

In rising to speak in this House tonight and making my first presentation to the people of Australia, I am deeply conscious of the very great privilege that has been conferred upon me by the people of my electorate of Canning.

I desire to be associated with the Motion for the adoption of the Address-in-Reply to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor-General so ably moved by the honourable Member for Warringah and seconded by the honourable Member for Gippsland and I would like to compliment them of their presentation, and likewise the honourable Member opposite who has just made his Maiden speech. And I trust that I may be able to emulate their considerable eloquence.

This seat was previously held by Mr Len Hamilton, and for a period of 12 years which is since its inception, and during this period he came to enjoy considerable respect throughout the Division, and it is my hope that I can rise to the occasion and at least equally represent the wishes and the ambitions of the people of the electorate.

Sir, I have been prepared to accept great responsibilities in this task and I believe that this responsibility transcends all boundaries imposed by political beliefs, on electoral and State borders. It transcends also all social classes and distinctions, and expressly conveys a sentiment of service to the people of this Nation in whatever way it shall appear necessary and desirable from time to time.

Perhaps this suggests an idealism, and this, I consider, to be not undesirable in any Member of this House, and certainly in a new one, because to me this does indicate a sincerity of purpose.

On this occasion, Mr Speaker, I would like to present a brief description of the Division of Canning, an area of over 35,000 sq. miles, and including a large part of Western Australia's agricultural areas.

I have travelled widely throughout Australia, Sir, and I believe that my electorate represents a fair cross-section of the people, their activities, of this land, and, in fact, there may be few electorates which display a more diverse range of industries. It includes a portion of the outer metropolitan area of Perth and a vast area of well-endowed agricultural land; it includes the major industrial area of Kwinana – which, as a result of the magnificently progressive work of the State and the Federal Governments, I now seeing immense development taking place in the establishment of heavy – and other – industries.

The dairying and irrigation areas are also well represented and closely associated with them, the timber industry which has played an extremely important part in the development of Western Australia.

Perhaps, though, the Division is best known for its wool and grain growing propensities in the great Southern – an area whose fame – and products – have long preceded me into this part of the Commonwealth.

The electorate – with a production of over 25 million bushels of grain, 289,000 bushels of fruit, 18 million gallons of milk and 51 million lb. of wool, might well be regarded as essentially an agricultural one, but one must not overlook either the ever-increasing possibilities for production of minerals, of bauxite, of copper and the rarer metals.

I have made this survey, Sir, with the indulgence of this House, to draw attention to the huge contributions that are being made in the field of exports which is, of course, in common with the entire State, and I take this opportunity of mentioning that this represents in value 212 Pounds per head of population, on all overseas exports. This leads me to comment, Sir, that this justifies any consideration which this Government may be prepared to give to assist in future development – in development in secondary industries, in establishment of new lands, and, very importantly, in communications and the now normal amenities of life.

We are, I believe, well aware of the importance of our agricultural production, and export, and this has been stressed in the Speech given by His Excellency, and I would like to refer to a subject which is closely related to that mentioned in the Speech as follows: (line 26 and line 30, page 3).

It is fact that farm incomes have fallen in the country, and there have been periods when funds for development and improvements have been in short supply and I would like to emphasise that the provision of long term finance in farming operations is absolutely vital. This, Sir, is a lesson which has been impressed upon me not only from my own experiences in farming, but also from observations in overseas study and in my years in agricultural extension work. I was therefore gratified to hear also in the Speech of the Governor-General of the increased funds made available to the Commonwealth Development Bank for this and other purposes, and I believe that from the service provided by that Bank in its two years of operations – that it is – and will be – one of the greatest things emanating at Government level that has happened to the agricultural industry.

In many departmental and expert surveys into the respective industries, the conclusion has been reached that, as well as in addition to the need for finance, education or the extension of improved methods ranks as one of the most important considerations in farming efficiency.

I am therefore delighted as the reference to this in the Governor-General's Speech.

I do, however, believe, Sir, that there is something fundamental to the acceptance of information made available through extension services. I refer to preliminary agricultural education.

I am aware that excellent facilities do exist throughout the Commonwealth at agricultural colleges, and secondary schools for training in practical and theoretical agriculture, and which can equip young people for the task of taking up properties and farming them well. However, by far the greatest number have no such opportunities available to them except through the operations of certain youth organisations functioning in each State which, under present conditions, are quite unequal to the enormous task which confronts them. I would like to draw attention to a comparison at this stage, between the facilities available in technical training and the requirements or standard demanded in technical ability by the various trades by way of apprenticeships and so on, and those which exist for workers in agriculture.

Now this, I consider, to be of the greatest importance from several points of view. First, let me refer to figures from Western Australia – and they may apply in other States also. New land is being brought into production at a rate of approximately three quarters of a million acres per year and has shown an increase from 15.9 million acres in 1940/41 to 25.4 million acres in 1961, and in light of present knowledge it may be estimated that of the remaining 40 million acres approximately remaining in the agricultural areas not less than one-quarter of it can be regarded as potentially agriculturally productive land. Now, this suggests that, apart from subdivision of existing properties, this land, in the main, will be taken up by a new generation of farmers, and I therefore consider that not only will it be eminently desirable that finance be available for the purpose, but also that the knowledge will be sufficient to provide for enlightened methods in farming, farm management and marketing processes.

This I regard of national importance because while the primary industries continue to so largely finance this country, we will undoubtedly face greater competition in world markets. It becomes even more vital then, that if we are to face the future with a degree of confidence we must have a continuing crop of young farmers, well versed in that industry, who, if they are given the encouragement and the opportunity, can be better farmers than their parents, can achieve a higher efficiency and utilise the good earth on more advanced principals of husbandry.

Sir, it is not my intention to display an undue preoccupation with problems in agriculture, because I consider that our second industries should also receive the benefit of enlightened technical training, as it is in these that we can provide for the absorption of that desirably large population which can contribute so greatly to the social and economic security of this Nation.

Development has been a key word in the politics of this country and I regard development in these fields of human endeavour no less important than the physical development of the Continent which has very rightly received so much attention in this House.