



Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Hansard 25 February 2003

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Hon. C. A. Wharton

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.46 a.m.): I rise to second the condolence motion moved by the Premier and to acknowledge his very kind words and his very sincere condolence to the Wharton family. Claude Wharton was very highly respected in the Country Party and the National Party. He was very highly respected by many Queenslanders and was certainly well thought of in his electorate, for the job he did in this parliament and as a minister. As the Premier indicated, he was born on 15 October 1914 in Gayndah. He passed away on 3 January 2003 in the Gayndah Hospital and was laid to rest in the Gayndah Lawn Cemetery. He was the son of Bill and Daisy May Wharton. He was the third youngest and had four sisters, Gladys, Muriel, Doris and Beryl. He married Pearl Estelle Dent in St Matthews Church, Gayndah, at 11 a.m. on 11 November 1942. They had two sons, Max and Gary, and one daughter, Sheryl. He was educated at the Ginoondon State Primary School and the Maryborough Boys Grammar School.

Claude Wharton showed leadership and demonstrated he was a team player when appointed prefect of the school, and he keenly participated in football and athletics. His employment history, as the Premier enunciated, included being a grocer's assistant at Loche's Grocery Store, where he made deliveries on horseback initially and then graduated to a pushbike. He was a main roads worker, dairy and small crops farmer, grazier and orchardist, and breeder of stud cattle and pigs. After his retirement from politics, his real love of stud breeding re-emerged with the beginning of the Giunda Droughtmaster Stud. With the help of studmaster Gary Taylor, the stud has become very successful and well known throughout the land for quality Droughtmaster bulls.

His professional and community involvement included: vice-president of the Queensland Dairymen's Organisation; director, Producers Cooperative Distributing Society of Queensland; chairman of directors, Gayndah Cooperative Dairy Association; director of Queensland Cooperative Cold Storage Federation Ltd; Director of the Wholesale Society of Queensland Ltd; chairman of the Gayndah Cooperative Trading Society; and chairman of directors, Queensland Bacon Pty Ltd. He was a Rotarian, a parish counsellor of St Matthews Anglican Church, Gayndah, a church warden and a synod representative. He was recognised in the 1985 New Year's Honours List and was awarded Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George. Claude Wharton was nominated for outstanding services as a minister of the Crown. He had spent 25 years in parliament and almost 11 years as a minister of the Crown.

In terms of his political history, he was elected to parliament on 28 May 1960, representing at that stage the Country Party—later to become the National Party—in the seat of Burnett. He was the Minister for Aboriginal and Islander Advancement in 1975, Minister for Aboriginal and Islander Advancement and Fisheries from 1975 to 1977 and Minister for Works and Housing from 1977 to 1986. Claude Wharton as Minister for Works and Housing was responsible for the construction of the Queensland Cultural Centre, a most magnificent icon and something which is enjoyed by many Queenslanders today.

Claude Wharton successfully administered the department which was the construction authority for all government buildings, including schools, public housing, courthouses, police stations and hospitals. Claude Wharton's community involvement included a lifetime of active membership of the Masonic Lodge and Rotary International. Among the many personal recollections of Claude Wharton,

most people would immediately recall his friendliness, happiness and understanding to all no matter what political persuasion. They were Claude's more distinctive qualities.

The current federal member for Hinkler, Paul Neville, best summed up Claude by saying that he was a man with boundless energy who never lost the common touch. He had an empathy with his constituents that the modern politician would envy. No request, no matter how small, escaped his attention. An extract of his maiden speech to the parliament highlights his empathy with his constituents and passion for improving the wellbeing and the lot of country businesses and country people. On 30 August 1960 Claude Wharton rose to state—

I am concerned about the drift of population from the country to the cities.

I think that is something we still talk about in the parliament today. He continued—

I believe that it has taken place partly because incomes from primary industries compare very unfavourably with those from other sources. It is disturbing to see a person who has built up an asset over the years in a country area sell out ... I believe that we should try to restore a proper relativity between incomes from primary industries and those from other sources. It is very disappointing to see that primary producers are at the end of the line, as it were, and they receive only what is left after others have taken out their costs.

We still use those words today. Claude Wharton was a strong advocate for improving the lot of country people. He strongly believed that the development of the state would come by individual enterprise and that the government's job was to do what the individual could not. He was proud to be part of a government that played its part in decentralising and developing the state and which created a solid foundation and sound economic footing, which we still enjoy today. I pass on the sincere condolences of the National Party to Claude's family and wish them all the very best during this most difficult time.