teachers Union. This report states that the State will need to spend \$130 million during the next five years to overcome the problems of education in Victoria. However, the report refers only to schools in the inner municipalities of Melbourne. No doubt many schools located farther out from Melbourne require just as much attention as schools in the inner suburbs.