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PRIME MINISTER

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MOTION OF CONDOLENCE - LORD CASEY

Richard Gardiner Casey died on 18 June.

In the history of our country few men have attracted, or earned, the respect due and paid to Lord Casey. Not only was his public contribution one of great distinction and lasting value. He was also a man of integrity and enormous commonsense.

He was the kind of man who imparted stature to the institutions he served. The Australian people can count themselves immensely fortunate to have had him as a servant over such a long period.

When I became a Member of this Parliament in 1955 I found that Dick Casey was always prepared to listen and to help. One of his great qualities was that he was always prepared to assist young people and to share his experience with them.

I first came to know Dick Casey through my family. He and my father were close friends over many years. They grew up together and went to school and university together.

I recall that they were both interested in automobiles. Lord Casey was an engineer by training and proud of it. He wanted to understand how things worked and why, and he always believed that the more engineers in Parliament the better.

At one stage my father and he became interested in a new engine designed by A.G.M. Michell. It was typical of Lord Casey that he would try to help someone with a good idea. They attempted to promote the engine but were unsuccessful in having it adopted.

One of Lord Casey's most impressive characteristics was his immense capacity for work. His industry was remarkable and it was this extraordinary application that enabled him to undertake so many careers in the course of his lifetime.

He was at one time or another, a soldier, an administrator, a politician, a diplomat and a Vice-regal personage. In all of these careers he served with conspicuous success.

In 1914 he volunteered in the A.I.F. and served with distinction at Gallipoli and on the western front. He was mentioned in despatches and for his valour he won the Distinguished Service Order and a Military Cross. He was discharged in 1919.

From 1924 to 1931 he served his country in the External Affairs Department as Australian political liaison officer in London. His political career commenced in 1931 when he became a Member of this House for the seat of Corio, a seat he held until his first resignation from the Parliament in 1940.

During the period of the Great Depression he served in several portfolios. Among these he was assistant Federal Treasurer 1933-1935 and Federal Treasurer from 1935 to 1939.

As Treasurer he took an active role in the development of a national insurance scheme, which for reasons beyond his control was never implemented.

He was also at this time Minister in charge of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (1937-1939) - an association he continued after the war and through his retirement - and one of great lasting benefit to that organisation and to the nation.

Casey was a Liberal in the full sense - a man of progressive instincts, not fearful of change. He welcomed the challenge of a new circumstance, a new job. He was often ahead of his time and keen to play a part in defining a new role for his country.

He represented Australia to the world in a critical period of our history.

In 1940 Casey resigned from the Parliament to become the first Australian Minister to Washington. He expended great energy in ensuring that Australia's position was well known to the American administration and the President at that time, Mr Roosevelt.

In 1942, at the request of the British Prime Minister, the late Sir Winston Churchill, Lord Casey assumed the position of Minister of State for the Middle East and had the rank of Cabinet Minister in the British War Cabinet. Speaking in the early part of this decade about the controversy that surrounded his acceptance of such a post, he remarked that such an appointment in the Middle East was far more important than the post he had left in Washington.

He appreciated the need for Australia to recognise that its security depended on events in a number of areas of the world.

From here in 1943 he took up his first Vice-Regal position as Governor of Bengal. During his time there, from 1943 to 1946 he experienced at first hand contacts with leaders of the Indian nation which would stand him in good stead when he assumed responsibility for Australia's foreign policy.

In 1949 - in that vital election for Australia's future - Casey returned to active politics as the representative for the seat of Latrobe. He held the seat until his retirement from politics in 1960.

In two tasks he undertook following the 1949 election he showed again the importance he placed on looking to the future and his concern that Australia should develop into a strong outward looking and tolerant nation.

Immediately after the election, he became Minister for Works and Housing and he continued his involvement with the C.S.I.R.O. being Minister in charge from 1950 to 1960.

It was in 1951 that he became Minister for External Affairs, and he held the post until his retirement. Looking ahead, as always, he worked hard to establish a new set of relationships with the countries of our region.

His permanent head at the time has recently recorded that Casey's statements during his visit to Japan in 1951 "marked the first real movement from enmity to close cooperation between Australia and Japan".

He appreciated the great significance of Australia's location close to the new states emerging in Asia and moved rapidly to expand our representation in the region.

Earlier than most, he foresaw the importance of bringing China in to the international community. He was always a realist about the world and never feared to see facts as they were. His advice was wise and his judgement sound.

Lord Casey's career showed that deep patriotism could be combined with an outward looking and humane international perspective.

In 1965 he assumed a post for which he was uniquely suited - the Governor-Generalship. He had much of value to say. He used the position to dignify Australia and symbolise the standards of public and private behaviour we should all strive to achieve.

In his life he was assisted at all time by his wife Lady Casey - a remarkable woman in her own right. She was to him in all of his careers a great comfort and point of courage. This was exemplified by her devoted action of daily attendance at his hospital bed after Lord Casey's serious motor accident in 1974.

Richard Gardiner Casey upheld the highest standards of public life, and in his private life was unfailingly generous and kindly. What he achieved he earned by his industry, his courage, his integrity, and his humanity. He loved Australia and because of his life we have a better sense of ourselves and what we can become.

To Lady Casey and to her son and daughter I extend on behalf of the Government my deepest sympathy at the loss of a husband and father. Australia has lost a devoted servant.