

[4 April 1989.]

**MR OMODEI** (Warren) [7.17 pm]: I join with my fellow members in congratulating you, Mr Speaker, on your election to the position of Speaker of this House. I also congratulate the newly elected members. At this time, in my first speech to this House, I am more conscious than ever before of the responsibility which has been placed on me by the electors of Warren to represent them in the best possible way.

My family played a great part in my election to this Parliament. It is a far cry from a small town called Tirano in the mountains of Northern Italy, to Gwalia in the goldfields of Western Australia, to a condemned group settlement block in karri country in the Pemberton district, to these hallowed halls of the Parliament of Western Australia. The family farm at Eastbrook has now been farmed for more than 60 years and compares well with some of the best farmland in this State. I am very proud of the contribution which my family has made to the district in which it lives.

It is from this ethnic and farming background that I come to this place to further my contribution to the community in which I live and to represent the Warren electorate. It would be remiss of me not to mention my campaign committee which worked so diligently to change the political representation in the new seat of Warren. There are too many names to mention. Many people spent their time doorknocking, canvassing and making sure that a Liberal represented the seat of Warren after 50 years of Labor representation. Among those who helped in my election were my wife, Ros, and my family who were raw recruits in the 1986 election. It was because of their campaigning that we made tremendous strides and worked so relentlessly that we were able to make my winning the seat of Warren in the 1989 election a reality.

Apart from my campaign chairman and committee who worked so hard, I wish to mention my treasurer, Mr Len Blyth, who was an inspiration to us all during the campaign. I pay tribute also to the retiring member, Hon H.D. Evans, who represented the electorate since 1968. I wish him and his wife well in their retirement.

The electorate of Warren takes in the south west corner of Western Australia and encompasses the shires of Manjimup, Bridgetown, Nannup, part of the Augusta-Margaret River shire - excluding the Margaret River townsite - and all of the area south of the Margaret River to the mouth of the Blackwood River. My electorate takes in some 13 000 square kilometres and includes some of the best country in Western Australia. The electorate of Warren has some marvellous natural resources. Most importantly it has a rugged coastline and it enjoys some of the most beautiful physical features of the Western Australian landscape, from the magnificent surf beaches at the mouth of the Margaret River, to the caves at Margaret River-Augusta, to the magnificent karri, jarrah and marri forests in the Manjimup-Pemberton and Nannup-Northcliffe areas, to the yellow tingle in Walpole. My electorate includes coastal land, rich fertile horticultural land and lakes and rivers, including the mighty Blackwood River which travels through Bridgetown and Nannup to Augusta, the Warren River, the Lefroy River, the Carey Brook, the Treen, the Deep, the Franklin, the Wilgarup, the Tone, the Perup, the Gardiner and the Donnelly.

The Warren electorate is in the high rainfall area of this State and has within it some of the best farmland in Western Australia. The dairy industry continues to flourish in the area despite the Kerin plan which caused losses of up to and in excess of \$10 000 per milk quota. The south west dairy industry is fortunate to be located in some of the best dry land dairy farming country in Australia. It boasts some of the best grazing country for beef and sheep, and the wool industry is enjoying good prices which will allow farmers to plan for their future.

Unfortunately, the beef industry has not enjoyed the same good fortune. The pesticide residue issue has caused many problems and it is incumbent on this Government to put measures in place for the continued protection of our domestic export market. The measures in place at this stage need to be maintained. They include the fat testing of beef cattle for pesticide residues, the buy-back scheme in areas with chemical residue problems, and consideration of compensation for farmers who are adversely affected because of the actions of Government instrumentalities.

The very fact that the electorate of Warren enjoys high rainfall and good soil types means that it has some of the best horticulture land in the State. In spite of the criticism levelled at Sir James Mitchell in the early development of this State about his group settlement scheme and all the connotations attached to the scheme it has proved to be a success. It may have taken 60 years - 60 years of hardship for those farmers who took up the land in the 1920s - but the high rainfall, good soil types and the availability of good surface water has proved that the Warren electorate is the land of milk and honey.

The horticulture industry is of major importance not only to the economic viability of the electorate of Warren, but also it provides employment opportunities. A case in point is the area with which I am most familiar; that is, the Manjimup Shire Council area. It grows 45 per cent of the State's potatoes, 50 per cent of the State's cauliflowers, and 32 per cent of the State's apples. Other important crops in this area are onions, beans and peas for processing, Chinese cabbage and exotic crops such as Kiwi fruit and avocados.

The Blackwood Valley has historically been famous for its apple production and there is no doubt in my mind that, with the evolution of new micro-irrigation techniques, the future for horticultural production is still a reality

in this locality. It will depend, of course, on whether this Government continues to plant this fertile valley with large scale pine plantations.

In so far as the Manjimup-Pemberton area is concerned the establishment of the Edgell Birdseye processing plant will further boost production of potatoes in that region and by 1992 the processing plant will require over 40 000 tonnes of potatoes - it is expected to increase the production of potatoes twofold. Members of this House will recall the ailing Manjimup Canning Company and its problems. It is now history that a group of farmers in the Manjimup-Pemberton area, with the help of the State Government, were able to facilitate the sale of the old cannery to Edgell Birdseye.

Mr Speaker, it is vital that we continue to evaluate the potential for production and downstream processing in the horticulture sphere. To this extent the Manjimup Horticultural Research Centre should receive adequate funding to ensure that research into all aspects of agriculture, horticulture and floriculture continues. Research facilities should be extended so that the plant propagation techniques may be investigated, including tissue culture and plant genetic improvements, so that these techniques may be used for both horticulture and the production of our native tree species.

The potential for viticulture in this area has already been recognised and will complement the vineyards and wineries of Margaret River and the great southern.

I turn now to another industry within my electorate that has received great media attention in recent times and which has some emotional aspects to it that sometimes cloud the real issues. I refer to the timber industry. In recent times this Government, to its credit, put in place plans and strategies for forest management which have secured the tenure of what were once management priority areas but are now national parks, and also has secured a percentage of the forest for wood production. This has taken place with the consultation of foresters, the timber industry, conservationists and the broader community. Great emotion is being attached to the cutting down of mature age trees, whether karri, marri, blackbutt or yellow tingle. However, rather than be led by the nose by some extremist elements in the community, I urge members and people who are interested in forest issues to take the opportunity to tour the forests and seek advice from reliable sources.

Another aspect to the timber industry is the paper wood industry, or the woodchip industry, and the timber industry now exports some 800 000 tonnes of raw woodchip product. Often there is great debate about the validity of information when decisions are made to harvest timber, including timber for wood or paper production. The reality is that every person in this House lives in a dwelling substantially constructed with the aid of timber products. Every day we use wood and paper products. There is no doubt that there is a great need to recycle a large percentage of this product. However, we need to make available the same opportunity we have enjoyed to young Australians. The collapse of the Wesley Vale project for paper pulp in Tasmania has now focused attention on Western Australia where a paper pulp plant has been proposed for some time. It should be made perfectly clear that any proposed paper mill in the south west should not be built unless it meets the highest environmental standards. Any paper mill built in Western Australia must be super clean by prevailing world standards. Every possible alternative processing method should be investigated. We must value-add our raw products, but we must take into account the cost to the community, including the environmental cost.

I know that in other parts of the world the Kraft chlorine process for wood pulping has been one of the most polluting processes. Emissions of sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere have been shown to adversely affect horticultural crops. I place on record the fact that although I do not oppose the construction of a pulp plant in Western Australia I believe that any new pulp plant must be clean and environmentally acceptable to the community. Australia's import bill for forest products is in the vicinity of \$1.5 billion to \$1.7 billion yet our exports of forest products amount to a mere \$400 million. It is obvious from this exercise that a considerable proportion of this is paper or paper products.

This leads me to the production of forest plantations and the need for replanting insofar as soil conservation is concerned. There is no doubt that the huge problem of salinity in Western Australia has emanated from an over clearing of native forests. It is my wish that while I am a representative of the people of Warren in this Parliament the Government, whatever its colour, takes steps to redress the current land degradation problem. This will be made possible by supporting soil conservation district committees and by planting trees on agricultural and forest land. At the same time, I make clear that any large plantings of plantation forests on agricultural land should only take place after the economic impact on the agricultural industry has been determined.

We do need to plant trees to combat salinity, whether they be native or exotic species. So far as the agricultural industry is concerned, tree planting for wood lots, shelter belts, and plantings on the landscape to combat salinity appear to be the best and most economically sensible direction to take. I call on this Government to reconsider its policy of not planting exotic species in State forests and to allow the reforestation and planting of low conservation areas of many millions of acres of Western Australia. It is incumbent on us as members to ensure that the Government of this State takes steps to restore our landscape to a reasonable level of what existed in the early days of land selection. In saying that I do not mean that we should replant every acre, but suggest that with proper planning we may be able to maintain, enhance and improve agricultural production. The various

Government departments should not just concentrate on the higher rainfall areas of this State for reforestation but also on those areas suffering from serious salinity problems and soil degradation.

Tourism is also an industry that is flourishing in the Warren electorate. The abundance of natural physical attractions including lands, forests, rugged coastline, inlets and vistas are second to none in this State. It is important that we maximise our natural resources in this industry and ensure that information is made available and development of marketing strategies takes place. I invite you, Mr Speaker, and other members to inspect the wineries of Margaret River, the Blackwood Valley, the forests of Nannup and the Windy Harbour plains, Deadman's Lake, the mighty forests and farmlands of Manjimup and Pemberton-Northcliffe, Mt. Chudalup, the inlets of Broke and Walpole, and the mighty Tingle.

I turn now to another phase of life in our community and more particularly in my own electorate of Warren. There is no doubt that although we need to make a commitment to a fair society based on firm economic foundations there is also a vital need for a social strategy that will assist all Western Australians. I believe that families in Western Australia should come first. There is no doubt whatever that the family composition is the fundamental unit in our society, and no other institution has such importance and responsibility. We must ensure that communities are able to plan and program development so that local needs and conditions are met.

It is the responsibility of members of this House and the Government of Western Australia to promote fairness in the distribution of resources, to ensure that all people have adequate access to services essential to their quality of life, and to provide the fullest opportunity for all people to participate in personal development and social community life. Church groups and other community organisations should be assisted in ensuring that the needs of our communities are met. Organisations such as Home and Community Care and Silver Chain are vital to the wellbeing of our communities, particularly those comprising people in their twilight years. It is incumbent on us to ensure that the people who have spent their energies for the benefit of this State are catered for in their retirement.

Our other great resource, of course, is our young people. The youth of today face greater challenges than ever before. To assist them we must develop programs with the objective of ensuring that all young Australians, and in particular young Western Australians, have access to information and programs and a choice of opportunity. We must encourage them to develop their own potential and to lead productive lives. We must encourage them to do more rather than less, and to embrace the principles of family and family life, and to take part in community affairs and make a contribution to the community for the benefit of future generations.

Education is a vital ingredient of this proposal. We must ensure that all children have access to a quality education, if necessary providing extra alternatives or tuition for those less academically inclined. We would be far better off putting in place education and training measures than allowing children to go on to school for social interaction. To this end the Government has much to answer for. Changes to our education system have been put in place too quickly and have led to confusion for students, teachers and parents alike. As a parent of teenage children I find our education system encourages students to take easy subjects and, in so doing, to achieve a higher TEE score. That is the state of play at the moment. Surely this is counterproductive. We need to encourage our students to aim higher. There is no doubt in my mind that the marking procedure should take into account the degree of difficulty of subjects.

My colleague, Mr Tubby, the member for Dale, expounded his opinion of the education system last May in his maiden speech to this Parliament, Mr Speaker. The education of children depends not only on administration and curriculum, but also on facilities. I bring this matter to the attention of the House for good reasons. There are 19 schools in my electorate most of which are in desperate need of renovation or replacement. Much of their equipment is in excess of 20 years old. We expect the students to leave school after using 20 year old typewriters and be able to use modern computer keyboards.

The Bridgetown High School requires a library and administration centre; Manjimup requires more classrooms; Augusta, a new administration centre; Northcliffe, new classrooms; Pemberton, a new school; Walpole, new classrooms; and at Nannup children are being taught in an old single men's quarters shack which was constructed on the school site. It is not good enough and it is time that these pressing needs were treated as a priority.

I turn now to our roads. The Federal and State fuel tax levies are the most iniquitous levies ever to be imposed on a section of the community. Roads within the Warren electorate are used extensively by interstate and local residents and are in dire need of repair and upgrading. The South Western Highway and the Muirs Highway are only three to four metres wide in places. Much of the road length has subsided through waterlogging and there is not enough provision for passing lanes on crests or curves. Despite some attention to the road north of Manjimup road reconstruction is still imperative.

Members of this House would be aware of the concern in the community with regard to road standards in this State. The Country Shire Councils Association, the RAC, and the Australian Automobile Association are mounting a strong campaign in regard to this matter. It is now an electorate issue. It will be to the peril of Governments both State and Federal to ignore this issue. It is important also to note that the safety of our school children and the efficiency of our school bus services rely on good road surfaces. This House has an obligation

to ensure that this State Government and the Federal Government make a greater apportionment of State and Federal fuel tax levies for the construction of better roads.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence. Although the Government is concerned with the quality of life of all Western Australians whatever their circumstances its most pressing charge is for the improvement of the position of all those who are most disadvantaged. I look forward to the challenge of playing a part in the better Government of this great State of Western Australia. I thank you.

[Applause.]