

which are not in keeping with gentlemanly debate. We do not get much of a deal out of that, and we do not get much of a deal unless we argue from strength.

This Government does not have strength. Strength is where the purse is, and it is the Liberal Party which has allowed the Australian Government to have power over the purse.

The SPEAKER: The honourable member's time has expired.

MR P. V. JONES (Narrogin) [9.51 p.m.]: May I join with those who have preceded me in this debate in congratulating you, Mr Speaker, on your elevation to the Chair, and thanking the members of the staff who have started to round off the corners of a rough country member.

Earlier in this debate the Leader of the Opposition, in welcoming new members, indicated it was a privilege to serve and suggested some of us may prove to be birds of passage. I am only the fourth member for Narrogin since 1911, and I trust I will not be a bird of passage. Indeed, I say, with respect, that the Leader of the Opposition entered this House the year I was born, so perhaps I can aspire to equalling his record.

I would also like to refer to Mr W. A. Manning, my predecessor, who at present lies seriously indisposed. Since coming to this House I have found he was held in very high regard here, as he certainly was in the electorate. I hope I can earn some of the respect he has earned over many years.

The electorate of Narrogin is similar to the other agriculturally based electorates we have been hearing about for some days. It varies a little so far as its products are concerned, but the problems are the same, and the aspirations of the people and the things they are trying to achieve are basically the same.

The electorate of Narrogin embraces 10 local authorities which are temporarily impoverished at the present time; I think I am right in saying that. It has nine country towns which are supported entirely by primary industry. More especially, they are moving towards the inevitable growth of service centres—the regionalism we have heard about previously. Some of the country towns are dying, a few are growing, and some are static at this point of time; but we are moving towards the inevitable formation of the service town, and Narrogin has its share of that. This trend is evident in the rest of the western world, where the numbers of rural holdings are declining.

In 1970 I made a study tour to Europe to investigate this matter. At that time, 1 000 acres of land were being lost to urban and regional development every day

through additional highways, urban sprawl, and so on. Of that area, 100 acres were in the United Kingdom.

This trend brings problems for us in two main areas. One is a decline in the commercial viability of businesses in rural towns; the second is related to the problems which were very aptly stated by the member for Geraldton last night—the problems of extending education, health services, and similar public spending to a static or declining population.

It is becoming very difficult indeed for commercial enterprises to continue in existence and to give the same level of service as in the past. We are now reaching the stage where increasing prices are being forced upon those businesses through increased freight rates, rising wages, and so on. In many cases it is only the loyalty of the surrounding community which keeps a business operative.

In the case of educational facilities and so on, I do not think it is an overstatement to say the people who live in rural communities are becoming more and more penalised. Mention has been made of the problems associated with providing equality in education. At the present time the living-away-from-home allowance which is paid by the Commonwealth is being used in such a way as to dictate the subjects which will be taught and the courses which will be followed at certain schools.

I can quote the case of a third-year student who was told by the Commonwealth authorities to stop following a particular course—namely, a language course—because that course was available only at a certain school and the student was told to go to another school which is closer to her home. The student will therefore receive the living-away-from-home allowance for attending that school only. Despite repeated pleas to the Commonwealth Regional Director of Education, it has been clearly stated that the student must attend the nearest school, regardless of the course she wishes to follow.

I agree with the member for Geraldton when he refers to equality of opportunity in education. It is becoming more and more difficult to provide opportunities for rural children similar to those available to children in the metropolitan area. It would be going too far to suggest the opportunities should be the same, but I do not think it is going too far to suggest the opportunities should not fall so far behind as they seem to be in danger of doing.

Another matter which should be well organised to ensure the survival of rural communities is the marketing of their products. A little over a year ago I represented this State overseas for some weeks in connection with the marketing of a particular primary product in Japan, Russia, and Europe. This was to talk with

our customers, the people on whom we depend to buy the products we produce. As a result of some very wide-ranging discussions with these people, it really came home to me how ineffective our marketing system has been over many years.

Whilst many results flowed from these meetings, I believe the one I have just mentioned is the most important. It can be boiled down to this: that whilst farmers are production experts, they are not always marketing experts.

One thing we tend to overlook when we talk about marketing our farm products is that we need to consider what our customers want in a marketing organisation. When we set up a body to do our marketing, we take into account the producers of the product and those at this end of the line. We do not always consider what sort of organisation would be the best for our customers to deal with. There is no more important aspect of marketing than that the organisation to market our primary products has to be credible, and it has to be credible to our customers. I feel that this has not always been the case in the past, but we are moving very much in that direction.

I would like to refer to one other aspect of rural marketing; that is, we do not know enough about our customers and what they really want. One of the reasons for my trip in Japan was to deliver a speech to a businessmen's association there. After I had completed this very pleasant task, a considerable number of questions were directed to me. These questions really brought home the lesson that we do not know very much about our customers. For example, I was asked how much I knew about the Japanese distribution system, financial arrangements, and the dietary habits of the people whom we wish to buy our products. I had to admit that I knew very little, and it was quite obvious that whilst the Japanese knew a great deal about us and our production and business methods, we knew very little about theirs.

I assure members that when I returned here I made a very strong recommendation that we must make every effort to know more about those with whom we deal and what they want from us.

In general, I would just like to join with the other members representing rural electorates and continue with what I see as the thread running through all their remarks in this debate. Perhaps it could be summarised in this way: the rural communities must not be allowed to fall too far behind in the general development of the State. I do not believe this will happen if we are aware of the problem, but we must be vigilant to make certain that it does not happen. I have referred

to the most serious areas of concern—education, health, the provision of facilities for country people, and the marketing of the primary products.

I am perhaps unique amongst the new members in one way in that I am not only new to this House, but also new to Western Australia; I moved here a very short time ago from Tasmania. I am not quite certain about the remarks made by the member for Gascoyne when he referred to the size of his electorate in relation to Tasmania—am I only 40 per cent a member?

When I mentioned to my father that it was my intention to attempt to become a member of this House he said he hoped I might become a member of Parliament, but that I would not indulge in politics!

The people of the Narrogin electorate have elected a new member of Parliament—I trust that they, and this House, will never have cause to regret their choice.

**MR BATEMAN (Canning)** [10.04 p.m.]: I suppose, Mr Speaker you are starting to become a little sick and tired of being congratulated. However, it would be improper of me not to join with all the other speakers who have congratulated you on your appointment to the high office of Speaker. I would also like to congratulate all the new members here tonight—I see some of them are not in the Chamber.

I reflect back to the time six years ago when I made my maiden speech. At the time the member for Victoria Park (Mr Davies) was the party Whip. He came to me every night and said, "Are you ready to speak?" For a long time I replied, "No, I am not ready." I put it off as long as possible, but eventually I stood in my place and spoke to the Address-in-Reply. I remember the occasion clearly; I will never forget it—my boots were full of water from sweating. It is one of the jobs we accept when we enter the House but I know how awe-inspiring it can be to stand up here for the first time.

I also remember that when I entered politics I thought I would set the world on fire. As members know, I have been here for six years and I still have not set the world on fire—and I do not think I ever will. I say to the new members who feel the same way, "Look at the blue book in front of you and you will see that it controls all our actions." It is sometimes not possible to do the things we want to do. Nevertheless, I am sure all the new members will do a good job in the House and in their electorates.

When I spoke to the Address-in-Reply some years ago, I remarked that I was never very impressed with this debate. I feel we waste days and nights when we should get on with the business of the