



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Hansard Tuesday, 18 May 2010

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Blake, Mr JRH

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.38 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this state by the late James Robert Henry Blake, 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, in the loss they have sustained.

James Robert Henry Blake, better known to his friends and colleagues as Jim, was born in Childers on 6 October 1921 and educated at Doolbi Primary School, Childers Junior High School and the Brisbane Technical College. From 1941 to 1945, during World War II, Jim Blake served in the 2nd/8th Field Regiment in the 9th Division of the Australian Imperial Forces.

With Anzac Day just a few weeks ago, sadly in Mr Blake we note the passing of another person who served his country with distinction at the time of its greatest need. After World War II Jim Blake worked as a farmer, a sugarcane grower and a trawlerman and later became active in the Childers branch of the Australian Labor Party, serving as its president, vice-president and secretary at various times. Following the death of the then Premier of Queensland, the Hon. Jack Pizzey, in July 1968, Mr Blake was selected by the ALP to contest the resulting by-election in the seat of Isis. In what was seen as a very surprising result—indeed, a political upset at the time, especially as Mr Pizzey had been a member of the Country Party and it was expected that the Country Party would naturally retain the seat of Isis—Mr Blake won what was described as a vigorously contested by-election and he took his seat in this House in November 1968.

Mr Blake retained the seat of Isis at the state elections of 1969 and 1972 but was defeated by National Party candidate Lin Powell at the state election of December 1974. However, Mr Blake was to make a return to this place. He obviously enjoyed his opportunity to contribute, because he came back as the member for Bundaberg. In the lead-up to the state election of 1977, the then member for Bundaberg, Lou Jensen, resigned from the ALP. Mr Blake was subsequently selected as the ALP candidate for Bundaberg. And while Mr Jensen contested the seat as an Independent, Mr Blake won the seat comfortably. It seems that Jim Blake was a specialist in difficult and unusual elections.

Jim Blake continued to ably represent the people of Bundaberg until his retirement at the state election of October 1983. As a farmer, a sugarcane grower, a trawlerman and a member of the Isis district Canegrowers executive, Jim Blake was a man in tune with primary industries matters and he spoke regularly in this place about the welfare of the people who are engaged in them. During his time in the parliament, Mr Blake served as opposition spokesperson for primary industries from 1970 to 1974 and from 1978 to 1982. He also served as shadow minister for lands, forestry and water resources and was a member of the Parliamentary Printing Committee—a committee that of course we no longer have.

Jim Blake was also a member of the Queensland Parliamentary Bowls Club and he and his wife, Edna, regularly represented Queensland at the annual interstate parliamentary bowling carnivals, both while he was a member and later as a former member. I am advised that Jim and Edna are both very fondly remembered by those who attended the carnivals with them.

As well as his military and parliamentary service, Jim Blake served his community in many other ways. Amongst them, Mr Blake was a member of the Isis RSL and he was involved with the Bundaberg branch of the Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex Servicemen and Women Association, and I think every member of this House knows something of the great work that that organisation does.

In 2001 Jim Blake was awarded the Centenary Medal commemorating the centenary of Federation in Australia for his distinguished service to parliament, to politics and to his community. Jim Blake was another of the generation who served their country during World War II and later went on to represent their communities at one level of government or another. I place on record the government's thanks for the many years of service that Jim Blake gave to the Australian Labor Party, that he gave to the institutions of our democracy and for the contribution that he made to his local community and the people he represented. On behalf of the government, I take this opportunity to extend my sympathy and that of this House to Mr Blake's family and his friends.