



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 16 May 2000

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Mr R. Jones

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (2.33 p.m.), by leave, without notice, I move:

"1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation for the services rendered to this State by the late Mr Raymond Jones, a former member of the Parliament.

2. 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 they have sustained."

Raymond Jones, or Ray Jones, as he was best known, was born in Cairns on 3 February 1926. He attended the Parramatta Park State School and St Augustine's College in Cairns. Prior to entering politics, Mr Jones worked as a porter, shunter and guard for Queensland Rail in Cairns—a strong Labor heritage. At the age of 16, Ray served in the Volunteer Defence Corps from 1942 to 1943, and was awarded the British Empire Medal (Civil Division) in 1942. Ray joined the Air Training Corps in 1943 for 12 months, before becoming an aircrew trainee with the Royal Australian Air Force in 1945.

Ray Jones had a diverse political career. He was a member of the Australian Railways Union from 1953 to 1965, where he served in all branch positions, including secretary and president, and was the campaign director for a number of Labor identities in local, State and Federal elections. From 1964 to 1965, Ray was an alderman on the Cairns Shire Council. But it was in this House that Ray made a great contribution for the working class men and women of Queensland, particularly of Cairns and far-north Queensland. Ray won the State seat of Cairns in February 1965 and set forth on his new career with typical humility and dignity. In his maiden speech to the Legislative Assembly he noted—

"I am fully aware of the honour accorded me and humble in the duties and responsibilities now imposed upon me as the member for Cairns. Even more is this so since I have been informed that I am the first member for Cairns elected to this Assembly who was actually born and reared in Cairns."

Those of us who knew Ray would know that this typifies his vivacious passion for the constituency he represented. Ray was also a visionary and a strong proponent of the vast potential that far-north Queensland had and continues to offer. In his maiden speech, Ray noted—

"When Governments of the day show respect for the North by material projects of development, not merely by nodding and winter visits for sunshine, then, and only then, can the economy of the State really boom, for here we have the greatest source of development potential in Australia. Neither should there be, as exists at present, the reflex thought that the challenge of developing the North is too great for this State and nation to tackle. Such defeatist thinking provides an easy excuse."

During his time in this House, Ray made many lasting friends on all sides of politics. His formal duties included four years as the Opposition Whip, between December 1977 and January 1981, as well as twice serving as a Temporary Chairman of Committees and as a member of a number of parliamentary committees. During his 18 years as the member for Cairns, Ray also showed his skills as the Opposition spokesperson for Northern Development and Maritime Services, Tourism and National

Parks, Maritime Services and Tourism, Transport and Road Safety, Aboriginal Advancement, and Northern Development.

In 1982 Ray's contribution to his beloved Australian Labor Party was recognised, when he was made a life member of the ALP. I remember that well, because I was the ALP State Secretary at the time. I remember the period after that when he was replaced in this House by Keith De Lacy, who later became the Treasurer. His life membership brought great joy to Ray and his wife, Fay, whom he married in 1949. Ray always said that his great passions were his family—Fay and their two sons and daughter—Cairns and the ALP. That was his order of priorities, and he never let any of them down.

The developments happening in far-north Queensland at the moment, such as Sun Metals in Townsville, the Cairns Esplanade upgrade, the East Trinity buyback, the city port project, the Cairns Convention Centre and the casino—all of these projects, many of which Ray saw, are initiatives of which Ray would have been very proud and projects that he would have fought and did fight for to ensure that Cairns was given a fair go.

Coming from the Atherton Tableland, I knew Ray very well. He and I developed a good relationship and friendship; we far-north Queenslanders stick together. He was a great Queenslander. He was a very decent man and he was very genuine in his commitment. He worked very, very hard. He was one of these gentlemen who are rarely found in politics. On behalf of the Parliament, I extend my sympathy and that of the Government, the Labor Party and the whole House to his family.
