

COMMISSION TO SWEAR MEMBERS.

The SPEAKER (the Hon. W. J. F. McDonald) informed the House that he had received from His Excellency the Governor a commission authorizing him to administer the oath of allegiance to such members as had not already taken and subscribed the same since their election.

JUSTICES (AMENDMENT) BILL.

Mr. BOLTE (Premier and Treasurer).—In accordance with the usual practice, and in order to preserve the privileges of this House, I move for leave to bring in a Bill to amend the Justices Act.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

The SPEAKER (the Hon. W. J. F. McDonald).—I have the honour to report that the House this day attended His Excellency the Governor, in the Legislative Council Chamber, when His Excellency was pleased to make a Speech to both Houses of Parliament, of which, for greater accuracy, I have obtained a copy. As the Speech is printed, and copies are in the hands of honorable members, it will not be necessary for me to read it.

Mr. LOXTON (Pahran).—I move—

That the following Address, in reply to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor to both Houses of Parliament, be agreed to by this House:—

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

We, the Legislative Assembly of Victoria in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the gracious Speech which you have been pleased to address to Parliament.

During the life of the last Parliament, we were honoured to welcome Her Most Gracious Majesty, the Queen, and His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh, to Victoria and we trust that during the period of this Parliament we may again have the honour of welcoming His Royal Highness for the period during which the Olympic Games are to be held in

Melbourne. I appreciate the honour conferred on my constituency by my selection as the mover of this motion and feel sure that the proposals embodied in the Governor's Speech will win the support of the great majority of members. In my opinion, the problems confronting Victoria at the present time are very human, and I am confident that legislation proposed to relieve them will be accepted by this House and by the people of Victoria, irrespective of party affiliations.

I was particularly pleased with the proposal to increase State Savings Bank advances for home ownership from the present limit of £2,500 to £4,000, because I am convinced that one of the major worries in our community to-day is caused by the shortage of housing. There are many instances of overcrowding in homes in my electorate, and I feel that I shall not be wasting the time of honorable members by quoting a case with which I am familiar. A person who rents a house in a certain area for £1 a week has sublet the front verandah to a man, his wife, and four children—at a charge of £5 a week. That is a scandalous state of affairs. The proposal of the Government is designed to alleviate this type of distress, and I shall welcome the introduction of the Bill which, in effect, will create homes for those who desire to own their own houses instead of drifting from one inadequate place to another. It will enable them to truly say that they have a stake in this great country's future. Likewise, it will help the young people of our community who, at the moment, find the prohibitive deposit required for home ownership far beyond their means. In the opinion of my party, home ownership is one of the greatest forces for good in the community.

The immediate plans to abolish sub-standard housing are most welcome. The municipality of Pahran has already prepared its own plan in order to achieve this desirable result and has created a fund in order to finance its scheme. That is indicative of the team spirit which I commend to the House and to the people of Victoria in order that we may improve the living standards of many citizens.

In regard to the subletting of properties, the Landlord and Tenant Act must be amended so as to ensure that the rents charged will at least be fair to the landlord, to the tenant and to the sub-tenant. In the opinion of my party, further amendments must also be made to the Act to enable property owners to improve and maintain their properties, with mutual benefit to both parties. It must be obvious to all honorable members and to the public generally that a ridiculous situation arises when we see one new house built in the outer metropolitan area and find that in the inner area two old ones are falling down for the want of urgent repairs.

By all means at its disposal, the Government intends to improve the living standards of the people. I have been interested throughout my life in the welfare of children, and I appreciate proposals designed to improve their education. There is a great shortage of teachers, and endeavours must be made to increase the recruitment and training facilities for these important members of the community. I am concerned particularly with the physical development of children, and I quote words used by a famous Parliamentarian of the past, *mens sana in corpore sano*—a sound mind in a sound body. I consider that to be the prime requirement of a healthy citizen, and healthy citizens are what we are looking for at the present time. In my electorate I am already planning to ensure that more school children participate in sport after school. I offer that as a suggestion to other members because there is an urgent need in congested areas to see that school children are kept off the streets as much as possible.

I was also pleased to note that special reference was made in the Governor's Speech to the care of the mentally ill. For a long time, I have thought that persons suffering mental disorders should be cared for in the same way as are the physically sick. The first step to achieve this objective is to place the Mental Hygiene Authority directly under the control of the Minister of Health because our public hospitals are controlled by the Minister through the

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Hospitals and Charities Commission. His Excellency also mentioned that the Government of Victoria intends to co-operate with the Federal Government in a rebuilding plan designed to eliminate overcrowding in mental institutions. From statements already made by the Prime Minister, it would appear that funds for this purpose will be available in the near future. Therefore, we must ensure that every effort is made to streamline the building activities of the State so that this work may be undertaken as rapidly as possible.

I consider that there is one further way in which we can attack the problem of the mentally ill. Many of the mental disorders of patients are caused by old age, and I am certain that these elderly people would be much happier and better cared for in special homes, preferably in the districts in which they have always lived. I am told that the cost of looking after them in that way would be far less than it is in mental institutions. The Commonwealth Government agrees with this view and it has already legislated to subsidize church and other charitable organizations on a pound for pound basis, in order to cover the cost of building homes for elderly people of this description. I sincerely hope that during the life of this Parliament we shall be able to provide many such homes. My party is convinced that they offer one of the most economical and effective means of solving the problem of overcrowded institutions in Victoria. Further, such a scheme would enable doctors in mental institutions to devote more of their precious time to patients who have a reasonable chance of recovering from their affliction.

The Government has shown the way in which it will, with quick and decisive action, tackle the major needs of this great State, and we look forward to seeing the full implementation of its programme in the coming months. I have much pleasure in moving the motion and, at the same time, I express our continued loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and our thanks to His Excellency the Governor, for his Speech.