



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONDOLENCES

Fitzgibbon, Mr Eric John

SPEECH

Monday, 9 February 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Fitzgibbon, Joel, MP

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Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (14:00): I thank you, Madam Speaker, and I will be very brief, but I just want to very quickly thank the House for its acknowledgement of my father's service both in this place and to his electorate. I also, on behalf of the family, thank the very, very many on both sides of this chamber and the other place who have extended their sympathies and support over the course of the last couple of weeks.

My father made many friends here, and many of those friends have remained in touch. I know he appreciated that very much. I reminded the many who attended his farewell that at one election my father's campaign slogan was: 'Eric Fitzgibbon—he's one of us.' It is the most successful campaign slogan I have seen used in my many years of campaigning—not that it was original; it had been used before with lesser effect. But somehow, alongside my father's name, it seemed to magically capture just who he was and what he stood for.

It also sent the right message, from his perspective, to those he sought to represent: that is, that his working class background caused him to understand fully the challenges of those who are battling in life and that he wanted to extend to them, as their representative, a hand-up—not a handout but a hand-up. There can be no doubt that my father's happy but struggling working class background affected his political thought. It certainly is what drew him to politics, and more importantly it drew him to the Australian Labor Party, a party he loved very much, a party that stood for what he believed were the important things in life.

He spent his 12 years here entirely without ambition. His only objective was to diligently, energetically and in a dedicated way represent the people of the Hunter electorate. On that basis, he is remembered very, very fondly, and that is a great comfort to us. He will always be remembered as Eric Fitzgibbon, one of us. We will miss him dearly. His passing is very sad, but he is in a better place and is at peace. I thank the House.

The **SPEAKER**: As a mark of respect for his memory, I ask honourable members to stand in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The **SPEAKER**: I thank the House.