

The report of the Standing Orders Committee is an historic document and I sincerely hope it will remove some of the confusion which has existed in the minds of so many back-bench members about the financial procedures followed in this House.

The honorable member for Mildura raised the question of reprinting the Standing Orders. I assure the honorable member that preparations in this regard are already in hand. I thank all honorable members for their contributions.

The motion was agreed to.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

The debate (adjourned from June 19) on the motion of Mr. McClure (Bendigo) for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech was resumed.

Mr. ROPER (Brunswick West).— I am grateful for this opportunity of speaking for the electors of Brunswick West whom I deem it a great honour to represent in this Parliament. My task has been made easier because my predecessor, Mr. Turnbull, served the residents of Brunswick West excellently in this House for a period of eighteen years. From his past performances I can learn what I am to do in the future. I regard it as my main duty, so long as I am on this, the Opposition, side of the House—which I hope will not be too long—to take whatever steps are necessary to safeguard the interests of my electors who have, by and large, not received a fair deal under the present Government. I will do more than safeguard their interests; it is my aim that the electorate of Brunswick West should get an equal share in present development programmes. In fact it should receive a better deal to compensate for past difficulties it has suffered. More compensation should be provided for inner areas such as the Brunswick West electorate and similar electorates represented by my colleagues on this side

of the House which suffer from specific disadvantages. It is my desire to press for compensation for those disadvantages and during my speech I shall mention a number and suggest ways in which they can be remedied.

The problems in my electorate are similar to those mentioned by many of my colleagues of the Opposition, and even by some Government supporters. They are the problems found in the less affluent areas of a capital city or similar areas of Australia. They are the problems of inefficient education systems, of inadequate health facilities and of insufficient low-cost housing. There are also the problems created by inadequate social amenities and it will be my duty and responsibility to try to make good these disadvantages suffered by the electors I represent. My references this evening primarily will be directed towards the electorate of Brunswick West, but quite clearly their application will be far wider than that. My theme really is why can't "it happen" in Brunswick West and similar less affluent areas?

There is no better subject with which to commence my consideration of the problems confronting the electorate of Brunswick West than education. In his address when opening this session of Parliament, His Excellency the Governor stated that the first priority of the present Government would be to ensure that it improved the quality and scope of education. Without doubt it is time for such a policy and hopefully, with the funds provided by the new Federal Government, there will be a substantial possibility that many of the present difficulties in the Victorian education scheme can be overcome. I mention the Karmel report presented to the Australian Parliament. It clearly showed the need for additional resources for education, particularly for the less affluent areas of Brunswick, Coburg, Moonee Ponds and similar places. As an illustration, I point out a number of the difficulties that electorates such as

mine have to face. Today I received an answer from the Minister of Education to a question placed on notice in which the honorable gentleman supplied me with figures on the number of migrant children attending schools in my electorate. The figures are quite staggering. I shall refer to two of them by way of example. At the Brunswick West Primary School there are 249 students of whom 200 are classified as students for whom English is not the mother language. In the Brunswick South-west Primary School the figures are much better. Of 580 students, 320 are students whose native language is not English. These students suffer a particular difficulty and over a brief period of time steps have been taken by the Commonwealth and State Governments to alleviate this problem.

I can provide honorable members with an example of the type of difficulty being confronted, because I have been personally involved in a substantial research project. I have obtained some of the results from other schools which used similar tests to the one I used. I shall refer briefly to the results from two schools, Brunswick North and Malvern East primary schools, schools which are completely different politically, sociologically and environmentally. At Brunswick North Primary School the teacher used a test on grade 6 children and found that their average reading ability compared badly with that of the grade 4 children at Malvern East Primary School even though the children at Malvern East Primary School were two years younger. In other words, students aged 12 and 13 years in grade 6 at Brunswick North Primary school were performing at a lower rate than students aged 10 and 11 years in grade 4 at Malvern East Primary School. This example is not rare in Victoria as the Minister of Education would know. Tests conducted on migrant students prove that they are not the only students who are breaking down

the school average. Indeed, the Australian-born students in grade 6 at Brunswick North Primary School only just equalled the grade 4 students at Malvern East Primary School. Those grade 6 children went on to high school this year and from the results of the tests it appears that they would have started their high school careers with a reading level of only mid-primary school standard. This will have an effect on their results during their careers at high school.

I would have welcomed in the Governor's Speech the inclusion of a reference to the Government's future activity in trying to overcome these difficulties and a statement setting out the ways in which they could be overcome. It is not just a question of providing more rooms or additional teachers to teach migrant children; it is the far more detailed question of providing a continuing education programme in these areas and ensuring an enriched education for the total time the students are at school. Irrespective of whether these children come to Australia when they are six years or ten years of age, it is essential to provide teachers trained in dealing with cultural differences. More special teachers must be provided in areas such as Brunswick and Richmond to make a realistic attempt at overcoming these problems.

There are other matters which can be raised on education not only in the electorate of Brunswick West but also in the inner-suburban area. There is a substantial need to renovate and even replace some of the old schools. By and large schools in Brunswick West have not done well out of Commonwealth educational programmes administered by the State Government such as the provision of Commonwealth science laboratories and libraries. I take the Brunswick Girls High School as an example. It has an enrolment of more than 400 students, has no science facilities and students have to leave that school if they wish to study science.

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The school also does not have anything which could be called a library, an essential requirement in these days of modern education. In the past the school has not appeared on the list of schools to receive a Commonwealth library or Commonwealth science laboratory grant and though it may appear on such a list in the future, it has not to date, even though those two programmes have been operating for many years.

This is one of the complaints that people residing in my electorate have made to me very strongly. They want money to overcome these difficulties and also to ensure that adequate professional assistance is provided.

A number of other areas of Government administration affect my electorate. In his policy speech during the last State election campaign, the Premier agreed to implement substantial parts of the Voumard report on local government finance in Victoria. The Premier suggested that local government was bearing far too much of the cost of providing welfare services. Most honorable members would agree with that statement. The situation will be improved by the proposed subsidy of \$2 from the State Government for every \$1 expended by local government, but that is not going to significantly improve the financial situation of councils such as the Brunswick City Council and the Coburg City Council which at present expend well in excess of 10 per cent of their total revenue on providing welfare services. Because of the present subsidy the cost of providing services is substantial. The situation is arrived at where, in the vital field of infant welfare, a total amount of \$55,000 is expended but only \$10,000 is received by way of subsidy. The result is that local government is severely embarrassed and is restricted in the type of services it can provide.

Although the Brunswick and Coburg city councils are attempting to provide an adequate welfare service, councils in some outer

areas of Melbourne where there has not been such a long history of providing such services are finding it extremely difficult to finance this type of work. Even those local authorities situated in so-called wealthy areas are having difficulty in providing adequate services and I hope that in future honorable members will receive news of how local government authorities are to be assisted in coping with these problems. It is hoped that they will have to bear only between 20 per cent and 30 per cent of the total cost of providing these services. The Government has generally adopted the practice of not lifting the subsidies paid and there are still a number of problems to be overcome. An example is that of a home help service which is provided at a salary cost of \$69 a week when the subsidy is based on a rate of \$39 a week. One would have to go back a long time to find anyone working for that kind of money.

The same situation applies in relation to vital services such as libraries. They, too, have been substantially disadvantaged. The situation will be improved by the adoption of part of the Voumard report. However, I have not seen any Government statement referring to the Voumard recommendation on capital expenditure for the creation of libraries. Yet capital expenditure is important in the expansion of library services. It is possible to provide much by way of maintenance subsidies but, in the last resort, buildings must be provided and loan moneys are difficult to obtain and interest costs are increasing. This presents a psychological barrier to any municipality considering a project which could cost \$300,000 or more.

Another subject referred to in the Governor's Speech was youth, sport and recreation. It is a major part of all parties' policies to have a Ministry of Youth, Sport and Recreation which will function effectively and which will be adequately financed. With other honorable members I have

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received from the Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation a lengthy document entitled *Broad Policy Guidelines*. Apparently, the guidelines will govern the funding of youth, sports and recreation facilities. I have written to the Minister and made my views known to him. I take the opportunity of making them known to the House.

The paucity of recreational space and facilities in the inner suburban areas of Melbourne is a scandal. In Brunswick, there are 80 acres of park for 50,000 people. If there were enough park space to satisfy the requirements of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works it would total 350 acres. Coburg is somewhat better off as it has 250 acres of parks and gardens. However, it should have more than 400 acres. The same situation applies in most of the inner areas of Melbourne. They just do not have the open space which the Board of Works says is necessary for proper recreation.

To make matters worse, Brunswick and Coburg, as well as similar areas, have lost land to freeways. If Freeway F2 is completed, Brunswick will lose 21 acres of parkland and Coburg will suffer similarly. There seems to have been no great effort by the Board of Works or the Government to replace the 15 acres of parkland lost to Brunswick in 1967 for the Tullamarine Freeway. That loss has still not been fully made up. Despite frequent discussions between the City of Brunswick and various Government agencies there is not much prospect that it will be adequately made up in the foreseeable future. The small area of recreational space available to these areas is being lost and not replaced.

In the document circulated by the Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation, there are, as I have suggested, a number of major weaknesses. One is that it really outlines a policy for areas for major organized sport. It speaks in terms of mass sporting facilities and large-scale projects. It

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does not envisage that in any recreational area programme there must be a broad spread of facilities. Areas of a quarter of an acre for playgrounds for children are required as much as 20-acre sites for major sporting facilities.

But there is a much graver weakness in the document. It is the insistence on a system of providing facilities by subsidizing the cost. If any policy followed by a Government—whether of my political persuasion or that of others—should have been abandoned over the years, it is the policy of providing facilities by a subsidy system. But that system rears its head again in this document. One would expect a Minister who took a great deal of interest in education in the previous Parliament to have realized that under this system the facilities go to those who can provide the initial sum to attract the subsidy. That does not seem to have penetrated to the author of the document. There is clearly a concentration on the subsidy system in sub-items (1) to (3) on page 2 of the document.

Subsidies are of no value to areas which cannot raise the initial amount required. It may be possible for some areas of Victoria to raise the first \$12,500 or \$25,000 to provide something which will cost \$50,000, but that would be excessively difficult in an area such as Brunswick or Coburg where that kind of money is just not available.

The same can be said of the suggestion that the employment of youth, sport and recreation workers by schools will be by a subsidy system. Most school advisory councils in the area which I represent have scarcely a dollar and will not be able to raise the substantial number of dollars necessary to employ these workers.

With its other weaknesses, the subsidy system is meaningless in an area where land is expensive. One is appalled at the prospect of buying land in such places as Brunswick,

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Richmond, Coburg and Preston where it would cost at least \$100,000 an acre. To buy 5 acres of land for recreational purposes would cost \$500,000. Local government authorities and voluntary organizations in the poorer areas, cannot raise funds of this magnitude. To buy 5 acres in the central part of Brunswick would cost \$1 million, and the City of Brunswick just could not afford that. This situation will prevail to a substantial degree so long as the guidelines suggested by the Minister are followed.

There are a number of other issues which I wish to put before the House and I hope to have an opportunity of doing that in the future. I thank the House for its tolerance. I hope that as time goes by I shall be able to speak more effectively about the difficulties which confront my constituents. I hope I can co-operate with Ministers and other honorable members in attempting to ensure that the disadvantages suffered by areas such as that which I represent are overcome and that the facilities in them are made equal to those in what are quite mistakenly called the better suburbs of Melbourne.

The sitting was suspended at 6.25 p.m. until 8.4 p.m.

Mr. BAXTER (Murray Valley).— It is a proud moment for me on the first day of the spring sessional period to make my maiden speech to Parliament. I am pleased to be doing so as the youngest member of the Country Party, and I am glad to see young men of the other parties represented in this House. Twenty years ago very few people under the age of 35 years were elected to Parliament. I am not suggesting that all wisdom resides in young people, but it is essential to have a balance in the House, and I think that balance exists at present.

I express the loyalty of the electors of Murray Valley to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. These days the traditional values of British democracy and allegiance to the Queen

are frequently questioned in the press and on radio. My constituents are loyal and do not question the Parliamentary traditions that have been built up over many years.

I am proud to succeed the Honorable George Moss as member for Murray Valley. In the last Parliament Mr. Moss was "Father of the House." He served for 27 years, a period which exceeds my total life span. The mantle of "Father of the House" has now passed to another member of the Country Party, the honorable member for Benambra, who unfortunately will not be able to be with us for some time.

In his 27 years as a member of Parliament Mr. Moss became well known and respected throughout the Murray Valley and got to know thousands of people. The electorate was always called Murray Valley although the boundaries changed frequently. Mr. Moss represented Wangaratta, among other places, for 9 years, Shepparton for 12 years, and Wodonga for the past 6 years. In that time the subdivisions of Nathalia, Numurkah, Cobram and Rutherglen were always within the Murray Valley electorate, but from time to time there were other additions and deletions.

I come into this House firmly committed to policies of decentralization. I am pleased that all the political parties have now adopted these policies. The Country Party has espoused this cause for many years. During the election campaign members of the Opposition said that the Government had stolen some of the Opposition's policies. It has adopted some of the Country Party's decentralization policies, but I welcome this.

The electorate of Murray Valley contains the city of Wodonga which, with Albury, has been selected as the first growth centre of Victoria. I welcome this positive move with open arms. City people are beginning to realize that Melbourne is becoming too big, its problems are becoming insoluble, that the time taken to