



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 13 April 1999

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Mr D. J. Sherrington

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.32 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this State by the late Douglas John Sherrington, a former member of the Parliament of Queensland.

That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the Parliament of Queensland for the loss that they have sustained."

Douglas John Sherrington was born on 7 December 1914 in Bundaberg, the son of Jane and Thomas, a miner, farmer and tramways worker. He lived his early life in the Booyal district about 30 kilometres from Childers where his parents helped pioneer the district and open up the area for sugarcane.

Douglas was educated at the Booyal Central State School and the Booyal Provisional School. It was this early life spent in a very typical poor bush town that helped form his future attitude to life. Years of serious drought were followed by the farm being repossessed by a bank and the family being forced to move to Brisbane to try to improve their prospects. Douglas went on to attend the Junction Park State School and the Central Technical College. But with the onset of the Great Depression he had to leave school and try to find a job to help support a family which included eight brothers and sisters.

He worked for two years as a junior clerk and started training as an accountant, but lost his job and was unemployed for the next five years. This devastating experience led to his forging an unbreakable bond with the labour movement. He went on to find jobs in the cane fields, in a slaughter yard, as a builder's labourer, as a truck driver and, finally, as an electrical labourer with the Johnstone Shire Council where he joined the Electrical Trades Union. He worked for 15 years with the Brisbane City Council as a tradesman's assistant and was elected as a voluntary shop steward. During World War II, Douglas served his country as an electrical worker on war ships and in 1942 was seconded to the United States of America small ships section.

He joined the Labor Party in 1949 and believed that it had a great obligation to listen to the people whom he had seen suffering. He believed that, as far as was humanly possible, Labor had to build a society that provided for everybody—especially the sick, the poor and the aged. He was strongly of the view that there should be no place in society for the cheat, the liar and the exploiter.

In 1957 he failed to win the seat of Sherwood but entered State Parliament on 4 May 1960 as the member for Salisbury, holding the seat for nearly 15 years. Douglas was secretary of the Queensland Parliamentary Labor Party from 1969 to 1971 and Opposition Whip from 1971 to 1975. At various times he was shadow Minister for Industrial Relations and Consumer Affairs, Mining and Main Roads, and Aboriginal Affairs. Douglas was an outspoken advocate for the environment before it became a major movement, acting as president of the Save the Trees organisation from 1950 to 1960.

He was a member of the Queensland Littoral Society, the National Parks Association, the Bird Observers Club and the Noosa Parks Development Association. Douglas accepted an invitation to

become an associate member of the British Naturalists Society. He took this advocacy into Parliament where he fought to save Cooloola, the Great Barrier Reef and Southwood National Park. He fought against water pollution and soil degradation. He wrote the first draft of the first Labor Party conservation policy.

Disturbed by the increasing number of electrocutions and accidents in the electrical industry, he forced the Government into setting up an electrical safety committee which ultimately led to the establishment of the linesman's training and safety course. He was a tireless worker for the Labor Party, serving in many positions for nearly four decades.

Douglas married in 1940, and he and his late wife Edith had a family of three children. He is survived by his children and their families.

A measure of how well a person is regarded in politics—and we all know that it is a very fickle life—is how well one is regarded by one's friends and peers when one has retired from this place and retired from active politics. In my time as party secretary and as a member of Parliament, whenever I ran into party members or friends of Doug Sherrington, they universally spoke well of him. I think that is the strongest compliment that anyone can pay a person who has served in this place. On behalf of the Parliament, I extend my sympathy, that of this House and of course the Government, to Doug's family.
