



Speech by

Mrs J. GAMIN

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

Hansard 15 September 1998

MR W. CALLINAN

Mrs GAMIN (Burleigh—NPA) (12.08 p.m.): William Martin Callinan was well known and greatly loved as the principal of Miami State High School for 17 years until his retirement in April 1986. He was born on 20 April 1926 and he died on 29 August 1998 at the age of 72 years.

It was a huge funeral at the Catholic Church at Burleigh Heads, attended by former students, past teachers, fellow principals, old footballers and people from all walks of life. His family paid most moving tributes, as did his old friend and colleague in education, Dr Jim Lally, and beloved ex-pupil Wayne "Rabbit" Bartholomew, who became a surfing legend. As I speak today about Bill Callinan, I am using their words and I am also quoting extensively—and with permission—from an article by Jim Lally in Gold Coast Life Magazine in May 1986 and which was reproduced in the Order of Service at Bill's funeral on 4 September.

Bill Callinan was born in 1926 in the suburb of Coorparoo, attended the local primary school and then completed Junior at Brisbane State High. In 1942 he was awarded a teacher's scholarship in the first intake of trainees to enter the Kelvin Grove College. In 1944 he began primary school teaching and also completed his senior matriculation by private study in one year. Almost immediately he embarked on his Bachelor of Arts degree as an external student from the University of Queensland and he completed the very demanding Diploma in Physical Education by 1949.

Bill was a great sportsman and a noted footballer. He played for Souths Rugby League Club, then switched to Easts in 1947. He captained Brisbane in Bulimba Cup matches and made the Queensland side in 1949.

Bill was transferred to Toowoomba High School in 1950. He captained and coached highly successful and almost unbeatable Toowoomba sides that included many great Rugby League players and he played for Queensland against England, France, New Zealand and New South Wales. The great and famous Duncan Thompson is quoted as saying that football politics was all that kept Bill out of the Australian team. If the Queensland selector—who of course was Duncan Thompson—had had his way, instead of the New South Wales selectors, Bill Callinan would not only have been a member of the 1952 Kangaroo team to England and France but he would have captained it. Duncan Thompson said Bill was the cleverest footballer he had ever coached.

While still on the subject of football, a couple of Bill Callinan's mates in this Parliament speak very fondly of him. The member for Beaudesert, Kev Lingard, was coached by Bill in the seven stone seven team that went to New South Wales in 1957. Kev Lingard is very proud that he won Bill Callinan's best and fairest trophy, presented after that match by the great man himself.

The member for Southport, who is not in the Chamber at the moment, remembers that Bill Callinan used to come to Souths with Pat Kelly—later host of the Miami Hotel. They used to give Mick pointers at every game. "Should we give up on this bloke", they wondered, "or should we stick with him?" Bill thought it was all taking far too long, but his coaching and encouragement eventually paid dividends and Mick went on to play for Queensland and then Australia. There are other members of this House who knew him well and greatly admired him.

Bill and Joyce were married in 1950 and had three children of whom he was terribly proud, who are now undertaking successful professional careers of their own and who are living and abundant

proof of the quality of the parental love, care and training given by Bill and Joyce. Bill's grandchildren also took part in his farewell mass, including his grandson Damien Rebgetz, who is a student at the conservatorium and who sang so beautifully during the ceremony. There was not a dry eye in the church by the time Danny Boy was over.

Bill moved from Toowoomba to Banyo, to Mackay, to Childers, to Ingham and to Gladstone—promotions all the way—and became principal of Miami State High School in 1969. His achievements at Miami are numerous and well known to all who came within his orbit. He was a great fundraiser. Who would be game to refuse him? His nickname was "Dollar Bill". The Miami Great Hall and the swimming pool, the library, the arts and craft centre, the film studio, the administration block—all were built during his administration. The huge letters forming "Hi Miami High" were installed on the hillside by Callinan-inspired working bees. The Miami Big Band was formed and has been enormously successful over many years. Many brilliant academic performances were registered by Miami students during Bill Callinan's term as principal. Sporting teams enjoyed great success. He introduced surfing as a sporting subject—no doubt initially in order to round up some of his more wayward students—but also produced notably successful surfing champions, including Wayne "Rabbit" Bartholomew, who became a world champion. He also established the Gold Coast Secondary Schools Rugby Competition, which has since flourished into one of the strongest competitions in Australia.

Bill Callinan was known as an entrepreneurial headmaster. He got things done. He made up his mind what he needed for his beloved school and he made sure he got it. But first and foremost, Bill Callinan was a teacher—an educator—a brilliant guide and mentor for young people in their formative years. He was loved, feared, obeyed and respected—all those things and all at once—by the thousands of young people whom he influenced over many years. Bill was a hands-on principal, interactive with his students and his staff. He knew and understood their strengths and their weaknesses. He lived by the highest standards himself, and he expected the same standards from everyone else. He encouraged achievement in any and every aspect of his students' lives—their academic endeavours, their social activities or their sporting interests.

I note that Bill took a particular interest in the concept of pastoral care, which he incorporated into the Miami curriculum in such a way as to provide a pioneering model for Queensland of the school as a "caring community". Many State high schools have since adopted a similar scheme. I remember my own earlier days of involvement in the Burleigh Heads Catholic parish, when we thought we would start off a more organised system of catechetics—religious instruction in State schools. We asked Bill to come down and talk to our group of volunteers. We were young and enthusiastic. We were brimful of ideas. We were going to change the world. Bill listened to it all, and then he gathered us together with his eye and said, "You well-meaning women, you're wasting your time." We were terrified. Where did we go wrong? But he was right, and gradually the systems of pastoral care he was promoting began to filter through—more professional and certainly much more effective than our amateur efforts would have been, and focusing on the principle of the school as a "caring community".

Bill received life membership of the Australian Principals Association, and only in January of this year was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his services to education. Bill Callinan retired in April 1986 at the age of 60, and I was one of the several hundred people who attended the "Bill Callinan, This is Your Life" testimonial evening at Jupiters Casino. It was a remarkable tribute to a remarkable man. When Bill retired, people asked what would he do with himself, and it was said that he might become Mayor of the Gold Coast, but it is also said that Joyce dissuaded him.

Bill was noted for his loyalty to his long-held Labor leanings. He was a Labor man through and through; nothing would deflect him from his Labor principles. Back in the eighties, the Nationals approached him to stand for Parliament—with the attractive prospect of becoming Minister for Education. Bill refused, of course; he would never give away his Labor loyalties. But educators throughout Queensland who knew him well will always wonder how the education systems in this State would have evolved had Bill Callinan been Minister for Education. I can assure this House that those education systems would certainly have been different, to say the least.

Bill was one of my constituents in 1988-89 during my first period in Parliament. Of course, I knew he always voted Labor, but I was very pleased and touched when he said to me one day, "I could almost vote for you, Judy." I was truly gratified that the thought had even crossed his mind.

In retirement, Bill was involved with Lifeline Gold Coast and, of course, he was a leading light in Lions, particularly the Lions Skills for Adolescence Program and Lions Youth of the Year. He became a director of Seagulls Rugby League Football Club and continued as a director of the Queensland Teachers Credit Union until the onset of his illness in 1995. He loved his golf, and he played twice a week until December 1997. He was dearly loved by his family, by many to whom his hospitality and friendship will become the stuff of legends, and by thousands of young people—now of more mature years—to whom he was guide, mentor and friend. The seeds he planted and nurtured are bearing wonderful and prolific fruit. Bill Callinan was a truly great man. We do not see many of them.

In closing, I will quote again directly from his old friend Jim Lally, who said—

"Throughout his career Bill has been renowned for his straight-shooting, deadly honest approach to everything and everybody. This, combined with his limitless energy, his initiative, and a brand of courage which often brought him to areas where angels would never dare tread, endeared him to the great majority of people who came into contact with him."
