

**HON DONALD WALTER COOLEY**

*Condolence Motion*

**HON KIM CHANCE** (Agricultural - Leader of the House) [3.32] - without notice: I move -

That this house expresses its deep regret at the death of Mr Donald Walter Cooley, a former member of the Legislative Council for the North-East Metropolitan Province, and places on record its appreciation for his long public service and tenders its profound sympathy to members of his family in their bereavement.

I wish to commemorate the service of the late Hon Donald Cooley. Hon Donald Cooley served in this house as a member for the North East Metropolitan Province from May 1974 to May 1980. Born in 1918, he commenced work at the Swan Brewery in 1940, before enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force in 1942. He served his country as part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Regiment and then the 6<sup>th</sup> Division, taking part in the campaign to clear the Japanese from what was then the Australian territory of Aitape Wewak. As a matter of personal interest, my father was engaged in the same field in the New Guinea campaign. I never asked him whether he knew Don Cooley, but it was quite a small group and it is likely that they knew each other.

Donald joined the Labor Party in 1937. He went on to become secretary of the Breweries and Bottleyards Employees' Industrial Union of Workers of Western Australia after working at the Swan Brewery from 1946 to 1954. He became involved in the union committee while at that workplace. I understand that he was very widely respected by all those he worked with. He was a generous and fair-minded person who was able to represent the employees very strongly, but was also able to engage management constructively in what was, in those days, a very difficult and demanding industrial environment. Don Cooley was a committed unionist. He was a true believer in the Australian Labor Party. He served the labour movement in many roles, including, notably, as the president of the Trades and Labour Council from 1965 to 1976 and as a delegate to the state executive from 1955 to 1976. He also attended the International Labour Organisation conference as a delegate in 1969 and 1973. I understand that Hon Don Cooley was a committed internationalist who understood that organised labour had to work across national boundaries to protect its interest. His fair-minded nature was also evidenced by his conviction that governments were always better to engage in dialogue rather than to use military or police force. Don Cooley was not a communist but it was his belief in constructive engagements that led him to attend the 1969 May Day celebrations in Moscow. His lifelong service to the labour movement was recognised with an Order of Australia Medal in 1985.

I also know that Don Cooley was a committed sportsman. He enjoyed both cricket and football. He played football at club level for West Perth and later went on to become a cricket umpire at first-class level. He was also a fanatical West Perth supporter and was often found watching his beloved Cardies play at Leederville Oval.

In terms of his contribution to this house, I note from his maiden and valedictory speeches that he always strived to defend working people and to engage constructively with those who he thought did not. His maiden speech was very much of the times for 1974, focusing, as it did, on a stout defence of the Whitlam government, which was then under stringent attack by the newly elected government of Sir Charles Court.

I understand that his defence of the Western Australian working people came to a head in this place one night during the government of Sir Charles Court when Don set what, I believe, was a record, at least at the time, for a filibuster in talking through the night on the then government's Emergency Services Bill. Don saw that bill and much of the legislation of that time as outrageous attacks on working people and their rights, and he did his utmost to hinder the designs of a government that he saw as strongly opposed to the aims of the union movement.

Don's contribution to the labour movement and the people of Western Australia will be remembered for a long time by those people whom he worked with and for, and by those who served with him on both sides of this place.

I conclude by expressing my sincere condolences to his wife, Elsie, and his son, Trevor.

**HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral - Leader of the Opposition)** [3.37 pm]: On behalf of the opposition, I express our support for the motion moved by the Leader of the House on the passing of Hon Donald Walter Cooley. Don Cooley recently passed away in his eighty-ninth year. He was a dedicated trade unionist who brought practical experience to this Parliament in his comparatively short time in it.

His election to the Legislative Council at the age of 55 years was the culmination of his lifetime of service to the Breweries and Bottle Yards Employees' Industrial Union of Workers of WA, the Trades and Labour Council of Western Australia and the Australian Labor Party, which he joined as a teenager 70 years ago. Don Cooley was the type of union official who had spent most of his working life on the shop floor. He was employed at the Swan Brewery before becoming secretary of the Breweries and Bottle Yards Employees' Industrial Union of

Workers in 1954, holding that position for 22 years. In 1955 to 1976 he was a trustee and committee member of the Trade Unions Industrial Council (ALP WA) and its successor the Trades and Labour Council of Western Australia, and served as president of the TLC from 1965 to 1976. In his role he was an executive member of the ACTU in 1971 and an Australian delegate to the International Labour Organisation conferences in Geneva in 1969 and 1973. He served on the state executive of the Australian Labor Party from 1955 to 1976.

As mentioned by the Leader of the House, Don Cooley's military contribution in the Second World War involved service overseas in New Guinea from 1942. I should note that he was part of that generation of young men who stepped up to lay their lives on the line for Australia.

At the March 1974 state general election Don Cooley was elected to represent the North East Metropolitan Province after the retirement of the late Bill Willesee, MLC. The province comprised the districts of Morley, Maylands, Swan and Ascot. Despite the efforts of an energetic Liberal Party candidate, Don was elected with 55 per cent of the votes cast and a majority of 5 670. It is not surprising that Don Cooley's first speech in this house, on the Supply Bill 1974, on 6 August of that year, was a defence of the trade union movement. On the following day, during the Address-in-Reply, he spoke at length of his experience in industrial relations. During the course of these speeches he quoted a political opponent, Sir Robert Menzies, and noted Menzies' remark that when in opposition, it was unwise to attack the government of the day on everything and to declare them always to be wrong. There is perhaps a message in that for some of us.

Don Cooley also emphasised that he bore no hatred to any opponent and that unionists on his side of politics did not hate employers. The second three years of Don's six-year term coincided with my first three years in Parliament. I sat in this chamber with Don for three years. I remember him for his great, booming voice, which came out from down where Hon Donna Faragher is now sitting; his very strident advocacy of the union movement; and, interestingly, his very friendly manner and nature towards other members. I particularly remember the way in which Hon Gordon Masters, one of my colleagues, would bait Don by referring, by way of interjection, to BHP every time Don was speaking in the house. For some reason, the very mention of BHP sent Don off into a tirade of invective against the Big Australian. It did not matter what the subject matter of the speech was; Gordon was always able to provoke Don into a passionate denunciation of BHP and the associated capitalist system. I also remember the night, referred to by the Leader of the House, when there was an all-night debate on the Emergency Services Bill. Don and Roy Cloughton, in particular, displayed an incredible ability to speak for very long periods of time; this, of course, was in the time before the time limit arrangement for parliamentary speeches. I remember having breakfast the following morning after the Emergency Services Bill had in fact been held up in this house while awaiting a determination in an industrial court, if my memory serves me right. It was delayed for that purpose, and I think the opposition of the day achieved its purpose by having people like Don and Roy Cloughton speak at great length.

Don Cooley was to spend his six-year term in opposition, and he did not contest the 1980 election. In his final remarks to this chamber, on 6 December 1979, he spoke with generosity of the staff and of colleagues on both sides of Parliament. He quoted the former Liberal Premier, Sir David Brand, as having said to him on his election to Parliament, "Well, Don, if the seat has to go to Labor, I'm glad it will be you". In retirement, Don Cooley published a history of his old union, and was honoured with a Medal of the Order of Australia for his services to the trade union movement. He had the distinction of continuing as President of the Trades and Labor Council for two years after his election to Parliament, and was a very dedicated servant of unions and their members. On behalf of the opposition, I extend our sympathy to his family.

**HON MURRAY CRIDDLE (Agricultural)** [3.42 pm]: I would like to make a couple of remarks on the contribution of Don Cooley. I remember him as a cricket umpire. He did the job very well and very fairly, and I played under his stewardship as a cricket umpire. I pass on to his family the sympathies of the National Party, and recognise the service he gave to the trade union movement and to this place from 1974 for the six years he was here. I pass on my condolences to the family.

**THE PRESIDENT (Hon Nick Griffiths)**: Honourable members, I thank the Leader of the House for moving the motion of condolence with respect to the late Donald Walter Cooley. His achievements have been referred to by the members who have spoken, and I thank them for their words. I note that the late Don Cooley had a very long career in the trade union movement. The Leader of the Opposition referred to his secretaryship of the Breweries and Bottleyards Employees' Industrial Union of Western Australia. When Mr Cooley retired from Parliament, he set about writing a book entitled "A History of Industrial Progress 1910 to 1975". There is a copy of the book in the Parliamentary Library. I had cause to borrow the library's copy and I will return it shortly for interested members. I note that the book is very interesting and very well written. It gives members a taste of where the late Mr Cooley came from, and gives a very good historic perspective on how Australia was; in this regard, it indicates how people expressed themselves for much of our nation's history. If I may, I quote from the first paragraph in chapter 1. This conveys part of the late Mr Cooley's strong empathy with the Australian Labor

Party and the trade union movement. He was here as a Labor member of Parliament, and prior to that he was the president of the Trades and Labor Council. Members might find these words interesting -

Labor history records that it was not until after the big strikes of the 1890's that the Trade Union Movement in Australia became a real force in our society. However, some historians will say that the workforce was still in a semi-slave state as late as the early 1920s.

Then the book goes on. Members might find those observations interesting. I have read the maiden speech of the late Mr Cooley and his last speech in this place. In each of them he is very strong in his adherence to the support of the cause of the labour movement and critical of, as he referred to it, the cause of the conservatives. As the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, and as Hon Clive Griffiths mentioned to me when the other day we were discussing the passing of Don Cooley, he was very interested in the welfare of BHP and never eased up on an opportunity to criticise BHP, but that was how things were done in those days.

Honourable members, I will pass on copies of the *Hansard* of these proceedings to members of the Cooley family. I invite members to acknowledge his passing and carry the motion in the usual way.

Question passed, members standing.

**THE PRESIDENT:** Thank you, members.