

Mr WELDON (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, might I begin by asking you to convey my congratulations to the Speaker on his election to his high office and I for one will strive to cause him as little concern as possible.

I come from Circular Head. It is a distant part of our most distant electorate of Braddon, and Circular Head, King Island and the west coast - although isolated regions - are collectively the highest income earning areas of our State. Mining, rural industries and the processing of primary products are the corner-stones of this productivity. These isolated areas are entitled to greater consideration. Smithton Airport needs a navigation beacon. This is a Federal responsibility which has so far been denied. I have a recent classic example of returning from Hobart and getting lost in an aircraft simply because the pilot could not find the airstrip because of cloud. We must bring pressure on the Federal Government to accept its responsibility and provide that beacon. A tourist road via the Roger River to link up with the west coast is needed and will provide a ring route around the State. Again it is a Federal responsibility because Federal funding is needed for tourist roads and this has been denied.

The west coast is a harsh and generally inhospitable environment, and therefore sporting activity generally needs to be carried on inside. This is where we must concentrate some effort. The indoor sporting facilities on the west coast need upgrading, especially at Rosebery. King Island is showing some exciting initiatives in that the factory of Interland Cheese is developing rapidly and this is due largely to support from the State Labor Government. We hope soon to see the export abattoirs on the island and obtain support from this Government to expand operations. The island is moving rapidly towards improving its tourist industry, but a reticulated power system is essential. It is an essential prerequisite for future development and we must address ourselves to this pressing problem.

I am pleased to advise the House that funds will hopefully be available this financial year to improve educational opportunities in the field of further education in Circular Head. I must commend the minister in this regard for his sensitivity in the approaches that have been made to him on the matter. Hopefully in the future we will see further expansion on this activity throughout the western area of our State.

Members - Hear, hear!

Mr WELDON - There are other issues pertinent to the whole of the Braddon electorate which are deserving of concern and support by the Government and, as time goes on, I will bring these matters to the attention of the House.

Mr Groom - He is on the right side.

Mr WELDON - Do you mind?

Mr Baker - What do you mean 'do you mind'? We are saying 'hear, hear'.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order! Maiden speeches are generally heard in silence.

Mr WELDON - I wish to move now to a totally different area, but one which I am sure will capture the attention of the House. One of the most debilitating and crippling diseases known to man is that of rheumatoid arthritis. Together with other forms of arthritis it accounts for some 26 000 Tasmanians today. Indeed it would appear that our State has a higher incidence of joint-related diseases than the other States. In 1976 the Rheumatism and Arthritis Foundation of Tasmania or RAFT was set up. This is a voluntary organisation which I am delighted to say has begun to receive recognition not only from the public but from the Labor Government. In recorded history dating back to the time of the pharaohs of Egypt, rheumatoid arthritis has been the subject of continued human suffering and research. There is, as yet, no known cause or cure for this particular connective tissue disease. However in recent times great strides have been made both socially and clinically in reducing the pain and distress associated with the condition. RAFT is endeavouring to assist the huge and increasing number of

people suffering from rheumatoid arthritis and other crippling diseases. It provides paramedical and referral assistance, literature and advice. But above all, it is providing comfort and security to the sufferers in that they know that there are in the community people who care and understand the depth of their misery.

The Government in its great wisdom, has increased its support for RAFT from \$5 000 to \$10 000 per year and has further recognised the need to support rheumatoid arthritis sufferers by pledging to provide a specialist rheumatologist with support staff at the Royal Hobart Hospital. This could cost in excess of \$64 000. This action on the part of the Government has the warm approval of the whole community. More is needed, and I will be seeking every avenue to obtain support for the unfortunate sufferers of this range of diseases. The people need the support as does RAFT. RAFT is in urgent need of another field worker. At present it has one in the north, one in the south and an executive officer. But the demands are such that a field officer for Hobart is required. I look to increased public support for the organisation but I am anxious to see the Government's providing, as it has done in the past, a back-stop.

Another disease condition has engaged my mind. That is multiple sclerosis. I have no doubt that honourable members are only too aware of this debilitating condition and of the severe and heartbreaking effects it can have on sufferers and their families. Multiple sclerosis is a disease of the nervous system where the nerve sheath or insulation becomes damaged, thus allowing interference with the normal activity of the nerve trunk. As the condition progresses, the patient's ability to control movement and other nervous activity diminishes. To the best of my knowledge there is no known cause or cure for this disease and it is ruining thousands of lives in our country annually. In 1978, the Multiple Sclerosis Society and the Creek Road Cottage Centre for handicapped people amalgamated, with the Multiple Sclerosis Society accepting responsibility for the whole organisation. The centre is staffed by two part-time occupational therapists, one co-ordinator, one aide and one bus driver. The society aims to seek out sufferers of the disease and provide them with the support, guidance and referral services which they so desperately need. So far there are 175 known cases in Tasmania, but this may be only the tip of the iceberg.

Like rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis predominantly strikes at people in their twenties and thirties. Unfortunately we can only hope to alleviate their suffering through care, guidance and paramedical assistance and with this in mind I am seeking to encourage the Government to continue and, indeed, step up support in this area so that the aim of rehabilitation of patients within the community is enhanced. I do actually have with me further detailed information on both RAFT and the Multiple Sclerosis Society and I would be delighted to discuss these with any members. I thank the House for its attention and I support the motion.

Mr HESWICK (Bass) - In speaking in support of this motion, I would like to express first of all my deep appreciation of the honour which has been bestowed upon me by the electors of Bass in electing me to represent them in this House. I also wish to express my continuing and very real loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen as well as to her subjects in this State as I seek to carry out my duties as a member of this place.

Several previous speakers have made mention of the problem of unemployment in this State and of the economy as a whole. It is a very serious problem today. I do not wish to speak at length about unemployment as such. I wish rather to point to its implications for Tasmania which are very real and very great when we consider that, in the last month, the figures for Tasmania from the Bureau of Statistics indicated that the unemployment rate in Tasmania increased from 6 per cent to 6.7 per cent while, at the national level, the rate actually fell to 5.8 per cent. I believe this must be a matter of very real concern to this Parliament. It is not only in this particular instance that Tasmania has a problem in relation to unemployment. It is not only now that we have found ourselves with one of the highest rates of unemployment in the Commonwealth. In fact it is not unusual for Tasmania to have greater economic problems than other States.

The question we should ask is why this must be so. Why is it that Tasmania often

seems to suffer from being in this position? Can we afford to side-step this question by simply saying that it is the result of general economic circumstances or by blaming the Commonwealth Government for its economic policies? Is it really good enough for us to accept as inevitable the fact that this State has the slowest rate of economic growth, the slowest rate of population growth and the lowest average personal income? There have been many problems related to these questions. There are many reports written about Tasmania's economic problems and it is very pleasing to note that at least one of those reports, namely the Callaghan Report, is receiving some action at the present time through the support of the Commonwealth Government. The question that I would like to ask in relation to this general problem is a deeper one again than that simply related to unemployment. Are we in this State making the best use of our resources for the benefit of the people of this State? There are a very wide range of resources available to us in Tasmania. There is far too wide a range for me to mention them all so I mention but two which are of particular interest and concern to me as a new member of this House coming from a largely rural background. I speak of our forests and our farms.

There can be no doubt that our forests are one of our greatest natural resources. Recent developments in the woodchip industry have led a great many thinking Tasmanians to wonder whether we are making best use of this resource - whether we are not giving our forests away. Many of us wondered as we watched the struggle which took place between two large companies for the takeover of Tasmanian Pulp and Forest Holdings Ltd., what kind of a resource this is that brought a contest which actually finished up practically doubling the original price which was offered. What kind of gold mine is it that we have given to the companies which have been provided with exclusive rights to take pulp wood from large concession areas? It must be a highly profitable business that attracts this kind of interest. It is not the profitability that is really the problem - there is no harm in profit. What we must have regard for is whether there is sufficient being put back into that resource which is the base for those industries to enable it to be a continuing asset to this State. The evidence suggests that there are grave doubts whether the long-term economic value of this resource is being preserved. The question I raise is whether the royalty rates being charged for this pulp wood resource are sufficiently high and I think that we have been provided with answers in the past to that question. I quote from the Everett Report on Forestry Development:

'We are satisfied that pulp wood prices are too low and further that they are inordinately low by relation to prices offered for saw logs'.

According to my information the average royalty for saw logs paid during the last year was \$4.38 per cubic metre, while the average royalty for pulp wood was 98 cents for an equivalent amount. Again I quote from the Everett Report:

'Returns to the pulp wood grower are too low to form a base for a viable self-sustaining forest-growing industry'.

I suggest that this is a serious indictment of the present arrangements within this industry. The Legislative Council select committee on this same subject met a few years ago.

Sitting suspended from 6 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.

When the House suspended I was speaking with reference to the royalty rates being paid on pulp wood timber in this State. I was about to quote from the report of the Legislative Council Select Committee on Forests which made this recommendation:

'That all current legislation and agreements be reviewed to assess the possibility of raising certain quite uneconomic royalties to realistic levels'.

That call I am sure is still relevant today and I am not referring simply to the situation which exists with TPFH itself. I am not suggesting that the company is in any particularly privileged position, rather the contrary may well be the case. There may be other greater deficiencies in prices paid which will be revealed as time continues. The basic fact appears to be that we are selling our forests too cheaply. The cost of regeneration is barely being covered let alone consideration being given to the value to our State of this great resource which has been grown over such a long period. How can we justify this when we consider how long it will take for a new crop to be grown of this forest resource? Not only does this mean that the State is not recouping the revenue which it could be from this resource, but it is also having an effect on the private forest grower too. The low prices paid for timber from crown land has the effect of acting as a ceiling on the prices paid to private forest owners. So we have a double effect an unnecessarily large deficit in our Forestry Commission accounts and the partial failure on the part of private land owners to regenerate this resource, simply because there is not the incentive for them to do so.

Another great group of resources which is of very real significance to this State are the agricultural and pastoral industries. It is a well known fact that we have very large areas of highly fertile soil, a temperate climate well suited to a wide variety of crops, and a reliable rainfall. Such is our potential for agricultural production that we can produce an extremely wide variety of primary products. We must also take into account, not only these physical resources but also the very great human resource of the expertise in production of this variety of agricultural product which has been built up over decades of experience. Our wool, meat, dairy, fruit and vegetable producers are amongst the most efficient in the world. In spite of this we are not fully utilising these great resources which we have. They are not always used to the best advantage and, in fact, they are even in danger of being allowed to deteriorate in some instances. This is largely because of the vagaries of the market situation for primary products. We can produce the goods - there is no question about that - but we do not always do so to the fullest extent of our ability simply because there is not sufficient incentive for our producers to do that.

It is true and worthy of note that some sections of our primary industry are at present experiencing buoyancy. For example our beef and sheep industries are benefiting from the very strong demand for their products on the world market. But the amount to which they are able to benefit is restricted by a severe limitation on stock numbers which results from the fact that these industries were allowed to run down over a period of years when they were in recession. The processed vegetable industry is also doing fairly

well at the present time and this is very largely because of the support being given to it by the Commonwealth Government's freight equalisation scheme. We should not forget, as an outlying State, to give true acknowledgment to the worth of that scheme which has, up to this time, yielded \$62 million in assistance, benefiting not only the primary producers but also a wide spectrum of our community.

It must also be noted that there are at least three sections of the primary industry which are experiencing some degree of difficulty at the present time. We should not delude ourselves into thinking that, just because some are receiving high prices, all sections of this industry, and all individuals in it, are in the very famous situation of never having had it so good. It is easy to draw drastically inaccurate conclusions from reading national figures such as the average income per farm which is provided by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. Even then, the comparative profitability is not so high really when we look at the trends in the ratio of prices received to prices paid for farm products over recent years. In spite of the uplift which has taken place in the last 12 months, there is still a significantly lower level in the ratio of prices received to prices paid than there existed six or seven years ago. If we look more closely at certain industries within that sector, we will find that they are even worse off. I mention in particular the dairy industry although it is probably not as badly off as some others at this time. It typifies the trend which is having an effect upon our primary industries. Quoting from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics Quarterly Review of the rural economy:

'Since the base period of 1960-63, prices received for dairy products by the farmer have increased by only 64 per cent while prices paid by the farmer for his inputs have increased by 236 per cent'.

Over the same period the Consumer Price Index has increased by 193 per cent and wages by 295 per cent. Is it any wonder that dairy farmers are leaving the industry? There has been a very marked and very worrying decline in the number of registered dairies. Since 1973, when the number was 2 748, they have declined to 1 667. Cow numbers and milk production have also declined although perhaps not quite so markedly because, for the most part, up until recently, it has been the smaller producers who have been leaving the industry. But now a new trend is developing and it is not only the smaller producers who are going out. Now that a higher price is being received for beef quite a number of the larger producers are leaving the dairy industry in favour of beef production. This decline in the dairy industry - one of our great industries for many years - is one which I believe should be a matter of real concern to this Parliament.

We must consider not only the effect on the primary producers themselves, but also the effect on rural communities as a whole, because we are reaching the stage where the viability of manufacturers within this industry is being greatly threatened. If any of those manufacturers cease to produce there will be unemployment of real significance in the rural areas where the alternatives for employment are very limited indeed.

There is another aspect of this decline which also is a matter of real concern. That is the continued availability of milk for liquid consumption in our town supplies. The reorganisation of the orderly marketing scheme in the dairy industry - together with these other factors which I have mentioned - has meant that a number of farmers who traditionally have produced by quota for the town milk supply have left the industry and others are seriously contemplating leaving it. Therefore a greater reliance is being placed upon the traditionally manufacturing-milk producing sector to maintain the supply of milk to our towns and cities. The extent of this greater reliance is perhaps too much for them to be able to produce the milk that is required next winter. The matter of most immediate concern is the fact that there is a very real possibility that there may not be sufficient milk for liquid consumption at the lowest point of production next winter.

This I would suggest, is a ludicrous state of affairs when we consider the productive capacity of our State as a dairy industry State. Within our primary industry sector dairying is one of the most important parts, which actually produces 43 per cent of the farm production value of all livestock products in this State. This is one of the two

best dairy States in Australia, with the most efficient producers and the most suitable climate. Market milk is only 24 per cent of our total production. We must ask ourselves again: are we really making best use of our resources, of our ability to produce, when we allow a situation to develop where there is a real possibility of a shortage in our own State? But lest I be misunderstood, I should perhaps point out that it is not so much the modification of the orderly marketing scheme which has resulted in the present situation developing. The real and most important reason for it is that the financial rewards are just too low to justify people's putting in the hours of work required on a dairy farm. There would be no sector of the community which works harder, for longer hours and for less financial reward in terms of income per hour than the dairy industry. Dairy farmers work these long hours partly because of the twice-daily milking routine but also because there is just so much work to be done. It is a highly labour-intensive industry which cannot afford to employ the labour which is required to do all the work. Any farmer can tell you that over recent years there has been much work left undone on his farm - much maintenance work that should have been done has been left undone - simply because there is just not the labour available nor the resources available to pay the labour to do that work. It is the State Government's responsibility to recognise and encourage these industries which are of basic importance to our economy.

These industries, of which I have mentioned just a couple but certainly would not intend to restrict it to those two, have the capacity to provide the real productive work which is the only way of improving our economic circumstances. It is only by making better use of our natural and human resources that we can permanently raise the living standards of our people. It will not be achieved by crying to the Commonwealth for more money or by devising bandaid-type relief schemes, artificial jobs, youth support schemes or the like. We must, of course, address ourselves to the social problems which accompany the problem of unemployment but the long-term solution to those problems is one of ensuring that we make the best possible use of the resources we have in this State. To do this we need inspired, constructive leadership by this Parliament and positive government action to encourage and support those industries which could give the economy a lift. It does not necessitate big spending by the Government; rather a recognition that private individuals and industry can make a greater contribution than governments. What we need to do is to encourage and support them in every way possible in doing just that. The role of government should be to do primarily those things which individuals cannot do for themselves but, at the same time, to encourage actively and support those industries and individuals who are producing the goods and services upon which our economy depends. Mr Speaker, I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

Mr LOWE (Franklin - Premier) - Mr Speaker, may I at the outset restate the sentiments of other honourable members in their expressions of loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen. I am proud to associate myself with the resolution before the Chair. May I also convey to you, Mr Speaker, sincere congratulations on the high office which you have been elected. I am sure as I mentioned yesterday that you will fill that office with distinction and honour. May I also congratulate all the new honourable members on both sides of the House. To those who have made their maiden speeches over the last two days I would want to pay particular commendation. With no reflection on any former first-timers, I do not think that I have heard a better range of speeches collectively than we have heard from honourable members on both sides of the House.