

The Hon. ROSEMARY VARTY (Nunawading Province) - Mr President, I congratulate you on your election. I am deeply honoured to finally be in this place as a representative of all the people of Nunawading Province. I sincerely thank all those people who assisted during the election campaign, and to do that, I must refer to the manner of my coming to this House. I do not need to remind honourable members that the by-election on 17 August was an historic election. It came about through the 2 March election for the province-which was decided on the casting vote of the returning officer-being declared absolutely void by the Court of Disputed Returns.

Mr Justice Starke found that:

My final conclusion therefore is that there have been errors and omissions by electoral officers which have not been shown not to affect the result and accordingly the election is absolutely void.

Throughout the intervening period from the first election until the final result on 17 August, many thousands of people have been involved in achieving a conclusive result.

I must express my special thanks and pay tribute to the work of Mr Alan Hunt. Not only has he been of great personal support to me with his wise and understanding counsel but also his work in assisting in the preparation of the case to the Court of Disputed Returns was outstanding.

I thank those people from both inside and outside the province, many of whom were not members of the Liberal Party but were concerned citizens from all walks of life, who assisted in the campaign because they recognized the importance of this election. My electorate committee so ably led by George Cox worked in conjunction with other sections of the party to plan and execute a successful campaign.

I must also place on record the co-operation, dedication and assistance of the State Electoral Office staff. The Chief Electoral Officer, Mr Richardson, tried at all times fairly to administer a cumbersome Act. As one result of the Nunawading Province decision, I hope amendments will come before this House that will clarify certain provisions and practices.

I also pay tribute to the candidates who stood, especially Bob Ives. I am sure all honourable members appreciate the tremendous amount of personal effort and sacrifice he made, together with all other candidates, over that period.

I thank my predecessors in this seat. Through redistribution, Nunawading Province is now made up of parts of two former provinces - Nunawading and Boronia. Peter Block and Gracia Baylor have both made significant contributions and given outstanding service to the Parliament of Victoria.

History records that political parties which take election results to the Court of Disputed Returns are usually rebuffed by the electorate and beaten soundly at any subsequent by-election. However, the voters of Nunawading Province were far more astute than that. They clearly understood the importance of this one seat and the ramifications of the result for the future of Victoria.

Before examining the reasons for the result, it is important to put the by-election in some historical context and perspective. Nunawading Province is a microcosm of a State. It covers portion of six municipalities, such as Box Hill at the western end of the province, where I had the honour of serving as a councillor before election to this Chamber. The province comprises municipalities

such as the Shire of Lillydale at the eastern end, where I spent my childhood and which now has some of the most rapidly developing urban areas in this State. Developing portions of the province can expect a population increase of approximately 50 per cent during the next ten years.

The province has played an important part in the economic and cultural history of Victoria; for example, the first recorded gold discovery at Andersons Creek, Warrandyte on 13 July 1851.

The first electric tram in the Southern Hemisphere ran from Box Hill to Doncaster on 14 October 1889. The first motor spray pump for use in the Doncaster orchards was built in 1892. The first woman to be elected to the Victorian Parliament at a general election was in 1937 when Ivy Lavinia Weber won the Assembly seat of Nunawading.

The area around Box Hill and Blackburn was the setting for many paintings by the artists of the Heidelberg School such as McCubbin, Roberts, Streeton and Abrahams. Such paintings as "The Artists' Camp" and the "Bush Burial" had their genesis here. This fine tradition of cultural awareness is still obvious today in the many art and craft groups in the Nunawading Province. The bush atmosphere so loved by the Heidelberg painters is still evident today in those large areas of park and open spaces preserved now as recreation areas for future generations.

Flying over the province one cannot help but be aware of the urgent need to protect this heritage. The province, shaped like a somnolent giant resting along the Yarra Valley, has as its spinal cord Whitehorse Road or Maroondah Highway. Whitehorse Road was never officially named but took its name from the hotel which was situated at the corner of Whitehorse and Elgar Roads, Box Hill. Whitehorse Road has graduated from the "deeply rutted track" of those days through "a ribbon of loose metal with rutted tracks- to the highway we know today.

I well remember my grandfather's stories of the journey along Whitehorse Road from Seville to the Melbourne markets where produce from our farm, mainly berry fruits and cherries, was carted in horse-drawn covered wagons. He told stories of his father bringing back from Melbourne corrugated iron which had travelled as deck ballast on clipper ships returning from England.

If the highway is the spine of the province, the communities, mainly residential, which radiate from it are the vital organs that function to make the province a living, growing being. These communities are being increasingly hurt by the policies and actions of this Government and are concerned for the future of their families, their jobs and their businesses. Repeatedly the people of the province gave me a very clear message, and their strongly expressed preference on polling day reinforced their concerns and that message.

Time and again the communities expressed their bewilderment at the actions of a Government which they had supported in 1982 in the belief that the interests of the people were its main concern. These communities cannot understand the downgraded role of local government and the taking away of autonomy from the municipalities on such important local issues as the establishment of brothels.

These communities have a long and proud record of voluntary community service in maintaining vital community networks which are being increasingly ignored. They rely on public transport, becoming cynical and frustrated by delays and cancellations of trains. The phantom 7.17 a.m. train from Ringwood station must haunt the Minister for Transport. These communities have their road transport increasingly delayed and their travel time extended because there is no

acknowledgment of the urgent need for the extension to the Eastern Freeway. They are concerned at the blatant misuse of union power to disrupt and destroy not only their jobs but also the businesses of those who employ them.

The trade union movement has a valid and vital role to play in our society, but it must accept that it has a moral duty to act more responsibly for the good not only of those of its members in jobs but also for the good of all those who are losing their jobs through the unprincipled actions of their unions.

Very importantly, many groups throughout Victoria - a strong coalition of basically conservative groups-are standing up and being counted and saying, "Enough is enough": These are groups whose views and needs have been ignored by Government-groups like the cattlemen, the police, the chiropractors, church groups and families.

Families in these communities cannot understand: why a health care system, which was the best in Australia some three years ago, is now one in which union power has become more important than the health needs of the community; why the Police Force is still underresourced to deal with the huge increase in crimes against person and property; why the State education system is falling behind; not only are teachers coming under greater pressure, but also the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy are being downgraded and not being treated as essential elements of a relevant and flexible education system; why businesses in the province are being squeezed more and more tightly, unable to expand and lead vital economic growth which will provide real jobs; business is being strangled by increases in costs and taxes, greater Government interference, control and regulation, and union blackmail; businesses whose workers compensation costs are set to skyrocket by some 200 per cent.

The skills I bring to this Parliament will, I hope, be utilized in such areas as Government accountability, restraint in government and the more equitable allocation and better stewardship of the resources entrusted to us. I look forward to a Victoria where there is less Government interference and regulation, where the entrepreneurial flair of people and businesses provides the opportunity of creating wealth and employment, where we return to the Christian principles of love and compassion to provide for those in real need, and where the family is the heart of our society.

I am conscious of the importance of this one seat and the responsibility this places not only on me but also on all members of the Opposition to act in a way that does not frustrate the work of Government. But let me say unequivocally that should the Government attempt to force legislation through this House without proper review and consultation with all interested parties as it did in the interregnum between 15 July and the end of the last sessional period, the Opposition will have no hesitation in calling the Government to account.

The Opposition will also call the Government to account on any proposed legislation to increase State taxes or charges above the consumer price index and any legislation which would discriminate against non-unionists in favour of unionists or which advances compulsory unionism.

I am honoured as a member of the Liberal Party to be serving as a member of this Parliament. With great humility I say that I hope my contribution will in some small way reflect the hopes and aspirations of all those people and groups who so strongly supported me.