

departments and instrumentalities should be compelled to wear seat belts. Once again a major attempt to reduce the road toll was rejected.

The subterfuge which the Government has adopted as an excuse for not facing up to its responsibilities is unsatisfactory Commonwealth-State financial relations, and in particular the intransigence of the Commonwealth Government has been blamed. I am one of the first to acknowledge the tremendous problems now facing the Government, but it is the authority in this State responsible for negotiating with the Commonwealth Government. It must bear the responsibility for its admitted failure over the past fifteen years to achieve just rewards for Victoria. This point has been included in the Budget speech every year. In his 1969-70 Budget speech, the Premier and Treasurer said—

Nothing could illustrate more dramatically—and yet more simply—the wholly unsatisfactory financial position of the States as against the affluence of the Commonwealth. Nothing could underline with greater emphasis that this problem of State and Commonwealth financial relationships is the challenge of the 1970's. This indeed is the great challenge to be faced up to and met during the course of this the financial year 1969-70, for it so happens that this year sees the end of the five-year period covered by the present Commonwealth legislation dealing with tax reimbursement grants.

The honorable gentleman then added—

The impossibility of the position of the States is well understood.

However, once again the result was failure. There are some that hold that this growth of Commonwealth power at the expense of the States is desirable. I subscribe to the opposite view. I support the views of our founding fathers embodied in the Commonwealth Constitution. The issues are not simply financial but relate to the question of which level of government should be responsible to administer particular aspects of activities of the people of Victoria. In this regard I am a determined Federalist and will do all in my power to achieve that principle.

*Mr. Fordham.*

The power of the Commonwealth is growing because of its financial strength and a consequent erosion of the power of the States. The situation is even worse at the level of local government. I assure honorable members that I will strive to restore to the people of Victoria and the Parliament of this State their rights under the Commonwealth Constitution. I hope that, in the 1970's the Government will do as the Premier has said—it will give leadership to the community and ensure that these rights are restored.

These groups and aspects of our society that I have briefly mentioned are but a few of those that could be covered to demonstrate the tremendous problems that we face with the alienation of people from the Government of this State. As I have readily found in the brief time in which I have been a member of this Parliament, these are not merely hollow statistics or hollow statements. These are real issues that are being faced by the people of the State, and many of them have been brought to my attention. If the people to whom I have referred are the drop-outs of our society, and if they are the alienated, I am only too willing to identify myself with them, as I am sure will all members of the Opposition, and to work to overcome their problems.

I record my thanks to the people of Footscray for the great honor they have bestowed upon me in electing me to represent them in this Parliament and I shall do all in my power to further the interests of that community. I assure Parliament of my dedication to its work and look forward to working with honorable members on both sides of the House in advancing the interests of the people of Victoria.

**Mr. KIRKWOOD** (Preston).—I congratulate those honorable members who moved and seconded the motion for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech, and wish to be associated with their expressions of loyalty. I thank the electorate of Preston and

those who have supported me and the platform I represent for the confidence that they have shown in me. I feel sure that their confidence will be justified.

The people of Preston had a great regard for my predecessor in this House, who served the electorate well for fifteen years. However, Parliament has been lax in not providing honorable members with proper facilities with which to perform the work that is expected of them. As a back-bencher, I have been provided with three tables, two forms and a couple of filing cabinets in a common room. I imagined—and probably the people in my electorate also imagined—that I would be provided with a table, a telephone and a separate room. I suggest that at an early stage action should be taken to ensure that all honorable members are given the facilities that are needed for them to undertake their work in a satisfactory manner.

The Government also owes a responsibility to municipalities in the form of subsidies, but it is not as advanced as it might be in alleviating conditions of hardship which exist in the municipal field. Some honorable members may not appreciate the problems which face the Government in this regard. Recently in the premier city of the north—Preston—an elderly citizens' club was erected at a cost of \$36,000. The citizens were appreciative of the \$10,000 received from the Government, but the City of Preston had to pay \$26,000.

At present, the City of Preston is considering the building of a municipal library. The cost of acquiring a suitable site was \$100,000, and it is expected that the building and furnishings will cost approximately \$150,000. However, no subsidy or capital grant is available for a library. The council intends to establish a building for the use of all citizens in the area—a place where students may make use of a reference library and where tradesmen may use expensive volumes to assist them to understand the problems of their trades—but the

Government will not give one "razoo" towards the project. It might be argued that the Government has adopted the proper attitude to this question, but I have not heard this argument voiced and I doubt whether any honorable member would try to advance it.

In Preston, the work of erecting a day nursery is also in course. Again, the cost is substantial. The acquisition of a suitable site will cost \$27,000. It may be said that that is a reasonable sum in an area such as Preston, but the money must be raised, and the cost of building is expected to be \$45,000. In this instance, the Government has granted a sum of \$20,000, but the balance must be met by the ratepayers, again for a service which can be used by people who are not ratepayers. No one will disagree with that because the children who will use the nursery cannot provide the money and the parents who usually use a day nursery are frequently in circumstances unlike those of honorable members of this House. Often, there is only one surviving parent, who must go to work in order to rear the family.

After a day nursery has been constructed, it must be maintained and operated. Certainly, the running costs could be much lower if a reasonable subsidy were provided by the Government. How can one nominate a suitable figure to charge a person who earns only \$30 a week and has enrolled children at a day nursery? I would not care to adjudicate on a fee for such a person. If I happened to have the power, I should give more aid to local councils because they need it. If it gives further consideration to the matter, the Government may be a little more liberal to municipalities than it has been in the past.

Probably one of the biggest bugbears in all municipalities is the provision of traffic lights. Efforts are being made to reduce the road toll and statements appear in the press on the need to install pedestrian and

other types of traffic lights throughout municipalities. Last year, the City of Preston obtained no subsidy for this work although fourteen sets of traffic lights were approved by the Traffic Commission. The council received a letter stating that, if it was prepared to complete the whole operation and pay for it, that would be in order so far as the State Government was concerned. The city which I represent in this House is not prepared to do this because it considers that the State Government has an obligation to the taxpayers in the City of Preston as much as it has to the ratepayers, and I agree with that view.

So far as municipal contributions to the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board are concerned, the Government's view might be changed if its members studied the report of the commission of inquiry in 1962 which suggested that the contribution by municipalities should be reduced to one-eighth. As honorable members are aware, municipalities now pay one-third, the insurance companies pay two-thirds and the State Government, which slid out from under a few years ago, makes no contribution. I have read the report of the 1962 commission of inquiry, which is an enlightening document. Last year, the City of Preston's contribution was increased by 22 per cent. I have the figures in my possession; they are well documented and factual. According to the law of this State, if the municipal council does not pay its contribution to the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board by a certain date the municipality may be fined \$80 per day; this is for a service for which the municipality receives no subsidy.

The limit on subsidies paid to municipal councils should be reviewed. As I mentioned previously, the Government subsidy for facilities for elderly citizens has a limit of \$10,000 and that for a day nursery \$20,000. The Government subsidy for a home help service is \$48 per fortnight for the staff's wage bill. The municipality which I represent has to pay \$80 per

fortnight for this service. Incidentally, the City of Preston employs 60 persons on this service, which is probably one of the largest staffs in the metropolitan area. It cannot be denied that the home help service is one of the most important amenities which a municipality can provide. The persons employed by the council visit homes where the residents are not able to do the work themselves; they cook meals, make beds and assist the elderly. The Government, which professes to be liberal, should act more liberally in this regard, and I trust that when the Cabinet is next considering the various subsidies it will be more generous in its attitude towards the municipalities of Melbourne.

Street lighting is another facility which is provided by the ratepayers. So far as I am aware—I am assured that this is correct—no Government subsidy is paid to municipalities towards the cost of street lighting in main roads. As honorable members who are interested in municipal affairs will be aware, the Municipal Association of Victoria considers that municipalities which have main roads within their boundaries should receive financial assistance towards the cost of street lighting. I contend that, in regard to both capital costs and operating expenses, the State Government should pay two-thirds, leaving the municipalities to pay one-third.

I hope that what I have said tonight will begin to wear away the rock and that residents of municipalities who are also ratepayers throughout the State will be treated more equitably. If this is done, my life will be much easier because I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the vast majority of the persons whom I represent have difficulty in meeting the commitments which are imposed on them as ratepayers because subsidies to municipalities have not kept pace with the rising cost of living. I trust that sooner or later this injustice will be rectified.