



Speech by

**David Gibson**

**MEMBER FOR GYMPIE**

Hansard Tuesday, 18 August 2009

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### **MOTION OF CONDOLENCE: HON. AM HODGES**

**Mr GIBSON** (Gympie—LNP) (9.43 am): I rise to join the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in speaking to this condolence motion for Allen Maxwell Hodges. Having never had the opportunity to meet Max Hodges, I wanted to gain an understanding of the man himself in preparing for this speech. After his retirement from politics in 1976, Max moved away from the electorate of Gympie. Although I have heard much about him, for even today he is still spoken of very highly in my community, I endeavoured to draw from a wide range of sources to better understand him.

I wish to thank his son, Russell Hodges, for sharing with me his 'Hodgitations' and Max's extended family for the anecdotes and memories that they have also shared. I would also like to thank members of the community of Gympie for taking the time to share with me their thoughts and memories of Max, and in particular his electorate secretary, Enid Pechey. Enid worked for Max for the last seven years of his service in this House, having commenced at a time when electorate office staff were a new feature to parliamentary life. Words that were consistently used when describing Max were 'a decent man', 'a man of integrity', 'a man with the courage of his convictions', and it is on that theme that I would like to address my remarks in this condolence motion.

Allen Maxwell Hodges, better known as Max, was born on 11 February 1917 to parents Arthur John and Helen Allen Maxwell. Max was the great-grandson of William Mitchell MLA, who was the Labor member for Maryborough from 1904 to 1908. As the Leader of the Opposition said, there is some argument that politics was in Max's blood. Max belonged to a generation that measured men by their honesty and their courage. It was a generation that faced war and Max, like many of his colleagues, enlisted in the defence of this nation on 17 March 1942. Max saw operational service in New Guinea and Borneo as the threat approached Australia's shores. He served in the 17th Field Regiment, the 2/4 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment and the 2/118 Brigade Workshop. On returning to Australia, Max was discharged on 28 February 1946 with the rank of staff sergeant. Like many of his generation, his character was forged and tested in active combat.

Max had the virtues that come from living in a small country town: sincerity, integrity, a strong work ethic and an ability to tell it like it is. These qualities became a political asset for Max and on 3 August 1957, at the height of the Gair affair with Labor split between the Queensland Labor Party and the Australian Labor Party, Max was elected to this House along with a coalition government that ended more than a quarter of a century of continuous Labor rule in this state.

What made Max's victory even more impressive was that up until that time the seat of Gympie had been a formidable Labor Party stronghold. Indeed, from Andrew Fisher in 1893 through to 1957, Labor had held the seat for 52 of those 64 years. Max was to take the safe Labor seat of Nash, and from 1960 known as Gympie, and remain as its member for 22 years through seven more elections.

It is interesting to read the maiden speech that Max gave in this House on 28 August 1957. The themes that he spoke about were the importance of water conservation, the importance of property rights, the need for an improvement in Queensland's health system, the importance of developing secondary industries in this state and for having a plan for the development of Queensland. These are themes that

still resonate today. A quote from Max's maiden speech, shared with us by the Leader of the Opposition, I think sums up best his approach as a politician in that they should be as 'statesmen thinking of the next generation, not as politicians looking to the next election.'

Max held a variety of parliamentary positions. As was indicated, he joined the cabinet in 1968 as the minister for works and housing—a portfolio that he held for seven years. However, it was when he took on an additional portfolio that he became most well known, and that was as minister for police. As has been pointed out already, it was under Max's leadership as police minister that Commissioner Ray Whitrod was appointed and the modernisation of the Queensland police force was undertaken. The Oxley Police Academy was established with a focus on a better educated police force. There was the creation of four new police regions and 28 new police districts for better police surveillance. The force's first planning and research unit was established. Along with the formation of the metropolitan mobile patrol system there was the implementation of the distinctive blue police uniforms that we see today. We have heard about the establishment of the anti-hijacking squad and a dog unit, but there was also the implementation of in-service training courses to bring some of the older policemen up to date and the first police aircraft was brought into service.

As police minister, Max wore the police tie pin and cufflinks with pride. It was in his role as police minister that an example of Max's integrity was shared with me by his family.

Early one morning Max was travelling from Gympie to Brisbane in preparation for cabinet meetings. His niece who was attending college in Brisbane was travelling with him. On this occasion the fog was fairly thick. As they were coming through Yandina, Max was pulled over by a young police constable. The police constable approached Max and, not recognising him as a police minister, indicated that he had been following him for some period of time and observed that he had been speeding. He asked to see Max's driver's licence. Max dutifully presented it. The young police officer's blood drained out of his face as he read the name on the driver's licence and he said, 'Oh my God', to which Max responded, 'And you better not bloody forget it.' Max's integrity was such that he insisted that the young constable issue him with a ticket for speeding and I am told that he diligently paid the fine.

Max's work ethic was well known. Indeed, he is on the record as saying that parliamentarians are not lazy bludgers as most people think they are; mostly they want to help others and they work 12 to 14 hours a day to do that. Max was one who was always on the job. One Friday evening as he was leaving Parliament House and returning to Gympie he recalled that there was a problem at a Spring Hill hotel. Max had serious concerns about the goings-on at this particular hotel and he instructed his driver to stop by that hotel to address those concerns personally before he left Brisbane. That was a trait Max carried in many of the things that he did.

Another story that was shared was when, again as police minister, he received a complaint about an individual police officer's rudeness to the public. Max visited the particular station unannounced. With no ceremony he simply presented himself to the counter and asked to see the inspector. The individual police officer whom he had received complaints about happened to be on the counter that day and the story goes that he proceeded to give Max a gobful saying, 'Who do you think you are wanting to see the inspector?' Max very quietly indicated that he was the police minister. At that point the responsible officer, embarrassed, dutifully escorted Max to meet the local police inspector. Max then personally relayed the concerns that he had received from constituents but also what he had experienced himself and simply said, 'I want the problem fixed.'

In his 11 years as a minister around the cabinet table Max always took the view that he had a responsibility to look after the rest of Queensland and not just Gympie. That meant that as minister he would spend the majority of his time away from the electorate. However, when in the electorate Max would make sure that he visited all of the schools on a regular basis. It was on one occasion when he was visiting the Amamoor Forestry School that Max met a young teacher named Lin Powell. Max inspired him to join the Country Party and Lin went on to be elected to this parliament and became a minister. Lin Powell's lasting memory of Max is one that I believe sums up best how the people of Queensland and the electorate of Gympie in particular remember him. Lin said, 'He was a man of the people. He never sought accolades but he never forgot the people who placed their trust in him.'

I am a believer that God uses good people to do great things. This is evidenced in the life of Allen Maxwell Hodges. Through his service in this House and in government he worked in a bipartisan way to establish the Port of Brisbane, to implement advances within our Police Service and as tourism minister to develop a novel concept of a tourism campaign promoting the state of Queensland outside of Queensland.

Max lost his first wife Rita in August 1969 and his second wife Pamela to cancer when she was only 37 in 1978. Of his three children, Max has one surviving son, Russell, and it is to Russell and his extended family that we extend our condolences. The state of Queensland is a better place because of the service of your father and grandfather. I join with the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and all members of this House in extending my condolences to the family of Max Hodges.