

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 15 August, 1973

Death of Joseph Alexander Lawson, Member for Murray—Printed Question and Answer.

MR SPEAKER (THE HON. SIR KEVIN ELLIS) took the chair at 2.30 p.m.

MR SPEAKER offered the Prayer.

DEATH OF JOSEPH ALEXANDER
LAWSON, ESQUIRE, MEMBER FOR
MURRAY

Sir ROBERT ASKIN (Collaroy),
Premier and Treasurer [2.31]: I move:

(1) That this House desires to place on record its sense of the loss this State has sustained by the death of Joseph Alexander Lawson, Esquire, Member for Murray.

(2) That Mr Speaker convey to the family of the late Member the deep sympathy of Members of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained.

(3) That this House, as a mark of respect, do now adjourn.

It is with a feeling of sadness that I have to inform the House officially of the sudden death yesterday of our colleague, Joseph Alexander Lawson. Joe Lawson passed away at the Royal North Shore Hospital at the age of 79. He was first elected to the Legislative Assembly as a Country Party member in 1932 when he defeated Mr J. R. Donovan of the Australian Labor Party following the collapse of the Lang Government. He remained a member of this House continuously from 11th June, 1932, until his death—an unbroken period of forty-one years and a record which would rarely be surpassed in any House of Parliament.

He was the father of this House and it was a title he earned not only because of his seniority but also because of his benign, friendly, helpful, even paternal attitude towards other members. He was certainly popular with members of all parties on both sides of the House. All had an affection for him. Joe Lawson held the seat of Murray for forty-one years,

mostly as a Country Party member but in recent times as an independent. It speaks eloquently for the regard in which he was held locally, both on a personal basis and for his untiring work year in and year out for his constituents, that he was re-elected to the Murray seat at no fewer than fourteen general elections. He held the seat against all-comers: nobody could unseat him.

The late Joseph Lawson's powers of survival were great in all respects. On 11th July, 1933, only a year after his first election to Parliament, he was a passenger on the Albury mail train which was involved in a big smash and was wrecked at Bowning. Our late friend escaped with nothing more than an injured knee. Two years later both he and his wife, Mary, were involved in a road accident in which their car was almost completely wrecked, but fortunately they survived the crash. Had the results of those accidents been less fortunate both this House and the people of the Murray electorate—and indeed the State—may well have been denied the valued services from that time onwards of one of the State's most dedicated parliamentarians and citizens.

One of my first recollections of Joe Lawson was when I had been in the House for only about a year. At that time he exposed, almost single-handed and with great energy and resolution, what has to be described as a racket involving the large-scale sale of oranges at the Sydney fruit markets. Hundreds of cases of oranges were being rejected by inspectors as unsuitable for the retail trade and they were then supposedly sold to factories at giveaway prices. However, the factories did not get them; they went to dealers through the medium of dummy sales to the factories. That was only one of a long list of things that Mr Lawson did or helped put into effect by positive action, by his speeches in the House and in other ways for the benefit of rural people in particular.

That was my first experience of Mr Lawson, but through the years I saw him in action in many other ways when he was fighting and working to improve the lot of the man on the land. Throughout his long

term in the Legislative Assembly Joe Lawson—as we knew him—advocated that water storages should be given a high priority. He was a great believer in the importance of water storages. He was always able to put his conviction to the House most effectively and in a way that avoided any reference to party politics. His constant advocacy on this theme of water storages and the work that he did—I do not think this is anything but a compliment to him—proved that he was a most resourceful and resolute operator behind the scenes, doing the things that parliamentarians have to do. Joe Lawson managed to achieve much for his constituents and for people on the land generally. He was a hard working and dedicated parliamentarian both inside and outside the House—in fact, everywhere he went. The Murray electorate is famous for its rice production and its oilseed industry, and much of the credit for this and for the general progress of the area, especially over the past 20 or 30 years, may well be attributable to the unflagging efforts of Joe Lawson.

Mr Lawson was a man of many parts right through his long and distinguished career as a member of this Parliament. When he was first elected to represent the electorate of Murray he was mayor of Deniliquin; he held that position in 1931 and 1932. Before he entered Parliament he had already built up an impressive record of community service. Mr Lawson was a member of the executive council of the Farmers and Settlers' Association from 1928 until 1932, and he was a foundation member and New South Wales representative of the Australian Wheatgrowers Federation in 1931. He was connected with many other bodies concerned with the interests and the welfare of the man on the land. Before entering Parliament Joe Lawson earned his living as a farmer and grazier, and he was well-known as an accomplished horse breaker. In his younger days he took an active part in various sports, particularly athletics. He was, in his day, a good sprinter and he competed in the Victorian championships, at one time competing in the famous Stawell gift.

Sir Robert Askin]

I can only say that, like all those who knew him well, I feel we have lost from our midst a friend, a kindly man who gave wonderful service to this House in a quiet but most effective way. The House and the State owe much to him. His wife predeceased him and he is survived by five children, Mr J. Lawson of Gordon, Victoria, Mrs M. Meillon of Lane Cove, Mrs V. Corbin of Roseville, Mr G. Lawson of Sans Souci, and Mrs M. Hazelton of Tooleybuc, in the Murray electorate. On behalf of the Government I extend deep and sincere sympathy to the late Mr Lawson's family in their sad bereavement.

Mr HILLS (Phillip), Leader of the Opposition [2.40]: With sadness, I second the motion. The Opposition wishes to join the Premier and members on the Government side of the House in this resolution of condolence concerning our late member, Joe Lawson. This is a sad day for this House. As the Premier has said, we have lost the father of the House. For as long as they live, every member sitting here today will remember Joe Lawson with affection, just as other fathers of the House, such as the late Sir Michael Bruxner, are still remembered by those of us who served with them. Joe Lawson could not have wished for a better ending. He died in harness, despite the fact that he was seventy-nine years old. He died while still in the service of the people whom he represented as member for Murray for more than forty-one years. He defeated a sitting Labor member to gain that seat.

This is the third day in succession that this House has had before it a resolution of condolence. On each occasion we have spoken of men who served in the Parliament for long periods. Consequently we have referred to the fact that those men were associated with days of turmoil in the New South Wales parliamentary system and when Mr J. T. Lang was in power. Joe Lawson came into this Parliament during those difficult days. He was the son of a farmer at Deniliquin, born in 1894 just across the Murrumbidgee River in the Victorian town of Echuca where his mother had gone for attention at the birth. Joe Lawson was

reared and educated in Deniliquin through lean and hungry times. His life commenced soon after the great economic crash of 1893. Those hard times would still be vivid and painful memories for his father if he were still alive, and doubtless those difficulties were implanted on the mind of our late colleague.

Joe Lawson followed his father by working the land and became a farmer and grazier with his own mixed farming property in the Deniliquin area. He became active in the Farmers and Graziers Association and from 1928 to 1932 was a member of the executive council of the Farmers and Settlers Association. It was then his turn to taste bitter days and in 1931, at the depth of the great depression, he banded together with other men who were in similar circumstances and became a foundation member and New South Wales representative of the Australian Wheatgrowers Association. In that same year he was elected mayor of Deniliquin. Obviously before coming to Parliament he was already an active servant of the people.

In June, 1932, Joe Lawson stood as Country Party candidate for the seat of Murray and was elected. He made his maiden speech in this House in a debate on the Farmers Relief Bill in September of that year. I can bring to mind the names of only three men who sat in this Chamber on that day and are still alive. They are all former Labor Premiers—Sir William McKell, the Hon. Robert Heffron and Mr John Thomas Lang. Those three gentlemen were members of this Parliament when Joe Lawson was first elected to it.

Few men have been supported so consistently by their constituents as was Joe Lawson over a period of forty-one years. Even in 1968, when Joe Lawson stood as an independent and was opposed by the party that he had represented in this Parliament over a long period, the people sent him back here as their man. He could not have been paid a higher tribute. As the Premier has said, Mr Lawson was a great supporter of conservation and irrigation projects. He plagued many a Minister to have water brought to the farmers and settlers in his

vast electorate. I remember attending the opening of a syphon on the Deniboota irrigation scheme when the Premier, the late Joe Cahill, dedicated it as the Lawson Syphon in his honour. Joe Lawson served in his quiet way, as the Premier said, and was able to achieve a great deal for the people of his electorate. They respected him for the work that he did on their behalf. Therefore, it was appropriate that the Lawson Syphon should have been named after him.

Joe Lawson's active life came to a partial end on the death of his beloved wife, Mary. My own view is that it was appropriate that he should continue to serve the people of his electorate, for that gave him a continuing purpose in life. All of us mourn his passing. He died as he most certainly would have wished to die, in the service of the people. We join the Premier in expressing our condolences to his five children who are left, particularly to Mrs Meillon who, as honourable members know, is associated with the Parliament and has served it and the people of this State. We express to them our deepest sympathy.

Sir CHARLES CUTLER (Orange), Deputy Premier, Minister for Local Government and Minister for Highways [2.47]: On behalf of my Country Party colleagues, I join the Premier and Treasurer and the Leader of the Opposition in supporting this motion of condolence. As I speak, my mind goes to a photograph of a group of people that hangs in the Country Party room at Parliament House. The photograph was taken in 1932. On one side of the group is a short, solid, dark-haired, youngish-looking man, designated underneath the photograph as Joe Lawson, member for Murray. Looking back over the forty-one years since, I reflect on the tremendously wide field of service given to the State and particularly to the country areas of it by the men in that photograph. I recall in the group were persons like Colonel Bruxner, later Sir Michael Bruxner, who served as Deputy Premier and in various ministerial capacities in this House over a long period. There was David Drummond, who was Minister for Education, also for a lengthy time. There was

Roy Vincent, who worked in the field of conservation and forestry, and Colin Sinclair, who was Minister for Lands. There were others. Everyone in that photograph was a magnificent Australian. Each of them proved himself to be so in subsequent years. Among the ranks of those men was Joe Lawson, the member for Murray. In my opinion he was an Australian to his fingertips.

Mr Lawson's name became synonymous with the electorate of Murray over the forty-one years in which he represented it, so much so that when today I had lunch with a group of persons interested in local government one of them told me that he had read in the press that Mr Murray, the member for Lawson, had died. That is indicative of the close association between Joe Lawson and the electorate he represented. It has already been mentioned that the name of Joe Lawson has been commemorated in his electorate by the naming of water conservation works after him. It is fitting indeed that his name should be associated with water conservation and irrigation, to which he gave a lifetime of service.

Death is always a sad occasion in this Parliament, even when the person involved is not a serving member at the time of his death. But, as the Leader of the Opposition said, Joe Lawson died in harness after serving Parliament for a long time. He gave such wonderful service to his constituents that he had the unusual experience of being returned to this Parliament as an independent. All of us who belong to political parties know how difficult that is, and surely it was an indication of the regard the constituents of the Murray electorate had for Joe Lawson. At least we and his family can look back upon his lifetime of service to this State and the nation. His family can recall also with great pride the splendid record of this man.

Perhaps the most pleasing aspect for all of us who knew Joe Lawson well is to record the fact that his late wife also ably served the State by his side right up to the time of her death. It has been said that Joe Lawson was an Australian to his fingertips. It would be equally apt to describe Mary

Sir Charles Cutler]

Lawson as a lady to her fingertips. All of us who knew this fine woman acknowledge the tremendous electoral help she gave her husband. It is only fitting on this rather sad occasion to refer not only to the magnificent service to the State of Joe Lawson but even perhaps more particularly to the wonderful assistance that his wife gave him on behalf of his constituents.

It is true that Joe Lawson had some differences in the latter stage of his career with the Country Party. Those differences may be attributed to the party system under which this Parliament operates. In general this system has served Australia fairly well. However, so far as I and my colleagues of the Country Party are concerned, we shall always think of Mr and Mrs Lawson as party associates of whom we are indeed proud. Every single one of us in the Country Party—and I believe this may apply to members of all parties—hopes that when the time comes to retire from political life he will enjoy confidence, love and respect of the order that Joe and Mary Lawson received from their constituents.

Mr SHEAHAN (Burrinjuck) [2.54]: It must be unique for a motion of condolence to be moved in this Parliament for the father of the House who has passed away while still a serving member. It was my privilege to become closely associated with and form a close friendship with the late member for Murray, who was a man of gentle manner and speech. He was considerate and kind in disposition, and combined all the qualities of practical knowledge and understanding that typifies a manly man, a country man, and a man who loves the land, its production and people. These attributes were adverted to not long ago when Joe Lawson celebrated the fortieth anniversary of his membership of this House, in the presence of the Premier and Treasurer, the Hon. S. T. Stephens when he was Minister for Housing, and many others. I well recall the affectionate regard that was shown to Joe Lawson by everyone present.

Our colleague fought determinedly for the rights of his constituents. When I was Minister for Lands I had many interviews with him when he pressed the claims of people he represented. The Premier has mentioned that he exposed the racket in oranges that were being sent from his constituency for sale at the Sydney markets. I happened to be the Acting Minister for Agriculture during the unfortunate illness of the Hon. Eddie Graham, who was then the Minister for Agriculture. I recall how, as a result of this exposure, the format at the markets was altered. Some growers had not been receiving even the cost of the freight they had paid to consign their fruit to Sydney.

It was the privilege of myself and my wife when I was Minister for Health to have the company of Joe Lawson and his wife on a tour throughout his electorate. His bubbling good humour showed through in his references to places we visited and various incidents that had occurred during his parliamentary career. One instance was his reference to his efforts to protect primary production in his electorate from the ravages of certain birds and this had brought him into conflict with the late honourable member for Canterbury, Mr Arthur Tonge—renowned for his association with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Although harsh words were exchanged between them on the rights of birds that flew in the Australian skies and their inroads into primary production, the firm admiration they held for each other and fine friendship were unaffected. Joe Lawson always had the interests of his constituents at heart. He loved sport in all its aspects. In particular, he was devoted to the sport of kings and was a good judge of all horse flesh.

During the lunch hour I confirmed from the record in the Parliamentary Library that the Murray electorate has always been one of the most important in New South Wales. In the early days of the Cobb and Co. staging service Deniliquin was a most important stopping place. The electorate has been represented by various Ministers of the Crown, including at least one who became Premier of New South Wales. The

late Hon. R. T. Ball and the late Mr George Beeby were two Ministers who represented the electorate. At various times this constituency has been represented by the Protectionist Party. When the Australian Labor Party came into existence it then became a Labor seat until 1932, when Mr Lawson wrested it from Labor.

From the record maintained in the Parliamentary Library it appears that at one stage the Murray electorate was represented by the late J. M. Chanter, whose son became a Labor member of this House after having belonged to the Protectionist Party since 1884. Mr Mark Anthony Davidson was another Labor member for the electorate but when Mr Lawson took the seat from Labor he retained it until his death yesterday. If that is not a tribute to his magnetic personality I do not know what else it could be. It is a rare parliamentarian who has not experienced frustration and disappointment during his political career. Joe Lawson was therefore not alone in suffering such a reversal. Nevertheless he leaves behind him a cherished record of whole-hearted devotion by himself and his wife on behalf of his constituents. I should like to quote an old Spanish saying to which I adverted on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary celebration to which I referred earlier. It is in these terms:

Whatever you are, be that
 Whatever you say, be true
 Straightforwardly act
 Be honest in fact
 Be nobody else but you.

In conveying my condolences and sympathy to the relatives of Joe Lawson I commend those lines as representative of his character, life and work.

Mr CHAFFEY (Tamworth) [2.59]: Joe Lawson was a great personal mate of mine. Like most honourable members I should not have thought that fate would catch up on him in this way. It was typical of him that recently, in his whimsical fashion, he should play a trick on me. Last week members of his family informed me that Joe had been to the doctor and had been advised to spend a couple of days in bed. They passed

on to me his request that I seek leave of absence for him on account of illness, which I did. Joe Lawson came into the House on Monday and I apologized to him for the clumsy fashion in which I had moved the motion seeking leave of absence for him because of ill-health. That caused some speculation about this place: I really should have said because of a temporary indisposition. It came as a deep shock to hear the news yesterday.

Some references have been made to Mr Lawson's record of public service since he came into this House in 1932. He was essentially a most kindly man but he was ready to fight on particular issues. After 1932 New South Wales had about a quarter of a million unemployed and one of the works designed to relieve the problem was on the Mulwala Canal. A Minister, the late Sir Michael Bruxner, went down to speak to some of the recalcitrant, militant, stir-up element there who wanted a bit more than they were getting on the job. Some of them did not want to hear what the Minister had to say from the platform and were making all sorts of noise. Joe Lawson said, "Let me get hold of that microphone". Then in typical, forthright language, Joe said: "Listen you so-and-so's. The Minister comes down here to talk to you to get you out of your troubles, so shut up or I will take the Minister away." So they shut up. That was the sort of man Joe Lawson was. He was essentially a man of the people whom he represented. Not so many years ago his late wife was honoured by an award of the MBE for community services. Those who were able to attend the function in Deniliquin last year will readily understand the close link this man had with the people whom he represented. He was essentially a family man. Many people have learned to their sorrow over the years that if you fight one Lawson, you fight the whole family.

When I said at the beginning of my remarks that he had played a trick on me I was referring to a couple of elections ago when the returns were coming in and the numbers were getting a little close. I had the whip out—everyone knows that Joe

Mr Chaffey]

Lawson loved racing—and I flogged him up the last furlong to get him ahead for one reason only—I did not want to have to accept the paternal responsibility for every member of the House. I preferred that he remain the father of the House and I thought that I should remove myself from the possibility of occupying that position before Joe Lawson tricked me into the post, but he beat me at the end. I have fond memories of Joe and I want to let his family know that he will never be forgotten. All I want to say finally is that whatever he may be thinking about what we are talking about down here, he will finish up top—not below.

Mr D. B. HUNTER (Ashfield) [3.4]: I should like to be associated with the motion. It has been my privilege to know J. A. Lawson during the years I have been a member of this House and during that time I have come to know him and enjoy his company because of his belly-chuckling humour, his fund of wide knowledge, his affection for the land, his unity of purpose and the love all his family had for each other. It has always seemed to me that he belonged to the breed of country men that is fast disappearing—those pioneers of the roving days when the world was wide, whose adventurous spirit has been depicted for us in the writings of Henry Lawson and others. Joe Lawson's knowledge was great, his sympathies were genuine, and his humour was one of the dominating factors in his relationship with others. By his passing the Parliament has lost a charming and attractive personality.

Mr MCCAWE (Lane Cove), Attorney-General [3.6]: Like all other members who have been here for some years I am grateful for the memories of Joe Lawson, which are indelibly engraved upon my heart and will remain while life lasts. When I came to this House twenty-six years ago Joe Lawson was already an experienced and long-serving member, but he was not aloof as men of superior experience sometimes are. He was approachable, gentle, helpful and kind, and I have much reason to remember him with gratitude. On an occasion such as this I

bracket him with another outstanding personality whom we have long since mourned—a former member for Parramatta and former Chief Secretary, George Gollan. Both George and Joe helped me greatly in becoming acclimatized in this place. I believe Joe Lawson helped me because of the value he placed upon being a member of parliament. He wanted others to appreciate that ethical standards must be observed and that certain standards of character are required in this House. As one who had even then been here a long time, he did everything he could to assist younger members by giving them advice, guidance and help with a view to ensuring that they would recognize those standards, appreciate them, and try to reach them, so the memories of Joe Lawson's kindnesses and help are etched in my mind.

When we were in Opposition we had more time to meet and talk. I like to think of many occasions in the parliamentary dining room during late sessions when Joe Lawson would entertain other members by reciting Australian poems. He loved the works of Banjo Paterson, Henry Lawson and Dorothea Mackellar. He knew their writings intimately and was able to recite with fluency long passages from their poems and ballads. This quality may seem in sharp contrast to the man of rugged physical strength that he was before the weight of years fell upon him. As well, he was a man of strong and rugged intellect; a man of very strong character and high ideals. He was a man from far out in this wide flung State, representing as he did an electorate far removed from the city. I recall him telling me and others that it was his practice once a year to set out with his wife to visit the various towns in his scattered constituency, advertising his coming in the local press and taking a month or so in touring that distant part of the State and making himself accessible to the people whom he represented in this House.

One sometimes hears the phrase "One vote one value". My constituents and those of other metropolitan members can be in touch by a simple telephone call or by taking a short bus trip. That is not so in the far-flung parts of New South Wales, and Joe Lawson, recognizing that his constituents were at a disadvantage, made himself available by visiting them. I know that other country members do this as well. Those of us who knew him for his personal qualities and for his devotion to duty know how affectionately his constituents, whether or not they supported him politically, looked upon him. Whatever their political views they will all mourn his passing as we do.

A little over a year ago some folk from the Lane Cove electorate attended a testimonial dinner upon my having achieved twenty-five years' continuous representation. It was a real pleasure for me to see Joe Lawson come in among more than 500 guests who attended that evening. He was not one who used many words but that action intimated to me that the affection I felt for him, and will always feel for his memory, was reciprocated. I have the pleasure to know Mrs Meillon, his daughter, who is one of my constituents and one of his five children. I should like most sincerely to join the Premier and Treasurer, the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Premier, the honourable member for Bur-rinjuck, the honourable member for Tamworth, the honourable member for Ashfield and other honourable members who today have paid tribute to the memory of a great Australian.

Mr FISCHER (Sturt) [3.12]: In 1971 I had the privilege of taking over the existing subdivisions of Corowa, Lockhart and Urana from the late Joseph Alexander Lawson, or Mr Lawson as he was known to countless thousands of schoolchildren throughout the electorate of Murray and the Riverina. I first met Mr Lawson when I was a student participating in the Milbrulong

district school sports, an annual event that he always attended. He was its patron in the same way as he was patron of many hundreds of organizations throughout his electorate. No doubt that reflected his interest in educational matters and in the standard of educational facilities in the area that he represented for over four decades. It is interesting to note that on Thursday, 19th July, the late member for Murray chose education as the major point in his speech at the municipal council chambers at Deniliquin, where he was a former mayor, in extending a welcome to the Deputy Premier at a civic reception. It is sad to think that next Friday, when many district school sports will take place in areas such as Saverlake and Milbrulong, Mr Lawson will be sadly missed by the many people connected with those organizations, in the same way as he will be sadly missed in the Murray electorate, the Riverina and throughout the State.

I am closely aware of the numerous achievements to his credit and the many projects that were completed because of his efforts. I mention only one of them, the Corowa high school. I support the motion of the Premier and Treasurer, and join with the Leader of the Opposition and other honourable members in extending my sympathy to the members of Mr Lawson's family.

Mr MAUGER (Monaro) [3.15]: I join with those who have spoken on the motion of sympathy to the Lawson family. On entering this Parliament some nine years ago I met two very fine gentlemen, Mr Billy Sheahan and Mr Joe Lawson, who showed me around the House. Yesterday I listened with a great deal of regret to Mr Sheahan making his farewell speech. Almost immediately afterwards I received notice that the other great friend who had introduced me to this House, Mr Lawson, had passed on. I went to the fortieth anniversary of the election of Mr Lawson to this House. It was held in Deniliquin and at 2.30 in the

afternoon on a week day the local town hall was packed with people, many of whom had travelled hundreds of miles to pay their respects to this man. It was something that had to be seen to be believed.

I came into closer contact with Mr Lawson over the past six or eight months in my capacity as Government Whip. On many occasions, as honourable members will know, a whip has to rely on members being present to vote. Frequently when I approached Mr Lawson in that regard I knew that he should have been at home but I had to ask him to stay behind. He told me of his unswerving regard for the parliamentary institution and the people whom he represented. He assured me that whenever he was needed he would be present here. Over the period I have been whip I have respected his sincerity and the way he has carried out his duties as an independent member of this House. I should like to record my sincere condolences to the family, and to assure them that all honourable members have appreciated his efforts over the years he served. Those efforts will not be forgotten.

Mr DUNCAN (Lismore) [3.17]: I join with the Premier and Treasurer, the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Premier and all other honourable members who have spoken in the tributes paid to the late Joe Lawson. It is not my intention to reiterate aspects that have been enunciated by them. I assure honourable members that as a young member of this House I deem it a great pleasure to have been a member and to have served in this Parliament during part of the forty-one years of service rendered by Mr Lawson. When we look at the careers of members of parliament we realize that there are those who have risen to great heights as parliamentary leaders, those who accept the responsibility of government as part of their parliamentary duties, and there are those who choose to serve on the backbenches. I believe that

Joe Lawson chose to serve on the backbenches and that he did so most effectively and with a great deal of satisfaction to the people of the Murray electorate and the State generally.

In 1968 it was my pleasure to visit the Murray electorate with my wife for the opening of the Finley show, at which it was my privilege to officiate. My wife and I shall not forget seeing the hundreds of people whom Mr Lawson knew on personal and intimate terms. It was not a one-way communication, as the people of the Murray electorate regarded their member with respect, admiration and confidence. I doubt whether a member of parliament can ask for more than to enjoy the respect, confidence and admiration of his constituents. This was the case with Joe Lawson. I join with all honourable members in extending our deepest sympathy to his family.

Mr FIFE (Wagga Wagga), Minister for Mines, Minister for Power and Assistant Treasurer [3.20]: I wish to associate my family, my constituents and myself with this motion of sympathy that has been moved by the Premier and Treasurer, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition and so finely supported by a number of honourable members on both sides of the House. I entered this Parliament almost sixteen years ago as a relatively young man. When a person comes into this Parliament at any age he feels quite strange. Many challenges are thrown down to a new member of Parliament, and he finds himself in a new and unusual situation. I have reason to be grateful for many acts of courtesy, for a great deal of assistance and indeed for much encouragement that was given to me by Joe Lawson in those early years of my parliamentary career. Because his constituency of Murray is in the southwest of the State, he was virtually a neighbour of mine, as member for Wagga Wagga, and on many occasions he visited my electorate; indeed, I have had

the pleasure, along with my wife and my family, of having Mr and Mrs Lawson in our home. Much has been said about Joe Lawson's personal qualities and about his contribution to the State, to this Parliament and in particular to the constituency he represented. I heartily endorse all the fine tributes that have been paid to his memory today.

I should like to amplify some of the things that have been said about the late Mrs Lawson because those of us who knew Mr and Mrs Lawson well realize that the representation of the Murray electorate was a partnership that was conducted by both of them. Mrs Lawson was a gracious lady with a warm heart and a personality that endeared her to everybody who came in contact with her.

The other thing to which I should like to make brief reference is that Joe Lawson had a dry sense of humour although it was nevertheless, a lively one. I recall that on one occasion when he visited my home, he entertained my children with a story about an event that occurred early in his political life. He told of going to one of his first political meetings when he was, naturally, feeling somewhat nervous. He had taken great care to prepare himself; he rehearsed his speech over and over until he had it word perfect. Then he set off for the meeting in a car, which he said was one of the few available at that time. The meeting was being held many miles away and it was necessary for him to travel over one of those country roads that are well known for the number of gates across them. He related how they drove on into the night and how he got out of the car to open one gate after another. When it got to about 9.30 p.m. he realized that it was unlikely that they would get to the meeting; they were lost. He said that at one of the gates he stepped out of the car and when he saw a group of kangaroos nearby he thought that his speech was not going to

be wasted. So he said, "Fellow Australians"—and went on to deliver his speech. This was the kind of man he was, with a dry but, nevertheless, lively sense of humour. We who were his friends will miss him. His constituents will miss him. His passing is a great loss to this Parliament and to the people of New South Wales.

Members and officers of the House standing in their places,

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned at 3.25 p.m.

PRINTED QUESTION AND ANSWER

The following question upon notice and answer was distributed.

MINERAL SAND MINING

Mr MALLAM asked the MINISTER FOR MINES, MINISTER FOR POWER AND ASSISTANT TREASURER—For each year since 1st January, 1965—(1) What is the total area of land leased for the purposes of rutile and other mineral sand mining? (2) What is the amount of bond required from the mining companies as surety against environmental damage? (3) How many companies have lost their bond? (4) What is the total amount of royalties received by the Government for this type of mining?

Answer—(1) The total area of land leased for the purposes of mining for rutile and associated minerals for each year since 1st January, 1965, is as follows:

<i>Year ending 31st December</i>	<i>Acres</i>
1965	31,622
1966	40,540
1967	51,047
1968	56,263
1969	70,477
1970	77,845
1971	68,253
1972	101,517

(2) Companies mining for rutile and associated minerals are called upon to furnish a guarantee deposit, a bond, a bank fixed deposit or cash in an amount of money as a guarantee that worked lands will be satisfactorily restored. The amount of the guarantee deposit is dependent on the extent of the area to be mined, the method of mining to be adopted and the location of the area. Guarantee deposits are currently called for in amounts ranging from \$500 to \$40,000 depending on the particular circumstances of each case.

(3) There was a case in 1962 where a guarantee deposit of \$1,000 lodged by Crescent Rutile N.L. was forfeited for failure to restore land mined on Kilcare Beach within portion MLs 5 and 6, Parish of Kincumber, County of Northumberland. It should be noted, however, that there are occasions where guarantee deposits are retained pending the satisfactory restoration of mined areas.

(4) Royalties in respect of mineral sand mining are collected on a financial-year basis. The following statement shows the net royalty received from this source between the financial year 1964-65 and the financial year 1971-72:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Net Royalty Received \$</i>
1964-1965	192,636
1965-1966	215,686
1966-1967	254,842
1967-1968	310,840
1968-1969	353,494
1969-1970	446,005
1970-1971	503,483
1971-1972	547,052
	\$2,824,038