

The Hon. J. E. KIRNER (Melbourne West Province) - I wish to acknowledge the Speech of His Excellency the Governor. It represents the views of the Government and emphasizes the fact which should not be forgotten by this House, that this Government has the greatest popular mandate to implement its policies of any Government for 60 years.

When my colleague, the Minister for Conservation, joined this House just three years ago, he expressed two hopes. The first was for the abolition of this House and the second was for reasonable representation of women. It gives me great pleasure both to be part of the increase in the number of Labor Party members in this House - an increase that will take the Legislative Council a step closer to abolition and to be one of the three new women members of this House. Three new Labor women members bring the male-female balance to something like 1 in 8, which is a very small step towards reasonable representation, which should be 50-50.

I also take this opportunity of paying tribute to some people who are important to the community, to the Labor Government and to myself. Firstly, I pay tribute to the Victorian Branch of the Australian Labor Party, which is made up of the people who, through our party's democratic processes, decide the policies within which the Labor Government works and select the candidates to implement those policies. I believe the strength and success of the Victorian Labor Government will very much depend on the continuing development of effective linking mechanisms between all parts of our party, including the Parliamentary wing and the public.

It is interesting to note that in the view of Richard Alston, the past president of the Victorian Liberal Party, the defeat of the previous Government on 3 April was at least partly due to the breakdown of such mechanisms within his party.

Secondly, I pay tribute to my family and friends without whose support I would not be here. The influence of each has been of equal importance. However, I would like to single out my mother, always actively involved in the fight for better education, and my father who has been clinging on to life for some five years in order to celebrate 3 April and today.

It was from my father, a fitter and turner, that I realized the importance of Labor Party ideals which include respect for each person's human dignity and the distribution of resources according to each person's need. From him I learned that I have a responsibility to be active and articulate in the community and that I have an obligation to oppose those who would deliberately create and benefit from recession while workers suffer.

The depression of the 1930s is writ large in my father's memory and it brings me no joy to see that same scene repeated even today. I am glad to be part of a Labor Government which will fight the Fraser Government's recipe for recession with all the means at its disposal.

Thirdly, I thank the people of Melbourne West for electing me to the House as one of their two representatives. I look forward to working with my Melbourne West colleague, Mrs Coxsedg, and the western suburbs community to tackle the serious problems of unemployment, pollution, under-education, lack of public housing, transport, health, age, and youth and children's services.

Already residents of western suburbs are feeling greatly encouraged about their futures under a Labor Government with the recent promise of the Minister for Planning for a community-based and community-supported study of zoning in the west. Local residents were particularly impressed - in fact they could hardly believe it - by the guarantee of the Minister for Planning of equity with the polluters at any hearing. This is in marked contrast to the position of the former

Government.

Fourthly, I pay tribute to the people with whom I have worked over the past ten years and with whom I have developed my commitment to participation and equality of educational outcomes. In particular I compliment the Government school council and parent organizations throughout the State and nationally for their invaluable educational leadership and their watchdog role in the development of a public system of education.

Without their role and crucial alliance with teacher organizations, the Federal Government's transfer of funds from public to private schools would have been far greater. As it stands, from 1976 to 1983 Government schools suffered a 10 per cent reduction in Commonwealth funds while private schools, regardless of need, enjoyed a 77 per cent increase.

I commit myself as a politician to work with Labor Party policies to ensure that the contributions of parent and school council organizations to education is recognized and supported by Governments in terms of our primary obligation to a quality Government school system, legislated rights for parent participation in decision-making, the encouragement of a collaborative process involving parents, teachers and students as equal partners in the development of educational policies and adequate resources for community organizations to perform their important roles of information and advocacy.

It is important for Governments to spell out the principles and values which underlie their actions. My actions in this Parliament and in my Parliamentary duties will be centred on my commitment to the three great principles of the Labor Party: Firstly, social democracy, that is, the redistribution of power so that it is shared equally by all people; secondly, social justice, that is, the redistribution of resources to ensure that all people live equally well; and, thirdly, freedom and a commitment to freedom of speech, education, assembly, organization and religion.

I conclude by outlining some examples of what those three principles might look like translated into Labor Government practice. The Government's commitment to the five great freedoms will be reflected and protected by legislation for freedom of information and for a Victorian Bill of Rights. I look forward to the Government's freedom of information legislation, giving the community full rights to discuss all the details of Government and administrative decision-making subject only to the requirement of essential security and individual privacy. Although, as a former lobbyist, it will not be half as much fun as collecting information from the back of a truck