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Mr. OLD (Minister of Water Supply).  
—(By leave.)—I move—

That leave of absence for the session, on account of duty with the Military Forces, be granted to George Hamilton Lamb, Esquire, the honorable member for Lowan.

The motion was agreed to.

PUBLIC TRUSTEE BILL.

Mr. BAILEY (Attorney-General).—

In accordance with the usual practice, and in order to preserve the privileges of this House, I move for leave to bring in a Bill to amend section 11 of the Public Trustee Act 1939.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

The SPEAKER (the Hon. W. Slater).  
—I have to report that the House this day attended His Excellency the Governor, in the Legislative Council Chamber, when His Excellency was pleased to make a Speech to both Houses of Parliament, of which, for greater accuracy, I have obtained a copy. As the Speech is printed, and copies are in the hands of honorable members, it will not be necessary for me to read it.

Mr. FULTON (Gippsland North).—  
I move—

That the following Address, in reply to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor to both Houses of Parliament, be agreed to by this House:—

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

We, the Legislative Assembly of Victoria, in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the gracious Speech which you have been pleased to address to Parliament.

I am conscious of the honour that has been conferred on me, firstly, by the electors of Gippsland North, and, secondly, by the Government allowing me the privilege of submitting this motion. I am also conscious of my responsibility to do justice to such an important and comprehensive speech as that delivered by His Excellency the Governor. At the outset, I desire to pay a tribute to the Government and the Premier, and I congratulate them on their legislative and administrative record, extending over a

period of seven years. This indicates that in the legislation the Government has introduced it has been able to anticipate the will of the people. That could not have been achieved if support had not been forthcoming from other sources, and doubtless that support has been appreciated by the Government. As a result, in the past seven years there has been good stable government in Victoria, and all sections of the community have benefited thereby.

Mr. CAIN.—The Government has been assisted with a little advice as well as support from the Labour party.

Mr. FULTON.—The Government can look with pride at its achievements during the time it has been in office, and I think the Government is entitled to receive the credit that is its due for what has been done. In the first place, I shall refer to one important achievement of the Dunstan Government, namely, the establishment of motor works at Fisherman's Bend, which has been followed by the erection of a number of allied industries, including the works of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation. Those activities greatly assisted in the provision of both skilled and unskilled work when most needed in engineering and associated industries. The organization of industry at Fisherman's Bend has contributed largely to the war effort. The plant, the staff, and scientifically and technically trained personnel engaged, have made a contribution to the Commonwealth war effort that cannot be computed in pounds, shillings, and pence. The far-sighted policy adopted by the Government in that direction should earn the commendation, not only of the people of Victoria, but also of the people of the Commonwealth, because we all know that it is not possible to establish large industries and provide the necessary staffs and trained personnel at a moment's notice.

I compliment the Government on the establishment of the paper pulp mills at Maryvale, in Gippsland. It stands as a monument to the Government's foresight, and, in particular, to the unceasing efforts of the Minister of Forests, who played an important part in encouraging the establishment of that industry in its early stages. There are in that district two flourishing towns, second to none in the

State—they are not in my electorate—and they illustrate the benefits that can follow the establishment of industries in country centres. In the Governor's Speech it has been revealed that the Government has been very helpful to the Commonwealth in its war effort. That is as it should be, and I urge still greater efforts in that direction by co-operating with the Commonwealth Government in a 100 per cent. war effort.

No man conscious of the situation that exists to-day, not only in Australia but throughout the world, can but feel concerned for the safety of the people of the Commonwealth. The Government is to be congratulated for what it has done towards safeguarding the civilian population, particularly the aged and infirm, and the women and children, who are our greatest care. It took a step in the right direction by bringing back from England Sir Louis Bussau, whose knowledge of what happened throughout the blitz period in London must be of great value in connection with air raid precautions and allied services in Victoria. We all know that it is not within the sphere of the State Government to have anything to do with military matters, but the protection of the civil population is its particular care.

I have given a brief review of the past activities of the Dunstan Government, referring particularly to the things that count in adding the sum total of what the Government has done. The past is not so much with us to-day; we have to think of the future; but it is the work that has been done in the past that will assist in determining the future. I think we can look with confidence to a progressive and stable period in Victoria under the present Government, even in these anxious days. Much work to further develop the State must be undertaken. In my own electorate I trust that the Government will pay due regard to the requirements of those I represent. Irrigation extensions and new irrigation works are essential, in addition to the provision of water in ample quantities where irrigation is not possible. That could be attained by the institution of a system of boring plants in country districts to tap the artesian storages and provide the water that is so necessary in some parts of the State for stock and domestic purposes,

Mr. Fulton.

particularly when settlers experienced dry periods such as have occurred in recent years.

I consider that the supply of electricity to country areas should be undertaken with the least possible delay, for the benefit of primary producers generally. I want to see electric power and light available on as many farms as possible throughout Victoria. An endeavour should be made to have electricity available before the return from active service of those who are performing military duties in answer to their country's call. Country women, too, are entitled to the same comforts and amenities of life as their sisters enjoy in more favoured localities. In addition, charges for the supply of electric power and light in country areas should be more comparable with those in the larger towns and cities.

It is generally recognized that it is not in the best interests of the children of the State that they should have to travel perhaps 30 or 40 miles daily by bus, and then 8 to 10 miles on bicycles or on horses, to receive the higher education that is their due. There must be more high schools, higher elementary, and technical schools in country districts. In my own electorate some children have to travel long distances to attend the high or technical schools that have been provided. The people I represent are fully aware that the provision of additional educational facilities is not possible during the war period, but we do want to see a ground plan laid and a comprehensive policy adopted to be put into operation as soon as the war is over. There is much to be done in the direction of post-war reconstruction. I, for one, do not wish to witness a repetition of the tragedy that occurred in Victoria after the Great War in the repatriation of members of our fighting services. I do not want to see the same blunders made in land settlement schemes as were made previously. In any reconstruction or repatriation plans, our task is to provide a permanent place in our civil life for the men of the fighting and allied services, particularly those in the fighting services who have done so much for Australia, and who will continue to do much for the people of this great Commonwealth until the war has reached a successful conclusion. A policy of decentralization will be necessary in

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any reconstruction plan adopted. It should embrace the whole State, and be of benefit to men who are to be repatriated from the Services after the war.

His Excellency mentioned in his Speech that a joint committee had been set up to investigate the possibility of placing industries in country centres. I trust that that committee will not act in the same way as the body that was appointed to deal with the production of power alcohol. If it does, then I say "God help us!" Power-alcohol production has been discussed since the outbreak of war, and I do not know if the committee is any further ahead now than it was when it was appointed. Industries should be spread throughout the length and breadth of the country, and although it may be put off now, sooner or later the problem must be tackled. Unless this or some other Government adopts a statesmanlike attitude on this subject, little will be achieved. The only way in which a State or a country can become great is by vigorous men and women doing work necessary for the welfare and development of the State. It is useless to continue a borrowing policy—to dig holes and fill them, or to shift sand from one side of the road to another—and for ever afterwards pay interest on the money borrowed. That will get the State nowhere. I believe we must encourage the settlement of many more millions of people within the borders of the Commonwealth. That settlement should not be confined to one or two large cities in each State, but should be spread throughout the country, to make the Commonwealth what we desire it to be.

I feel certain that the majority of the citizens of this State desire work, not charity. We should be ashamed of what was permitted to occur in the past, when many people were paid a miserable dole and were not given work of a national character. We are now feeling the effects of that policy and it has hampered the defence of this country. As an example, I mention the need for a uniform railway gauge throughout Australia. There are many other things of the same kind, but such a state of affairs should not be tolerated in the future.

I feel it imperative that I should mention the important question of uniform taxation throughout Australia. I submit

that if it is necessary in the interests of Australia to abolish State Parliaments, it should be done in a proper and constitutional manner. Hastily devised and ill-conceived legislation is not in the best interests of any country. We have seen the results of such legislation in the past, and if similar legislation is placed on the statute-book in the future, the people will rue the day. Many advocate a dictatorship, but when we remember the misery and bloodshed that are rampant throughout the world to-day, we must think very seriously before doing anything to lead the people to believe in a dictatorship. The misery which is abounding at present has been brought about by two dictators, and it behoves us to do all that lies in our power to impress on people the need to retain their confidence in our parliamentary institutions. With all their faults, I feel that our present forms of Government in Australia and our democratic ways of life are much to be preferred to any dictatorship.

His Excellency referred to the social work that has been carried out by the Government. Such work should be on safe and sound lines, and although much more needs to be done in that direction, the Government is to be congratulated on its efforts. The housing scheme that it introduced has been an outstanding contribution to the social welfare of the State. It is pleasing to note that the Government has signified its intention to refrain from introducing contentious legislation this session. I presume that is because of the gravity of the present war situation. The people of the State, I think, will fully support the Government in its desire to further our war effort. We should forget all sectional and personal ideas; our one aim should be to achieve unity so that the war may be won as speedily as possible. If we are not successful in winning the war, any social order advocated by any political party will count as nothing. We should have the one idea—to win the war, even though it may mean the sacrifice of personal gain or advantage. I know that the members of my party heartily concur in that view.

I express my gratitude to the Governor and to the Government for the kindly references of sympathy by His Excellency to the relatives and friends of those men and women who have made the supreme

sacrifice in the war, and to those suffering through their service in the defence of this land. I wish to add my personal tribute to them.

Mr. GUYE (*Polwarth*).—In seconding the motion, I wish in the first place to congratulate the honorable member for Gippsland North on his excellent speech, and, secondly, on his success at the recent by-election. I also desire to express my appreciation of this opportunity to associate myself with this loyal resolution at a time when, I know, we will all agree that our Empire is passing through one of its greatest crises. His Excellency the Governor referred to the great changes that have occurred since Parliament last met. When we look back, we realize that those changes are startling. In the interim, we have witnessed the tragedy of Singapore and of Rabaul. We know that hundreds of our fellow citizens have been bombed to death in Darwin, and that Sydney has been shelled—fortunately, without great effect. I believe honorable members would wish me to say with all reverence that we should thank God that so far this State has escaped unscathed. His Excellency referred to the fact that two members of this House on active service are missing, and are believed to be prisoners of war, and he expressed the fervent hope that more reassuring news concerning them would come to hand later. In that hope we all concur.

I now wish to mention another change which has occurred since we met last. The honorable member for Ballarat and the honorable member for Dandenong have put first things first, and have put on the uniform of the Royal Australian Air Force. Naturally, I hope the best of good luck will be their marching companion on whatever road may lie ahead of them. In view of the general war situation, I consider the most important statement in His Excellency's Speech to be—

Matters relating to the prosecution of the war will be given precedence, and the fullest co-operation with the Commonwealth Government on questions relating to the defence of Australia and of the Empire will be maintained.

Because the war has actually come to our shores, there has of necessity been an increase in air raid precautions. I am pleased to know that the Government has built on the foundations that were well

and truly laid by the State Emergency Council, under the chairmanship of Sir John Harris, to cope with any emergency that may now arise. Speaking as a district warden, I know how effective the work has been. My area is an evacuation area. It is easy to say that a certain district shall be an evacuation area, and that the people must go 150 miles inland. However, when we come to arrange and organize the evacuation, the difficulties are appreciated. In the particular area with which I am concerned all plans have been completed. We have even made arrangements with the military authorities regarding the roads to be used for civilian traffic as against military needs. I wish to pay a tribute to the men and women in the country—I do not differentiate between those living in cities and towns—for the work they are doing in a national capacity. In my home town of Winchelsea a flax mill now operates, and after the men employed there have completed their shifts it is common for them to spend up to six hours at night at their A.R.P. posts. Such action is highly commendable.

His Excellency announced that it was the intention of the Government to increase the acreage for the growing of potatoes during the coming year. I saw a paragraph in the press announcing that the Minister of Agriculture intended to organize and supervise that campaign. I assure the honorable gentleman that when he comes into my electorate—it is a potato-growing district—he will be favourably received.

Mr. CAIN.—How have the people in your area treated the suggested guaranteed price for potatoes?

Mr. GUYE.—I shall refer to that aspect later. During last session I asked the Minister of Agriculture for his assistance regarding the actions of an agent in the district who was purchasing potato seed from growers. I have since ascertained that this man bought several hundred tons at £3 a ton. I contended at the time that he should have paid £5 a ton.

Mr. CAIN.—That agent will sell the seed back to those farmers now at £10 a ton!

Mr. GUYE.—Through action taken by the Department, under the instructions of the Minister of Agriculture, each grower concerned received an extra £2 a

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