

study in the relocation of municipal boundaries. It had been argued there, as it has been here, that small authorities were not efficient; that they did not produce the best in either efficiency, councillors or staff; that bigger must be better.

It can now be clearly stated that the new United Kingdom system has not saved any money at all. Indeed, why should it? There are still just as many people wanting the same personal services. Local government is a labour intensive industry. Boundaries do not really alter the numbers of personnel needed to deliver the services. Sir Stanley Holmes, Chief Executive of Merseyside County Council, a super town clerk of a municipality with 1.5 million people, speaking at the conference in Canberra of which I spoke earlier, said that he was left with the impression that the management consultants who structured these super-councils had, "found democracy an obstacle to efficient management". Democracy is a live and personal thing which is reflected in council elections. Sir Stanley Holmes also said—

I have always taken the view that the task of the local authority and its elected members is to find the balance between sewers and symphonies.

In council elections this is the choice of the voter. Once elected the councillor should be readily available so that Mr. Brown can be protected from bureaucracy and centralized power. I cannot justify the aggregation of municipal areas solely on the ground of economy, if the cost is the sacrifice of this basic form of democracy.

The formula under which funds are to be disbursed by the Grants Commission established by this Bill strengthens the capacity of those municipalities which have particular needs and disadvantages. This important section will, over the years, ensure, strengthen and promote local government throughout Victoria. On the ground of equity to all residents of Victoria, on the basis of my faith in the ability of councillors and their

officers, and upon the worth of this grass-roots of democracy, I support the Bill.

Having provided funds to local government on the as-of-right basis, we must now turn our attention to ensuring that the functions which are best delivered at the local level are so provided. The Minister for Local Government has recently announced the establishment of an inquiry which will undertake a review of the principles, operations and functions of local government as it presently operates under an Act which is the result of more than 100 years of accumulated legislation by this Parliament.

In conclusion, I thank all honorable members for the courtesy extended to me, both during this, my maiden speech, and since commencing membership of this House. I trust that henceforth I will be able to make a worth-while contribution to the debates of this House and that I will effectively represent all the people of Chelsea Province. I support the Bill and value its effects and consequences.

The Hon. D. M. SALTMARSH (Waverley Province) : Mr. President, although the hour is late and perhaps you are tired by having to give so close attention to the trio who have preceded me, as a final leg of the barber shop quartet I hope it will not be too difficult to listen to the few comments that I have to make on what I believe is a most important Bill.

It is an honour to speak tonight as the recently elected member for the province of Waverley. I believe that because of my experience gained through working in local government for the past six years as a social planner, and as an administrator of a diverse social development department, I should have some relevant experience to contribute to this debate. I support this very small yet most important Bill, affecting as it

will the style of local government into the future. The provisions of the Bill will give to local authorities throughout Victoria a greater opportunity to provide services for people, as well as the traditional local government property services.

Since 1971, when an amendment to the Local Government Act removed limits placed on municipal authorities in the amount of rate revenue which could be spent on non-property services, local government in Victoria has slowly but noticeably changed in character. Generally, however, it has been the larger municipalities in both rural and metropolitan areas which have accepted greater involvement in areas of planning, town planning, welfare, health and community services, as well as recreation and support for the arts. Local government in many instances is showing not only a new face but a new heart.

The Grants Commission Bill will support boldness in municipal administration and will enable genuine diversity of development to occur throughout local government because grants will not be tied, and local imagination and local initiative will be made possible. Community services will more accurately reflect community aspirations because more non-rate funds will be available to meet these needs. That having been said, however, it should be further noted that the provisions contained in this Bill will mean additional funds for local government over and above the established funding arrangements for services such as traffic control, infant welfare, libraries, home help, meals-on-wheels and other services which are provided by subsidy or by grant.

The potential for diversity of response by local government in using the additional funds released to local government through proper income tax sharing schemes will pro-

duce such a richness of administration that in the words of Auden, writing of local government—

A community may be judged by the degree of diversity attained and the degree of unity retained.

Our unity in Victoria will be the unity of understanding and response to people within our municipalities. The Government is to be commended for its enlightened support of this important principle.

Change, growth and development are key goals to be supported through this Bill and they will take place within the area of local government.

In 1971, Mr. Hamer, the then Minister for Local Government, when introducing an amendment to the Local Government Act, commented that such amendments cropped up almost like hardy annuals. These amendments, however, reflect the growing interest in and the increasing importance of local government, which today provides for functions ranging from family planning centres to, in some cases, cemeteries.

The major burden in providing community social workers and welfare workers, child-care facilities, youth services, meals-on-wheels, home help services, senior citizens' clubs, kindergartens, holiday programmes, homes and hostels for the aged and handicapped, is being assumed by local authorities working closely with Federal and State Government departments and services and with other voluntary organizations.

The goal of this Bill can properly be summed up in the words of de Toqueville, who sees local government as—

a free-standing, independent local community with residents running their own affairs and thereby strengthening democracy and increasing efficiency while relieving the central Government of administrative responsibility.

In so far as this Bill will encourage that style of local community, then it will support a noble goal for our State.

The Government, in presenting this Bill, is not only establishing an important new principle, already so clearly outlined by my colleagues, or just establishing as-of-right entitlements for municipalities to use untied grants as they see fit, but is providing for special needs and disabilities of each particular local authority to be assessed. More importantly, however, in my view, effort which is made by municipalities to function effectively and provide reasonable services will be evaluated. Support for authorities showing initiative, understanding, imagination and good management cannot be too highly commended. Clause 12 (3) (b) will encourage every Victorian municipality to respond uniquely to the special challenges and needs and be financially supported by this Government because of that application.

Many problems faced by local government are not, of course, answered entirely by the provisions of the Bill. Much growth is yet to occur. Much change has yet to be experienced. The Bill, however, is a significant catalyst in reshaping local government into the future.

From my contact with a number of municipal administrators, it is clear that local government generally welcomes the initiatives expressed in the Bill. It is significant that the City of Caulfield—portion of the city, which may be regarded as fairly wealthy, is in my province—because of the allocations through the Grants Commission, has been able to extend what already was a large home-help service. The municipality has been able to extend the service by the use of \$40,000 of additional funds so that this year, \$180,770 will be spent in the municipality supporting appropriately many of the older and frail members of the community. It assists them to remain in their own homes for as long as possible and provides some home care and treatment for people living in the areas of their choice.

The Hon. D. M. Saltmarsh.

Frequently honorable members have been bemused and perhaps confused by arguments that involvement in the sphere of local programmes is too expensive for local government authorities. I believe it should be stated clearly that where there is good and active administration, the whole range of local services are provided which meet the needs and aspirations of people but which do not necessarily cost the ratepayer a great deal in funds.

Again, I should like to quote the City of Caulfield. Its current estimate to maintain homes and hostels for the aged, for example, is covered by the provision of \$230,620. Not one cent of rate income is being spent on that programme. It is entirely self-supporting through Government grants and subsidies and through revenue received.

Child minding in the City of Caulfield has become an expensive programme. It has been necessary to set aside \$125,620 this year to maintain those services but again not one cent of rate income is being spent on that considerable programme.

It is true that, with good imagination and business management, it is possible for local government to be supported in the initial initiatives and to move into these areas to provide encouragement and show concern for people.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the members of this House for the hearing which it has given me and for the support various members have provided so generously both prior to and since my election to Parliament. I should also express my gratitude to the electors who have chosen me as their representative, and especially to a number of local people who have been staunch supporters throughout my election programme.

In serving as a member of this Parliament, I trust I will always support any worthy initiative of the people of my electorate so that in some small way I will make a worthy

contribution, not only to the electorate but also to the people of this State and their aspirations for a free society and true democracy. I believe the Bill before the House also reflects that concern. It is easy therefore for me to give the measure my wholehearted support and to commend it generously to the House.

On the motion of the Hon. F. S. GRIMWADE (Bendigo Province), the debate was adjourned.

It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until the next day of meeting.

ADJOURNMENT.

MAIDEN SPEECHES — QUALIFICATIONS OF OVERSEAS DOCTORS — DELAYS IN COURT PROCEEDINGS — BRIGHTON BEACH BATHS — INTERPRETERS IN MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTIONS.

The Hon. V. O. DICKIE (Chief Secretary) : By leave, I move—

That the Council, at its rising, adjourn until tomorrow, at a quarter to three o'clock.

The motion was agreed to.

The Hon. V. O. DICKIE (Chief Secretary) : I move —

That the House do now adjourn.

The PRESIDENT (the Hon. W. G. Fry) : We have been through an historic occasion tonight with maiden speeches from four new members. In the memory of the Leader of the House, who has been here a long while, that has not happened before in the history of this House. Certainly four maiden overs in the one night is a record, the last one almost forcing the President to clear the gallery.

The Hon. K. I. WRIGHT (North Western Province) : I bring to the attention of the Minister of Health a matter which concerns the serious shortage of medical practitioners in the country areas of the State. Two towns in the North Western Province, namely, Quambatook and Pyramid Hill, have been without medical practitioners for four or five years. In other larger towns, the number of doctors for the people is well below

the national ratio of approximately one to 2,000. In the township of Ouyen, where there is one doctor for 5,000 people, the doctor is working 24 hours a day, seven days a week trying to keep up with his work.

Some years ago when it was realized that most medical practitioners with qualifications from Australian universities were reluctant to take up practice in country areas, it was discovered that graduates of Indian universities were available to come to this country to practise. These doctors proved themselves popular with the people, skilful in their profession and adequate in every way.

An alteration in 1970 in the qualifications of the universities from which they graduated, restricted the doctors from India in their desire to come to Australia. Recently, during a visit overseas, the secretary of the Ouyen and District Hospital Committee met a medical practitioner who originally qualified from an Indian university. He later went to the United Kingdom where he practised for seven years in various capacities and became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons from the Edinburgh University.

The Ouyen and District Hospital Committee made endeavours to bring this doctor to Australia. An application was made to the Victorian Medical Board but, to the dismay of the committee, the doctor was refused permission to practise here. It is realized that he could have undergone an examination but time was of the essence and he would probably have taken six months or so to study medicine again, just as would a solicitor or valuer—

The PRESIDENT (the Hon. W. G. Fry) : Order! When does Mr. Wright intend to relate his remarks to the matter of Government administration? He has cited a good deal of history that is known to honorable members and I invite him to indicate what aspect of Government administration he wishes to raise.