

The Hon. R. I. KNOWLES (Ballarat Province): When Mr. Reid made his maiden speech he suggested that he was a very patient man, bearing in mind the time which had elapsed since his election as a member of this Chamber until he made his maiden speech. If that is accepted, I believe I have already established that I am the most patient of all new members.

Mr. President, I commence by joining other members in extending to you my congratulations on attaining the high office of President. It is already clear that you will continue with the best traditions that were set by your predecessors.

It is my privilege to be a member of this Chamber as a representative of the Ballarat Province. It covers a large area, extending from Beaufort in the north to Colac, Lorne in the south-west; around the coast to Barwon Heads in the south-east; skirting the urban area of Geelong to Port Phillip Bay and encompassing Lara, Bacchus Marsh, Ballan and Creswick. It takes its name from the historical and beautiful city of Ballarat.

In my view Ballarat has wisely maintained the best of the past, but this has not detracted from its growth as a commercial and industrial centre - quite the contrary. Ballarat, with its beauty, culture and stability recognizes and values its traditions and thus provides the security necessary for new development.

Last week marked the 121st anniversary of the establishment of this House and this week celebrates the 122nd anniversary of the Eureka uprising. The event probably represents one of the most significant occasions in this State's and indeed in this nation's political development. From this beginning Ballarat has continued to make a vital contribution to the political life of this country. Honorable members will be aware of the many political moves that have originated in Ballarat as well as the prominent men on all sides of politics who have emanated from that city. Indeed, the Chief Secretary may suggest that the troglodyte movement originated in Ballarat as he is the self-proclaimed leader.

In the last Parliament, both the Leader and the Deputy Leader of the Government in this Chamber were representatives of the Ballarat Province. Against this background, I trust that my trepidation in entering this House will be clearly understood. My honour on entering this Chamber is enhanced by succeeding the Honorable Murray Byrne as the representative. He is a man well known to honorable members and there is little need for me to list his attributes of seemingly unending energy, enthusiasm and total dedication to the causes in which he believed. In my view his greatest achievement was to restore country Victoria's confidence in its own ability to develop. Until the late 1960s, decentralization had become a much over-used word by exponents of all political points of view. It is not without coincidence that the present Leader of the Government in this House, the Chief Secretary, was the first Minister for State Development to establish a separate Department of State Development and he commenced work on what is now the legendary ten-point plan.

The Honorable Murray Byrne, on assuming responsibility for this department, continued and further developed not only the plan, but also the department, and it was only a man of his flair, enthusiasm and boundless energy who could have achieved what appeared to be an impossible task. For the first time in recent history, the rate of growth of non-metropolitan Victoria was greater than that of Melbourne. Little wonder that these initiatives set a precedent for the whole of Australia.

Both the gentlemen to whom I have referred entered this Chamber approximately within twelve

months of each other, some twenty years ago. In view of the comments of some honorable members opposite on the relevance of this Chamber, we do well to ponder the different attitudes of members of the Council at that time as to their role and compare it with today's situation.

I trust the fact that as I was still a very young boy in short pants will not prevent me from presuming the attitude of members of that day, but as I understand it, life was more civilized, and political deliberations found their rightful place in the late afternoon and prior to dinner.

Members of this Council would, by and large, have maintained their active involvement in business, the professions and the trade union movement, and because of that involvement, would certainly have brought a different perspective to Parliamentary debate; but community attitudes have changed and the community's expectation of their Parliamentary representatives has changed accordingly.

In my view, throughout this period, the Legislative Council has maintained its essential role as a House of review within the limitations of partisan politics. Indeed, in the short time that I have been a member of the Chamber, I have seen significant amendments to various pieces of legislation, which may not have been possible without the existence of this House,

It appears to me that the role of the Council is also changing to encompass an investigatory one and indeed within this Parliament we have seen the Leader of the Government initiate questions without notice. On its own, it may not seem a major issue, but in my view it is significant, and I commend the honorable gentleman on his initiative. Further development of this role not only marshals the obvious talents of members who sit in this House, but in the community's mind reinforces a distinct and different role for this Chamber compared with the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. President, you will be questioning the relevance of these remarks to a debate on forestry, but dare I suggest that I have been provoked by honorable members opposite espousing the view that this Chamber should be abolished. But, I believe the functions of review and investigation are an essential part of democratic Government and because of its nature, the Legislative Council is singularly placed to adequately perform these functions.

The essential point that I make is that the role of this Chamber has and will continue to develop by the process of evolution and I trust that in some small way I can contribute to that continuing process.

I now turn to the Bill. The Bill authorizes the works and services programme to be undertaken by the Forests Commission over the ensuing twelve months. In my view, the importance of this work is often underrated as the commission seeks to achieve what are often seen as conflicting objectives.

However, in relation to the some 14 million acres under its control, I believe the commission adopts sound multiple use forest management, as it seeks to provide one of man's most versatile and natural resources, guarantees a continuing supply of clean water, conserves and protects an environment which will allow wild life to flourish, and increasingly provides extensive areas for outdoor recreational purposes. However, it is important that a continuous assessment be made of the priorities which the commission gives to the various aspects of its works.

One aspect which is currently causing concern in some sections of the community is the commission's softwood planting programme. Much of this programme is carried out under the

Commonwealth States Softwood Forestry Agreement, an agreement negotiated in 1967, mainly as a result of balance of payments difficulties. At that time, timber and associated products were a major import component and there was some concern that the deficiency in home grown softwood supplies would increase in the future against which Australia had large areas of land suitable for the growing of softwood timber. The aim of the agreement was to overcome the projected short-fall by the end of this century. Since the commencement of the scheme more than 42,000 hectares of softwoods have been planted by the commission under the programme. Such an area represents a very small percentage of the total area under the control of the Forests Commission.

The effect of this increase in softwood plantings has provided a vital link in a valuable decentralized industry. Against this the critics now challenge the basis of the current programme. They suggest that population growth will be less than expected and consequently future requirements have been over estimated. In any event they question the ideal of State or even national selfsufficiency, but perhaps the major concern of the critics is an aesthetic value judgment, and it is important to recognize that the areas suitable in all respects for softwood plantings are often close to urban areas, so that although the over-all percentage of forest land is not great, forest areas readily accessible to these communities have a major softwood component. I welcome the commission's changing emphasis from clearing native hardwood forests for replacing with softwoods and using wherever possible marginal farmland or alternatively already cleared land.

I do not wish to canvass this issue further, as I readily admit to having no expertise on the subject, but I believe it is important that we recognize the conflicting views within the community and I trust that they will all be considered in the current review of the agreement, which the Minister indicated in his second-reading speech is being undertaken.

A particular area of interest to me is the Otway Ranges, and in particular the future of the hardwood forests, which cover most of the public land in that area. These hardwood forests are only remnants of magnificent forest stands that were present prior to the area being thrown open to settlement last century. Currently, the supply of hardwood saw logs from this area is 50,000 cubic metres annually, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain this cut because of the decline in the quality of the trees available for harvesting. Such a problem is a result of past land settlement schemes, bush fires and the difficulties previously experienced in establishing regeneration in the mountain areas.

Re-establishment to achieve the maximum level of productivity of which these forests are capable now depends upon the removal of large quantities of lower quality wood, considered useless for sawing, but suitable for pulp wood. In this regard the provision of hardwood pulp wood at a current rate of 60,000 tons per annum assists in the regeneration of commission forests as it allows a more complete utilization of the present forest. The continuity of this market will materially assist regeneration.

Hardwood production will continue to be of importance to the Australian community and because of the long lag in hardwood production it is only a body like the Forests Commission that can undertake this work. The rehabilitation of this magnificent area will continue not only to provide hardwood for this State, but to protect the water supplies, guarantee the survival of native fauna and flora, and to provide immense capacity for outdoor recreation.

I have mentioned the problems caused by some past land settlement schemes and all honorable

members will be only too well aware of some of the disastrous results following the ill-informed alienation of Crown land to agricultural production. Although there has been subsequent reclamation in some areas, there are still large areas throughout the State unsuitable for the agricultural pursuits for which they are being used, but on which people are locked in to the situation of continuing farming. In this situation, those involved are not generating sufficient income to survive, but by selling their land, if they are able to sell it, are unable to cover commitments and have sufficient capital to have some hope of re-establishing themselves elsewhere.

The opportunity for the State to play a positive role in overcoming this socio-economic problem is, in my view, very real. Although the scope of such a scheme is far broader than the terms of this debate, clearly some areas would be suitable for reforestation and the Forests Commission has the expertise in this field. What I am suggesting is certainly not new as the Forests Commission is already involved to a limited extent, and similar work was carried out under the dairy adjustment scheme and the rural reconstruction scheme.

For a large scale scheme to be successful, in my view, we should use, the co-ordinated resources of agriculture, conservation, rural finance and the Forests Commission, and such a scheme can be effective only if it is implemented with a great deal of compassion. I look forward to maintaining a continuing interest in this field.

I thank honorable members for the courtesy they have extended me in listening to me in silence and you, Sir, for your forbearance. I commend the Bill to the House.