



Speech by

LINDA LAVARCH

STATE MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

Hansard 14 September 1999

MR T. SMOUT; REPUBLIC DEBATE

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (10.10 a.m.): Mr Speaker, 2 September this year marked a century since Queenslanders voted for Australia to become a nation. On 6 November this year, Queenslanders will go to the polls to decide whether we want an Australian as a head of state and thereby completing our journey of independence. A century ago, a Queenslander, Sir Samuel Griffith, had the courage and foresight to lead the debate on Australia becoming a nation and has been recorded in history as one of our founding fathers.

Today I wish to mark the courage and foresight of another famous Queenslander for his commitment to the cause of Australia becoming a republic by being the first person to sign the Australian Republican Movement's Founders Book. I speak of Ted Smout. Ted, one of our few surviving World War I veterans, is 101 years old. For the first century of his life he has witnessed Australia's journey from being a colony to a Federation and a nation, and now he believes that we should become a republic. Last year, he realised that the time had come to leave behind the monarchy, when he was invited to France to be endowed with France's highest decoration, the French Legion of Honour. Upon returning home through Heathrow Airport with three other World War I veterans, all four were treated appallingly by an officious British airport guard. He says that his medals activated the alarm on the metal detectors—as any fool would know—and "that some bearded idiot insisted on frisking us despite the protest of our carers". There were 300 passengers on the plane and they were the only four searched. Ted was disgusted because they were treated with honour in France but like criminals in Britain.

The editorial of the Weekend Australian on 4 and 5 September this year best summed up this experience by stating—

"When the French honour our heroes more highly than the British, the formal severing of our lingering links to the Empire cannot be far away."

All Queenslanders can become part of Australia's history by supporting a yes vote for an Australian head of state on 6 November, and showing their commitment to the republic by following Ted Smout's lead and signing the Founders Book.

Time expired.
