



Speech by

Dr DAVID WATSON

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Mr N. E. Lee, MP

Dr WATSON (Moggill—Lib) (10.05 a.m.): I wish to associate myself briefly with the condolences being expressed this morning for the late Norm Lee. Similar to the member for Yeronga, the minister, I attended the funeral yesterday, along with the members for Redcliffe and Bulimba. There might have been some other members there whom I did not see. A moving tribute was given by his son, Trevor, who gave a eulogy which fully covered the exceptional life that Norm led during his 82 years.

I first got to know Norm well when I was in federal parliament, as his electorate of Yeronga partly overlapped my federal electorate of Forde. We had some common branches, community groups and other interests. By that time, Norm had been in this House for 20 years and yet remained an effective and dedicated representative and an advocate for local causes and concerns. I valued the frank advice that he gave me from time to time. Norm was never backward in giving frank advice.

Mr Purcell: Particularly to the feds.

Dr WATSON: Particularly to the feds, and particularly in the aftermath of the coalition split in 1983. I think it is fair to say that Norm never forgave those Liberals who switched sides to keep their ministries.

To me what is particularly noteworthy about his contribution to this parliament is that he came here after a very successful career in business at what was then a comparatively young age of 44. He went on to make a strong contribution as the member for Yeronga and as a minister. In later years, he achieved great success in another business activity—cattle production and export. He built his firm into, as others have said, one of the major agribusinesses in this state.

I know from my various discussions with Norm over the years that he was especially proud of what he and his son, Trevor, achieved in the cattle production and export areas and the contribution they made to rural Queensland and the whole of the state. He was a good friend of my predecessor, Bill Lickiss. They entered the parliament and the ministry at about the same time and they left on the same day. It would be fair to say that neither was impressed by their departure, but both remained effective members and loyal Liberals. Fittingly, both retired from parliament voluntarily on the same day in 1989. The coincidences in their political careers are remarkable, as is the fact that both entered the parliament after successful business and professional careers. In his retirement, Norm continued his interests in politics, the Liberal Party and business.

Finally, I think it is a tribute to Norm's effectiveness as an MP that in 1972 he was able to defeat arguably the strongest possible challenger the Labor Party could have put up against him, the then Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Clem Jones. At the time, Clem Jones was at the peak of his popularity. I think he had only recently wiped out the council opposition, but Norm was able to comfortably defeat such a popular challenger. Some would argue that Norm was helped by a favourable distribution in 1972, as I am sure the current member for Logan would say about his defeat at the hands of Norm Lee in 1986. But the fact remains that Norm always understood his electorate and, like any good politician, understood numbers.

I join with the Premier, my leader and other speakers in paying tribute to a distinguished former member, someone I came to know well and regard as a good friend. I extend my sympathy to his widow, Dot, and to his family.