



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 18 March 2004

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Mr A. M. Wilson

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.41 a.m.), by leave: I move—

1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this state by the late, Alexander McLachlan Wilson, a former member of the Parliament of Queensland.
2. That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the Parliament of Queensland, for the loss they have sustained.

Mr Alexander McLachlan Wilson was born on 11 December 1920 in Rockhampton. Alec was educated at the Stuart Creek State School. Alec married Sybil Corney on 8 May 1946, later having three sons and four daughters. Prior to his election as a member of this House in 1977, Alec was employed in a variety of occupations, including as a carpenter, railway wagon builder, meatworker, locomotive fireman, and a trade union official and organiser for the Townsville Building Workers Industrial Union.

Alec was to then pursue a parliamentary career, taking with him a wealth of experience in local industries that would provide him with the ability to serve his electorate for the duration of his parliamentary career. Alec's parliamentary career began when he was elected as the member for Townsville South on 12 November 1977. Once in parliament, he wasted no time in demonstrating his support and commitment to serving the people of Townsville South. In his maiden speech, Alec drew attention to the local industries and resources of Townsville. He highlighted the need for improved water infrastructure, including the need for a dam to service the Burdekin area, and improved roads and educational facilities for the Townsville South electorate.

During his parliamentary career, Alec served as the opposition spokesperson on works and workers compensation, northern development and maritime services, transport and main roads, and works and water resources. Alec was also a member of the Parliamentary Buildings Committee and a member of the opposition party committees on transport, works and housing, industrial relations and transport. Alec held his seat until the 1986 state election.

Alec's funeral service was held at the Lakes Chapel, Townsville on 5 March 2004. I take this opportunity to extend my sympathy and that of this House to his family—to his wife, Sybil, his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

A large part of his electorate is now represented by the Minister for Child Safety, who will no doubt make a contribution in a minute. I knew Alec well. When I was party secretary I experienced a number of educational exchanges and a number of incidents that were beneficial to both of us. I think they led to both of us being better people. Alec was a colourful individual. No-one who knew him or met him or had any understanding of him was left in any doubt about his views on any subject at any time. For that reason, I had a sneaking admiration for his forthrightness. If I were to think of one word, 'forthrightness' is the exact word that would describe my view about him.

He did represent an important constituency. I think if one spent any time with him, as a number of ministers did—I know Mike Reynolds, Tony McGrady and Robert Schwarten will be saying something—one would know that he had very strong views about representing working Queenslanders. For that he should be acknowledged and tribute should be paid to him.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.45 a.m.): Alec Wilson was born on 11 December 1920 in Rockhampton. He unfortunately passed away suddenly aged 83

years on 29 February 2004. His funeral service was held on 5 March at the Lakes Chapel in Townsville. He was born to Robert and Jan Wilson nee McWilliam. A twin to his brother George, he had eight brothers and sisters. He married Sybil Maud Corney of Hughenden on 8 May 1946 in Townsville. He and Sybil raised seven children—three sons and four daughters. He is father, father-in-law, grandfather and great-grandfather to Don and Grace, Ann and Terry, Jean and Larry, Ian, David, Deborah, Robyn and Stewart and their respective families.

He was educated at Stuart Creek State School. He left school at the age of 14 to take on a job as a cleaner in the railway, gradually working his way up to a fireman driver. At the outbreak of World War II Alexander joined the Navy, though the railway refused to let him go because they deemed it to be an essential service that he was providing. After the war he became a carpenter and worked in Hughenden, Cloncurry, Mount Isa and Charter Towers before moving back to Townsville in 1968. He was a wagon builder and a meatworker.

His professional and community involvement included in the early 1970s taking on the position of organiser of the Townsville Building Workers Industrial Union where he gained great respect from the members for his tireless work and dedication. His political history included being elected to parliament on 2 November 1977 as a member of the Australian Labor Party. That was for the seat of Townsville South. With subsequent electoral redistributions I understand that much of his electorate was what is now Mundingburra.

He went on to serve three terms in the Queensland parliament. He was shadow minister for northern development and maritime services, shadow minister for transport and main roads, shadow minister for works and water resources, shadow minister for Aboriginal affairs, and member of the Parliamentary Buildings Committee from 1978. I think that was probably a very interesting time for this particular place as the Annexe was being constructed. Alec Wilson retired from the Queensland parliament in 1986 at the age of 65 years. He was secretary of the Labor Party branch from 1964 to 1978.

Alec Wilson was particularly passionate about one of the essential commodities for growth, and that was water. An extract of his maiden speech to the parliament supports these concerns on reliable water supplies to the people of Townsville and the people in the Burdekin area. On 18 April 1978, Alec Wilson rose to state—

The importance of such a project is vital to the vast areas surrounding it. The areas it could supply with water include Townsville City, Thuringowa Shire, the Lower Burdekin area, the coastal plains between Mount Elliott and the Elliott River and the Burdekin River valley below the Leichhardt Ranges. When viewed in its right perspective as a source of water for mining, agricultural and secondary industries, as well as for the domestic supply of the ever-increasing population of the area and also as an energy source by way of hydroelectric power to help meet the future needs of the area, the building of the Burdekin Falls Dam becomes very important and indeed a must.

These concerns were responded to by the construction of the Burdekin Falls Dam—the largest dam in Queensland holding four times the water of Sydney Harbour—which was constructed under the former Bjelke-Petersen government. The issue of a reliable and secure supply of water for our communities throughout Queensland is today certainly just as important, if not more important than it was when Alec Wilson raised it with regard to his electorate in north Queensland in his maiden speech almost 26 years ago. On behalf of the opposition, I pass on our condolences to the family of the late Alec Wilson.