

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) - I thank honourable members for the opportunity of delivering my first speech in the debate on the motion for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to His Excellency the Governor's Speech at the opening of the 51st Parliament today.

I congratulate those who have spoken before me-the honourable members for Melbourne, Pascoe Vale and Ballarat North, on their excellent contributions to the debate.

In speaking to the motion I take the opportunity of affirming my loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen, and I make that affirmation on behalf of the citizens of Doncaster.

I pay tribute to the Christian dignity and graciousness brought to the Office by the Governor and his wife. However, I confess that I was embarrassed for the Governor as he delivered today's address, which was notable for its omissions and hyperbole rather than any solid program for good government.

I congratulate you, Mr Deputy Speaker, on your election today and I also congratulate the honourable member for Werribee on his election as Speaker. I thank him for the courtesy and advice that he has already given me in my short period in this House. I hope that he will be able to maintain the honourable traditions of the office of Speaker, to rule this House with impartiality and fairness.

I come to this Parliament on the retirement of Morris Williams. Morris retired after sixteen years in this place, first as the honourable member for Box Hill and, subsequently, as the honourable member for Doncaster after the creation of the seat in 1976.

During my campaign in the electorate of Doncaster I met thousands of individuals. It is a diverse electorate ranging from people who live in severe economic and social difficulty to those who could only be described as extremely comfortable. The overwhelming impression that I received as I moved throughout the electorate was that my predecessor, Morris Williams, was well known, well respected and, over 30 years of public life, had contributed much to the lifestyle of the people of Doncaster.

In his maiden speech Morris described himself as being an old-fashioned radical Liberal in the Deakin tradition. From the comments of honourable members on both sides of this House it is apparent that he worked hard to live up to that tradition, and succeeded. He is a man of integrity who fought for the highest standards of public and commercial life.

I hope to continue my personal friendship with Morris. His advice and guidance have made my first days in this place much easier to cope with. I know that all honourable members will join me in wishing him a happy, fulfilling, and long retirement.

During the public life of Morris Williams the area of Doncaster has changed substantially, from a rural orchard area some 20 to 30 years ago, to a substantially urban area. The seat of Doncaster now covers an area of nearly 27 square kilometres within the City of Doncaster and Templestowe, which city is also represented by my friend, the honourable member for Bulleen, and by the honourable member for Warrandyte, Mr Honeywood.

The population of Doncaster, almost 50 000 people, represents a true melting pot of race, religion, and occupation. Its inhabitants have made contributions to every facet of Victorian and Australian life.

I have lived in the electorate for almost fifteen years. I completed my secondary education at Whitefriars College at Donvale, within the electorate of Doncaster, and I am proud to say that I am its first former student to enter Parliament.

Over the years I have formed strong bonds with many people and organizations within the electorate. Their needs, in terms of public transport, road construction, government health services, and State education have been largely ignored by this government. It is little wonder, then, that just three weeks ago they voted for me, the Liberal Party, and those ideas for which the Liberal Party stands-support for the family, freedom with responsibility, reward for effort, pride in excellence, striving together for the common good, and respect for the law and citizens' rights.

My belief in liberalism is deep rooted. It is founded in my family's history. My parents came from the Baltic States which were first annexed by the Germans and then enslaved by the Soviet Union. My grandfather was executed for his liberal beliefs and participation in democratic government. My grandmother, who still lives, spent fifteen years in a prison camp in Siberia.

The fact that I stand in this country at all is a result of the emigration of the Baltic peoples from their enslaved homelands to the freedom and opportunity of this country. My parents, coming from Latvia and Lithuania respectively, demonstrated to me that the values of freedom must have democracy as their first principle.

I am pleased to see the establishment of popular fronts in each of the Baltic States, with their calls for freedom, democracy, and sovereignty, and I wish them well. It is part of a movement that is taking place in socialist regimes across the world.

As some honourable members would know, I spent some months last year at Beijing university in the People's Republic of China, studying Chinese law. At the end of 1986 the university in Beijing became notorious for its student riots in support of democracy. It is clear that Marxism has failed as an economic philosophy: socialism is dead.

In China they are adopting economic reforms which reflect liberal theory, giving people responsibility for their own lives and their own enterprises. I have seen liberalism "at work" in the face of a Mongolian peasant, on the dirt floor of whose hut I slept and who, for the first time in 40 years, under new reforms, has control over his family's plot of land. One sees in him and the results of his economic endeavour and the increased production of his land, the fact that liberal remedies work and socialism does not.

Liberalism is a philosophy that is optimistic and visionary. I say optimistic because liberalism is all about letting people use their creative energy as they see fit; visionary because liberalism sees beyond vested interests. Sir Robert Menzies set up a party, not of big business or big unions but, as he described it, a party for the forgotten people, the people that this government has forgotten are the middle class, small business, the family man and woman, the elderly, and the young. I hope to put that liberal philosophy to work on behalf of the people of Victoria.

One must ask the question: where to, Victoria? Over the past decade it has become obvious that the centre of world economic activity has shifted from Europe and from the Atlantic basin to the Pacific rim. The two largest single economies of the world are now the United States of America and Japan. The fastest growing economies are the "Four Tigers of Asia" - Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea-China and the ASEAN nations. To a large extent the European market has been shut off from Australians and especially from Victorians.

We have adopted fair trading as our principle and we must work with other fair trading countries, especially the Cairns group of fair trading nations, to ensure that free trade is our ultimate aim. In the interim, our future certainly lies in cooperation with Asia.

It is now well recognised that Victoria's economic future depends on an export-led recovery based on knowledge and skill industries, on its successful and competitive primary industries and on applying Victoria's relatively cheap energy to Australian raw materials to provide semi-finished products.

However, as I indicated earlier, the Speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor was noticeable for its omissions. Export growth and, therefore, economic growth depends on meeting the needs of fast-growing Asian economies, many of which have education systems which are the equal of, if not better than, our own.

In my opinion, government has a role to play in enhancing Victoria's export growth. The Federal government's agency, Austrade, has certainly been a notable success. However, in general, the market is a much better judge of a venture than is government and the ill-fated Victorian Economic Development Corporation stands as the most glaring example of a government's ineptitude in this area.

The Victorian government would be far better engaged in indicative planning, in clearing up labour market impediments, in removing taxation and regulatory barriers to economic growth, and the growth of exports. When I speak of impediments to export and trade, I speak of the Port of Melbourne. The Business Council of Australia recently released figures which estimate that European ports, such as Rotterdam and Hamburg, are twice as productive as the ports of Melbourne and Sydney. A recent Industries Assistance Commission report concluded that a more competitive waterfront and shipping industry would benefit Australia by at least \$1 billion a year.

Employment practices at the Port of Melbourne are a disgrace. Penalty and shift rates prevent the port working efficiently 24 hours a day. Work practices on cranes are a mere joke. The recent debacle involving the seafront unions, the Ark Royal, and the American vessels in the Port of Melbourne stands as an embarrassment to all Victorians and all Australians.

When speaking of impediments, I am aware of a report on WorkCare released today. One of the newly elected government members is responsible for the mess that is the WorkCare system which stands as an enormous impediment to economic growth in Victoria.

I turn to the issue of conservation. No-one on this side of the House doubts my commitment to conservation. I am a member of two of the peak conservation groups in Victoria. I say to the members of this Assembly and to the community of Victoria that the best record in conservation is held, not by this Labor government nor by the Federal Labor government, but by the Hamer government in Victoria and by the Fraser government.

The national parks legislation as it now stands was essentially set up under the leadership of Sir Rupert Hamer. The environment protection legislation stands as a tribute to the State Liberal Party's efforts. The vast areas of national parks and metropolitan parks in Victoria are also a tribute to former visionary Liberal governments. At a federal level, it was a Liberal government that introduced the Antarctic Treaty Act of 1960; that abolished whaling at Albany; that proclaimed the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park; that prevented sandmining on Fraser Island; that

proclaimed Kakadu and Uluru parks - for which the present Labor government has claimed so much credit - and that proclaimed the Christmas Island National Park. Liberal governments also introduced unleaded petrol to Australia and did so many things to protect the Australian environment, for which current Labor governments now claim credit.

Conservation must not be seen as a sacred cow. Conservationists must be prepared to compromise because good conservation policy requires enormous resources. Those resources can be accrued only through economic growth.

I have spent extensive periods over the past two years travelling in Third World countries in Asia. I say to honourable members present that the worst problems of pollution are those that exist in the semi-industrialised countries. One needs to look only at China to see a newly developed economy with the worst acid rain problem in the world, its enormous problems of water purity, human waste control, and so on.

The way to improve conservation in Victoria and to provide the wealth and resources that will enable our national parks to be extended is through economic growth and the elimination of the inefficiencies that exist in our economy.

I turn briefly to ethnic affairs. During the recent election campaign I visited a number of ethnic communities not only in the electorate I represent but also peak organisations representing the Chinese community and various other communities. They all understood that multiculturalism was a creature brought into existence by the Liberal Party, a policy defended by the Victorian Liberal Party of today.

Large elements of the ethnic communities in Victoria such as the Vietnamese, the Yugoslavs, Eastern Europeans, and the Afghans, have escaped from socialist economies. They recognise that a commitment to freedom and to free enterprise is what they need. It is the sort of commitment by government that migrants need if they are to make a success of life in any country.

In conclusion I thank the many hundreds of people who have participated in assisting in my election. I thank the members of the Liberal Party in Doncaster who showed enormous faith in me when pressure was brought to bear from other sources. I commit myself to the liberal Party and the successful model set up by Sir Robert Menzies of a party with decentralised power in the hands of its members and branches, a party in which diversity of opinion was encompassed, and a party for which I shall continue to stand.

I thank my family and friends who have given me such support and especially my mother who, although widowed at a young age, managed to provide the moral and educational basis for my presence here. I thank honourable members.