



Speech by

Hon. MIKE REYNOLDS

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Hansard 18 March 2004

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Mr A. M. Wilson

Hon. M. F. REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (9.56 a.m.): I was very proud to represent the state government at Alec's funeral just a few weeks ago. The speeches that we have heard today were very much the same as those I heard at the funeral. Alec was a great spokesperson on behalf of the working class. He and I went back 34 years when I joined the Labor Party in 1970. We had a close association in the many different parts of the party. The honourable member for Waterford was just reminding me of the Townsville regional council, which was a body that represented the EECs—or the SECs as we know them—and certain times that we had there. We remember those very, very fondly.

Alec had a great commitment to the people of his electorate. It goes without saying in some respects that when Alec beat Tom Aikens, the longstanding member for Townsville South, it was a day of great celebration in the Labor Party in Townsville. He beat Tom Aikens, who had been a member of parliament for 33 years. He beat him in 1977, ousting a very longstanding Independent who started his life as a member of the North Queensland Labor Party, became a representative of the North Queensland Party, became an Independent and was fondly known in his last years as 'Tory Tom'. Alec absolutely thrashed Tom in that election. It was a very fine win for Alec Wilson and the Labor Party.

In Alec's maiden speech to parliament he confirmed his very strong Labor credentials when he spoke about what he called the greatest social evil of our time—unemployment. He described unemployment as degrading, 'because the jobless feel unable to pull their weight in society when they are denied their right to work'. As the current member for Townsville, I know that Alec devoted much of his spare time, up to the time of his death, helping young unemployed people. He was closely associated with the Unemployed Workers Group in Townsville.

He was a champion of the working class. Alec Wilson told parliament that something was drastically wrong with the conservative state government of the day because the workers of Queensland were not receiving their fair share of the wealth from Queensland's rich natural resources. As we have heard today, he was also a great advocate for the Burdekin Dam. He was a great advocate for the irrigation that was required for agricultural purposes.

Alec was a great husband, father, worker, Labor parliamentarian and great union identity, and he will be sadly missed by his family and friends. As the member for Townsville, I would offer my very sincere condolences to his wife, Sybil, and his three sons and four daughters on their very sad loss.