



Speech by

**Hon. R. SCHWARTEN**

**MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON**

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Hansard 16 May 2000

**MOTION OF CONDOLENCE**

**Death of Mr R. Jones**

**Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton— ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (3.06 p.m.): Ray Jones was a true-blue Catholic working-class Labor man. That is what the order of service at his funeral said, and I do not think anybody could put it any better than that. He was a long-term friend of our family, going back some 40 years when he first met my father at the 1960 Labor in Politics convention, as it was then called. He was a visitor at that particular conference. He subsequently became a delegate to the 1963 conference because the original delegate pulled out at the last moment and Ray was there as a visitor. That is how they did business in those days. He was a very willing recruit. It was not 12 months later that he was a Labor alderman in the Cairns City Council and it was not two years later that he was actually a member of this place.

Ray Jones was a very humble man and, as my father would describe him, a bloke you could depend on when the chips were down. He was a great mate. He understood the firm bond between unions and the Labor Party. He was proudly a member of both. He was rewarded with life membership of the Labor Party and, as I understand it, of the ARU.

Ray Jones spent nearly 50 years in the Labor Party. When some people get out of politics they forget to get in there and do all the hard work at the branch level, the EEC and so on. As the member for Cook and the member for Cairns have said, Ray was there long after he retired to give something back to the party.

I was delighted to be able to give something back to Ray Jones and his wonderful family by naming a boarding house in Cairns after him. I could think of no more fitting tribute to a man who had really pushed the issue for far-north Queensland. In the infamous days of the cricket team under the leadership of Tom Burns, Ray Jones was the only Labor member of Parliament from north of Rockhampton.

His family will tell of Labor Party supporters making trips from Townsville, for example. They would not deal with their own local members and would come and sit underneath Ray's house and have a cup of tea made by Fay and discuss their issues with him. He was always available. He used to love trains, as the member for Cook said. He told me once that train journeys were part of his political "polling". He used to sit in the train and talk to people and ask them about the issues that concerned them. He would then bring up those issues in Parliament.

I do not want to go on, except to say that the Labor Party has lost a true believer, somebody of whom we can all be proud. We can all take a leaf from his book. He was a fierce defender of the north before it was popular to be so. In his maiden speech he talked about the cost of the Courier-Mail being so exorbitant in Cairns as compared with Brisbane.

Those were the bread and butter issues with which he concerned himself. From talking to Tom Burns, I have no doubt that Ray would have been a Minister. He was an excellent performer in this place. As I say, our family has lost a great mate. To his family—Fay, Kay, Ron and Tim—I say, "We share your sorrow on this occasion."

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