



## Speech By **James Lister**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS**

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### **MOTION OF CONDOLENCE**

**Cory, Mr DW, AM**

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (9.41 am): 14 February this year saw the sad passing of the former MP for Warwick, David Wheatcroft Cory AM, at the age of 93 years, as we have heard. On behalf of the people of Southern Downs, I extend to David's wife, Margot, and his son, Ben, and Ben's wife, Margo, and family our sympathies and thoughts at this time of loss.

I am very proud indeed to say a few words about this great yet deeply humble man. I will leave the task of memorialising David as the farmer, friend and family man to those who are perhaps better placed to do his story full justice. As a successor MP for the district which David once represented, I want to publicly venerate him for his time in parliament and as one of our community's great parliamentary representatives, on par with giants such as former premier TJ Byrne, Otto Madsen and Lawrence Springborg. In doing so, I hope that I will add some further lustre to his already shining reputation.

David was born in Warwick in 1928 and his lifetime spanned a remarkable period in Queensland's political history. I am sure that I speak for everyone who knew David during his long life when I state that he was a gentleman to all. We have already heard the Premier and the opposition leader remark upon how David was respect and liked across the political divide. That is definitely true. He was also a straight shooter and a man who never surrendered his values to expediency. As a respected farmer and grazier, David was well in touch with his community and he exhibited a genuine and practical dedication to the public good. It was a dedication which served him well and served our district well when he was Warwick's member of parliament.

David was elected to the state parliament as the member for Warwick on 18 October 1963, at a by-election caused by the sudden death of the beloved Otto Madsen, who had been the Country Party member for Warwick since 1947 and a popular and effective primary industries minister in the government of Sir Frank Nicklin. The going was not easy for David at his first election. In our neck of the woods, those chosen by local party members to succeed a well-respected departing MP usually suffer a significant adverse swing at the polls. This was certainly the case for me when I took over from Lawrence Springborg. So it was for David too. He achieved a slender 51 per cent majority against Labor at the 1964 election, representing a 10 per cent primary vote swing against the Country Party's previous result under Madsen six months earlier at the 1963 general election. As a new MP, David exerted himself faithfully and enthusiastically, and it was not long before his qualities as a representative and advocate for his seat were recognised, with solid two-party preferred results of 66, 61, 62, and 75 per cent in his favour at the 1966, 1969, 1972 and 1974 state elections respectively.

Much of the basis for his success must be attributed to his wife, Margot, who, for much of David's time in parliament, functioned as his electorate secretary, for it was not until 1973 that members of parliament were afforded offices and electorate staff. Margot's affinity for detail and business-like approach made her an invaluable asset, and their partnership assured that the electors of Warwick would receive prompt and careful attention to their queries and concerns.

Politics is never simple, and MPs of consequence understand that while compromise is necessary there are also times when you have to stick to your guns—even if doing so runs counter to one's own personal and political interests or to those of powerful people. One of the things which I admired about David was his polite but firm refusal to compromise on matters of significant principle to him. It was known in political circles at the time that David did not get on well with Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, who had narrowly become premier after the retirement of Sir Frank Nicklin in 1968 and the subsequent sudden death of his successor, Jack Pizzey, after only six months in office.

There is no doubt in my mind that David would have made a very effective minister, but in politics ability is not always the decisive consideration in matters of promotion—that is to put it politely, I think. I am sure many of us hold that dear to heart. I think I am on firm ground in saying that David, had he been willing to toe the line and to be silent when matters of importance to him were at hand, would have made the ministry and would have done a fine job in any portfolio.

The question is: how did he differ from Sir Joh? I asked David this question once. He revealed in his answer, which was tastefully understated, much about himself. In essence, David was a coalitionist. He valued and respected the then Liberal Party's role in governing with the Country Party in coalition. David knew instinctively that governing Queensland was a job for a broad church of city and country representatives, with a reasonable spectrum of political values. This sensible pragmatism, it seems, put him at odds with Sir Joh's famously ruthless and unaccommodating approach to coalition. Hindsight strongly suggests that it was David who was right, because in 1983—this is long after his departure from parliament—the government's coalition agreement ended with irreconcilable differences between the two party leaders. David and I believed that that event, to a significant extent, laid the ground for the loss of government by the Nationals in the 1989 state election to a resurgent Labor Party under Wayne Goss.

I think that it says much about a politician when, while still in the fullness and prime of his political career, he decides to hang up his armour and ride home to the farm. That is what David Cory did. After serving his community in parliament for more than 14 years, he decided not to contest the 1977 state election, at which he was succeeded by popular National Party member Des Booth. The Country Party had become the National Party on 6 April 1974, which happens to be my birthday. I thought I would just pop that in.

David went on to continue his leadership in and love for his community. He was active in the Warwick Show and Rodeo Society, Warwick Polocrosse and also spent many years as a member, and later chairman, of the Rural Lands Protection Board. David was fittingly recognised with the award of the Centenary Medal in 2001 and later in 2004 as a Member of the Order of Australia for his work in rural land protection and the control and elimination of invasive pests.

Over the years since I became our MP, I would every couple of months pop in to see David and Margot at their Murrays Bridge property. I was always assured of a friendly cup of tea and a slice of cake, but, more importantly, of receiving the wisdom and advice of a forerunner who had already seen and done everything that I was facing as a country MP. I would marvel at how David could relate events—in the first person, mind you—in Queensland political history where he himself was a participant. He was there. He could relate to me firsthand the famous personalities and quarrels of days past and share the nuggets of truth which remain as lessons today. David's stories and advice admitted me to the puzzling but enduring certainty that everything changes and yet everything stays the same.

I have made my share of mistakes and boo-boos, but I never went wrong when I sought and followed David's advice. As long as God spares me, I will always remember David Cory. How could I ever forget the quiet man with iron in his soul. Vale David Wheatcroft Cory AM.