

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Mrs WILLEY (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I have the honour to move -

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor in reply to His Excellency's speech:

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Members of the House of Assembly in Tasmania, in Parliament assembled, desire to thank your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to address to both Houses of Parliament.

We desire to record our continued loyalty to the Throne and the Person of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second, and at the same time assure Your Excellency that the measures which will be laid for us during the Session will receive our careful consideration.

Mr Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your elevation to the Chair, and I know that you will serve this Parliament with distinction and great skill. I speak today with an appropriate sense of my part in the history of this Parliament and I am deeply aware of the trust placed in me by the electors of Bass and I hope to serve them well in this Chamber. In this regard, Mr Speaker, I seek the guidance of your high office.

Tasmania's future depends now on some hard decisions and hard work. What we do, and what we fail to do, in the next decade will determine for a long time the direction of this State. It is a time for careful political judgments. We as parliamentarians must take up the challenge of outlining the age-old problems - and the new ones - and seeking some solutions. More than ever we need to take on every aspect of our work. There is a greater need for us to research and to be scholarly, to illuminate the difficulties, to advocate the necessary reforms, to influence public opinion, to use this Chamber properly to produce wise and thoughtful legislation, and to exhibit a readiness which is sadly lacking at the present time to contemplate new ways and new approaches, whether it be in the fields of housing, or job creation, health, welfare or economic planning.

The electorates' expectations have reached a low ebb. Their judgment of politicians is a little harsh but their hopes have never been higher. They are looking for leaders - and the result of the honourable Premier at the recent election, and the overwhelming support that he got from his electorate of Franklin, illustrate this. There are those who would say that there is very little difference between those on this side of the House and the Liberal members opposite - that there is nothing much of substantial importance to choose between the two parties. This is a very superficial point of view which ignores the fundamental difference between our two parties. The Labor Party's philosophy and its policies are quite different from the Liberal Party's and our priorities are completely different.

The aim of this Government and of our party is for a prosperous, economically independent Tasmania, with a sense of purpose and direction based on principles of equality and justice for all our citizens. We seek a sane balance between the private and public sector, and we would like a fairer distribution of the wealth and resources of this nation, so that our State can develop a society where the citizens are not divided by social barriers or by extremes of wealth and poverty; a society that is marked by co-operation, with a genuine opportunity for all, where the old and the young and the sick and those handicapped in spirit or in body are lovingly and generously accepted as the responsibility of the whole community; where those who cannot produce goods, not through their own fault, can at least share in the production of the society; where the unemployed are not a mere percentage of the workforce - a statistic - their frustration buried beneath layer upon layer of economic jingoism.

By contrast the Federal Liberal Government, through its aims and policies, its meanness and intellectual poverty, is condemning far too many of our citizens to a life of economic hardship which buries the human spirit and has so diminished our sense of pride in this nation that national respect is having to be marketed on television like cornflakes.

It is for me equally regrettable that our own personal sense of pride, and our sense of fun and enjoyment, is so suppressed that a public relations exercise - no matter how laudable in its intent or how entertaining in its execution - is required to get us to celebrate life itself. National and personal pride are reduced to cartoon characters - the great PR 'con' of the seventies. However, for all that, we on this side of the House are willing to 'have a go'. We are willing to have a go at Mr Fraser and we are willing to keep on having a go at Mr Fraser until Tasmania gets a fair share of Federal funding and its citizens are relieved of some of their fears, anxieties and financial hardships.

The cost of living in this State is escalating and the effect on families is devastating. For many it is a struggle just to exist from week to week. Health costs are sky-rocketing, doctors' fees are going up and the great rip-off of private medical insurance continues unabated. Unemployment continues to exceed 6 per cent of the Tasmanian workforce, prices soar, petrol prices double, family allowances are frozen, taxes increase, and housing is becoming scarcer and dearer. All this is the result of Federal Liberal policy and we as State parliamentarians must continue on behalf of our constituents to express constantly our objection to this real onslaught on the Australian people. But while these policies continue, we should look to using some of our State resources to alleviate some of the hardship. We must of course set priorities, but we cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that many Tasmanians are living below the poverty line.

In the field of housing we will seek a more realistic allocation of funds and we will need this to continue our public housing programme. As well I would hope that there could be an immediate increase in the provision of emergency housing. Politicians are a besieged city these days and our most constant constituent request is for housing, which we cannot immediately provide, from people whose situation is desperate. I support the call of the honourable Premier for a joint State and Federal inquiry into public housing in Tasmania chaired by Professor Henderson. The results of such an inquiry would prove a plan for the future of Tasmanian housing and I hope it would also jolt the conscience of the Federal Government. However we must show more imagination and innovation in the way we solve some of our special housing problems. I urge this Government to examine closely the concept of supportive community hostel-type housing for people with special needs - for example the elderly or the emotionally and physically handicapped, those on probation, or homeless youth. This is in line with our welfare programme which is moving towards preventive rather than remedial services and towards community-based services rather than institutionalised ones and it is an area in which government and voluntary bodies can work together.

In this area I believe the time has come for governments to take note of the decreasing number of voluntary workers in our community and the increasing load which they bear. The cost of voluntary work is catching up on people, particularly those with limited resources, but always with unlimited talent and willingness. I would like to see a State-wide registry of gifted and trained volunteers supported by a relief fund to offset the costs of voluntary work. These registered volunteers could provide a support system in their own community - for example assisting families in times of stress or illness, to relieve the parents of handicapped and retarded children, or to complement the family structure in special circumstances to avoid family breakdown. Increased co-operation between government and voluntary groups in this way has a built-in cost-saving benefit. This should be remembered.

In further seeking to alleviate hardship, I believe we should examine some reform to the Hydro-Electric Commission policy regarding payment provisions, giving positive consideration to extending concessions to all beneficiaries of State and Federal pensions or benefits and consider the abolition of the connection fee for these

consumers. I believe the HEC should publicise, and we should encourage it to do so, the existing rebate system and the instalment systems which are presently available for payments and introduce a stamp payment system similar to that operating in Telecom. In addition the HEC could appoint officers whose special job it is to deal with payment difficulties and publicise the names, localities and phone numbers of these officers.

This Government should resist all efforts of the Federal Government to place an undue burden on this State. We do not have the resources to counter completely the oppressive measures of the Fraser administration, but we have the opportunity to demonstrate that governments can be both competent and compassionate.

I believe the overwhelming desire of the Tasmanian people is for a government of men and women of vision, principle, purpose and ability who are able to lead, capable of reforming society and willing to use their wide range of talents for the benefit of this State. The challenge to this Government, so strong in numbers and youth, is to meet that need, to provide the Tasmanian people with practical solutions to the difficulties of our time, and to inspire them with hope for the future, and Mr. Speaker, we accept the challenge.

Mr ADAMS (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I rise to second the motion moved by my colleague, the honourable member for Bass, Mrs Willey, that the Address-in-Reply be presented to His Excellency the Governor.

I join her in expressing loyalty to Her Majesty and in thanking His Excellency for the speech he addressed to both Houses of this Parliament in which he so clearly outlined the progressive policies of this Government.

Mr Speaker, I wish to congratulate you on your election to that high office. In this Address-in-Reply I wish to speak on two matters. One concerns industrial relations and the problems that conservative governments are causing in this area. I will also deal with the meat industry in Tasmania and some of the problems with which it is faced.

Firstly I wish to say that the people of Tasmania returned a stable, moderate, experienced and progressive government. In Australia today the old pastime of conservative forces is being revived. It is the pastime of union-bashing - blaming the trade union movement of Australia for all the ills of our society, and for all our economic and social problems. The conservative forces blame the unions for inflation, for lack of growth in manufacturing industry, for the fact that companies are not buying raw materials and manufacturing them into goods. They say the social problems of unemployment are caused by the trade union movement and not by conservative politicians. However disagreements between labour and capital will not be solved by governments' blatantly legislating for division, passing laws that will, if in force, cause division between trade unions, governments and employers. These laws are being made in Queensland; they have been enforced in Western Australia; and the Federal Government has enacted these laws.

These governments claim these laws are industrial relations legislation. They have nothing to do with industrial relations! They have nothing to do with solving problems between workers and management and between workers and governments. The sole purpose of these laws is to try to win elections. When the conservative forces of this State consider any particular dispute they should think about the contribution being made to enlarge the divisions between unions, employers and governments by their conservative friends. Industrial relations is a sensitive and emotional area. Enacting laws which divide for the sole purpose of winning elections shows that these people's priorities are not to put Australia first but to aid their own self-preservation no matter what the cost. In New South Wales and South Australia, the governments have close ties through their parties with the trade union movement. In this State we also have a government which will work with the trade union movement and the Employers Federation for the benefit of the State and will not be legislating to divide the community.

The meat industry in Tasmania has some problems which are even contributing to the price of meat. The biggest problem is the loss of livestock from this State to the mainland for slaughter. The stock farmers of this State are now gaining, like farmers in other parts of this country, a fair return for their labour and capital through increased prices for their livestock. The large shipments of livestock from Tasmania and Australia to the Middle East countries, to meet these countries' demand for protein, have created a great shortage of sheep in Australia and indirectly forced up the price of meat. Approximately 5 million live sheep were exported from Australia in 1978. That must leave a gap in the Australian sheep flock. The problem that Tasmanian meat processors are now faced with is the difficult task of trying to keep their plants viable and their skilled workforce intact with the big reduction in the number of stock available for slaughter. There are enough plants and skilled workers to process all the stock that we can produce but over the last two years no plant in this State has operated at full capacity. If plants were to close and the workforce dispersed, there would be, besides the social problems that this would create for those people