



PRIME MINISTER

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DEATH OF MR J.I. ARMSTRONG

Last Thursday, 10th March, John Armstrong - a man who had held public office in Parliament, overseas and in his home State of New South Wales over a span of forty years - died suddenly at Batemans Bay, on the New South Wales coast which he loved so much.

John Armstrong was a straight-forward man - blunt, open, forceful without any trace of sophistry or cynicism. He was a most likeable man, with an earthy sense of humour, and he was much respected by all who knew him or worked with him.

He was also a man of moderation. Many politicians forget that if they speak with hyperbole and rancour, they may exacerbate public feelings, deepen public divisions and bring disrespect to Parliament. John Armstrong was well aware of that danger and managed to put forward his point of view with strength and vigour but tempered with moderation and humour. It is no wonder that he proved to be a success in the many public offices he held.

And there were many offices which he held over his long career of public service. In 1934 he became an Alderman of the City of Sydney, and three years later he was elected to the Senate.

He represented New South Wales in the Senate for 24 years, during which time he was a Minister of the Crown for three years and later deputy leader of the opposition for five years.

After leaving the Senate, he again became active in local government, and in 1965, he achieved a life-long ambition by being elected Lord Mayor of Sydney. He brought great flair and imagination to that office.

In 1973 he was appointed High Commissioner to London. His style was not that of his predecessors in that office, yet he served Australia forthrightly but discreetly. Our continuing good relations with Britain owe much to his tenure of that office.

One of the initiatives which John Armstrong long advocated was the introduction of an Australian honours system. It was most fitting that he was made a Companion of the Order of Australia last Australia Day. Sadly he died before being invested with the insignia of that Order.

A State funeral was held for him yesterday in Sydney. At the Requiem Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral, which was attended by the Attorney-General on my behalf, Cardinal Freeman paid tribute to the "attractive consistency of his character".

John Armstrong held many positions of power and influence but throughout he remained himself, plainly speaking his views without pretension.

John Armstrong served his Party and his country well. I talked with him only last week and he seemed to be greatly enjoying his well-earned retirement. It is sad that he could not have had longer to enjoy it.

The Government extends its profound sympathy to his wife, Joan, and his four children.

Mr Speaker, I move: