



Speech by

Lawrence Springborg

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Hansard Tuesday, 7 August 2007

CONDOLENCE MOTION: DEATH OF HON TJ BURNS AO

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (11.27 am): Tom Burns was a true, dedicated and decent Queenslander. My first experience with Tom Burns was when I was campaigning as a 21-year-old to take over the seat of Carnarvon. I picked up the *Stanthorpe Border Post* one day and read about Tom Burns's visit to Stanthorpe where he had addressed the local branch of the Labor Party and implored the entire electorate of Carnarvon to never send a boy to do a man's job.

I remember walking into this place in 1989. I walked around that part of the chamber and as I was about to sign the roll a voice came from behind me saying—and it was Tom Burns and it was unmistakable—'There's a nice lad. If you do this right, mummy will give you an ice-cream and a packet of lollies.' That was my first real witness of Tom Burns in this place.

I will step back a couple of weeks from that and go to my first ever television interview. I remember sitting in Stanthorpe behind a table. This was at about the time I was elected. I was asked whether there were people I admired in politics. Of course, I went through the people on our side whom I admired. I said that I admired very much Sir Joh and a range of other people, and I also said, 'Tom Burns.' People who see that interview, if it is ever replayed, would find I appreciated quite an eclectic mix of people in the body politic. But I think the important thing is to have an appreciation of people for who they are.

It is true that what you saw with Tom Burns is what you got. You did not get a charlatan carpetbagger; you got a person who stood there and said what he believed. Whilst you might not have agreed with him necessarily, you knew what he said was something that he absolutely believed in. Sure, as we heard today, he was prone to a little bit of embellishment, and I suppose that that is the colour of politics. However, Tom Burns was also prone to passion, dedication and commitment. He was committed to this place, to his cause and to Queenslanders. That showed right throughout his parliamentary career.

It is great that we had a person like Tom Burns whose colour and passion were so visible. He yearned and then had a practical opportunity to do so much to advance the people of Queensland, whom he had sought and strived to help for a long period. In this place there are not as many differences as people might think. Whilst there might be political differences, I think that there is also a basic understanding, appreciation and passion to do things right for Queenslanders. It is the philosophy that guides us that might be a little different. Tom Burns may have had a different philosophy to me, but I certainly admired him for what he was. I admired him for the person he was and for the principles that he espoused, not only in here but also on the outside.

I say to Angela and the Tom Burns family that today we share your grief. We pass on our condolences to you and we also feel great appreciation for what this great Queenslander did for so long.