



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

Hansard 18 June 2002

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE—DEATH OF MR C. J. BENNETT, MP

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.41 a.m.): On behalf of the opposition I join with the Premier and second the condolence motion for Colin James Bennett. Colin James Bennett left this parliament some 30 years ago after serving 12 years as the Labor MP for South Brisbane. As the Premier has said, he then went on to join the National Party. He certainly had a consuming interest in politics and was a person of very strong and passionate beliefs.

The place that he left has changed, not only in terms of the demographics of the chamber, but it remains the people's house. Queensland has changed, too. It is still the people's Queensland. Lives such as those of Col Bennett show us that Queensland is a truly great democracy and a place where everyone is free to hold a point of view and to argue it.

On occasions such as this, when we as members of parliament pause to recall those who were here in times past, it is good to remember why our democracy is so full of life. Col Bennett was a Townsville boy, though of Darling Downs parents. He adopted Brisbane as his home. He was a city alderman and later a vice-mayor. We can really talk about consensus in this place when we look at the various roles Col Bennett undertook. He was a strong advocate for Brisbane—quite partisan in the cause of the capital city. In his inaugural speech to this parliament in 1960 he made it plain that he had little time for a government that was, as he put it, capable only of blaming every ill on the former government. It seems the more things change the more they do indeed stay the same. In that regard it is worth noting that as long ago as 1960—42 years ago—people were talking about and trying to find ways to solve the traffic problems of the city.

Col Bennett was a barrister, having been educated at St Joseph's College, Nudgee, and the University of Queensland. He served our country well in the RAAF during World War II and spent a time prior to that service teaching mathematics at Brisbane Grammar School.

I had the privilege to know the Bennett family. His daughter went to St Ursula's College at Dutton Park with my sister. We thus got to know the family quite well. It was also a fairly turbulent time in the area of Brisbane where I grew up because Vince Gair was a senior parishioner at the Mary Immaculate Parish at Annerley. It certainly was a turbulent time for the Labor Party. As a young person I remember that Col Bennett was a person of very strong and strident views. He was a wonderful family man. I am sure his family will miss him greatly. On behalf of the opposition and the National Party I provide our sincerest condolences.