



Speech by

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard 13 April 1999

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Mr D. J. Sherrington

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.40 a.m.): I rise to second the condolence motion moved by the Premier and to echo the sentiments that he expressed in his remarks on the life and times and the parliamentary service of Doug Sherrington. It is a mark of the parliamentary tradition that, despite the differences and the vigour of this place, we are all mates here—former members among that number—and the passing of even a distant mate whose service to this House through the then electorate of Salisbury and the people of Queensland ended fully a quarter of a century ago is something that touches us all.

Doug Sherrington was a Labor man in the proud tradition of his party in those distant days. He did the hard yards. He was never in Government—he served the people through Labor's lean years—but he did serve as a parliamentary secretary and Opposition Whip. As the Premier remarked, he was also an early conservationist, a partisan for that cause and the author of a bitter poem titled *The Conservationist's Lament in the Old Curiosity State*. In this place he spoke with fervour about conservation. On that score, he backed his parliamentary record with outside interests in the area, serving from 1950 to 1960—his election year—as president of Save the Trees. In his later years, he might have enjoyed the greening of our cities and towns with street plantings. I hope that he did. He was also a member of the Queensland Littoral Society, the National Parks Association and the Victorian Bird Observers Club. As the Premier remarked, he was a life member of the Noosa Parks Development Association and by invitation—a none too common honour—a member of the British Naturalists Society. Doubtless, the robust tongue and insightful political instinct that he demonstrated helped him on the hustings.

He was—and I am indebted to the Parliamentary Library research section for this instruction—the consummate street corner campaigner. In those days it was the era of the loudspeaker car. How times have changed, as I am sure Doug would have found reason to remark. And change they have indeed. In fact, in his maiden speech in the Address in Reply debate on 31 August 1960, Doug felt it appropriate to comment—and I have to say adversely—on the reluctance of then Government members when it came to pledging loyalty to the Queen, then only seven years into her reign. That gripe was voiced just shy of 40 years ago. Times change and people with them. The Queensland of today, the Australia of today, the Britain of today, are vastly different places. However, I think that the lesson that Doug was reading to his recalcitrant classmates on the Government benches at that time still stands today. There is form to be kept; there are traditions to be honoured. Form, tradition and the other casualty of modern life, good manners, are just as valuable in the "McWorld" of today as they were in the days of yesteryear. I am sure that that is the point that Doug was seeking to make at the time. He certainly recognised the essential truth that human society progresses best when it draws on the past to reinforce its adventure into the future.

Doug's maiden speech is well worth reading. He stated—

"Legislation that is placed before the House must be framed to give the maximum benefit to the State. It is the duty of Parliament to be fully alive to the rapidly changing circumstances that develop in modern civilisation."

I submit that those words are an object lesson in true public service: a beacon that we in this House four decades on—nearly half a century—might like to observe and remember as we strive to do our

best for today's Queenslanders and tomorrow's Queenslanders. Doug Sherrington was speaking for his Queenslanders of tomorrow when he made that statement. It is our privilege to be the Queenslanders of his tomorrow.

Doug Sherrington was a common man, and I say that in the nicest sense of the word. That is what made him—makes him, because the spirit never dies—a fine Queensland. He was a proud Labor man, and we can all honour him for that. We do so today by this motion. Let his life as a private man—husband of Edith, father of one son and two daughters—and as a public figure—member of Parliament, trade unionist, activist for conservation—stand proudly on the record of this place and in the hearts of Queenslanders.
