



Speech by

Kerry Shine

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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DEATHS OF MR GB KEHOE AND MR PND WHITE

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (10.01 am): I would like to support the motion with respect to the late Brian Kehoe. Whilst I knew Brian in my youth, his sons, Ben and Dermot, have been good friends of mine for about 40 years. As was mentioned by the member for Southport, Brian was born on Labour Day 1917 and served most of his working life in the Magistrates Court for about 42 years, other than for service in the war and in this place. He joined the 42nd Battalion from Rockhampton, and he served in New Guinea at Buna, Salamaua and Milne Bay—that historic battleground where the Imperial Japanese Army suffered its first-ever land defeat. Three of the four Kehoe boys served overseas. Brian came from a strong Labor family, so it was no surprise that he named his first son Benedict Joseph after the person he believed to be the greatest Labor leader, Ben Chifley. His second son, Dermot, was named after his mate killed in the war.

When the sitting ALP member for Nash for over 30 years, Tommy Dunstan, retired in 1952, Brian showed great determination and political skill in gaining preselection, although not a member of the group in the ALP which traditionally held sway in rural Queensland. Nash was comprised of Gympie and the southern portion of Maryborough joined curiously by the Mary River through the alleged ingenuity of Mr Hanlon. On 7 March 1953 he won the seat. He increased his majority in the 1956 election, at which election the Gair government gained over 56 per cent of the vote.

There were a number of reasons for the 1957 split. For Brian Kehoe, there was a principle involved which went to the roots of his belief in democracy—in this instance, whether a government should be directed when to bring in legislation by a body not elected by the people. That belief was held by a majority of the caucus, and, after Gair was expelled, the 24 or so others joined with him to form the QLP. He and the others went into political oblivion at the subsequent elections in August 1957 and then in 1960. That that was the most likely result would have occurred to him having regard to what had already happened in Victoria in 1955. The seat of Nash or Gympie has never been won by Labor since.

He rejoined the magistrates service, as we have heard, and served with great distinction. He would have been particularly proud to have witnessed his son Dermot's appointment as a magistrate last year. Brian Kehoe was a man of great principle, character and courage; a loyal, faithful and committed member of his faith; a loving husband and father; a man of humility and compassion. In his maiden speech here, he said of his predecessor: 'The name of Dunstan in Gympie is synonymous with all that is upright and honourable and, even though there are many who are politically opposed to him, he holds the highest possible place in their esteem, being one of nature's gentlemen.' To those who knew him well, these words of his could well be his own epitaph.

Today, the day of his funeral, is a sad one for Brian Kehoe's family and friends. For those in my party, I suggest it is an appropriate time to reflect on the events of 1957. To my mind, that portion of Queensland Labor history should be compulsory study for all who are privileged to represent the great Australian Labor Party in parliament. Brian Kehoe, in that same maiden speech reflecting on the outstanding Labor victory in 1953, said, 'On present indications it would appear that the Labor Party will never cease to be the government of this state.' Within a short time, it was out of office for 32 years.