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C R (Bert) Kelly

The death of Bert Kelly last Friday has removed from the Australian political scene a person who made a remarkable contribution to debate on economic issues in Australia.

Bert Kelly was almost certainly the first and definitely the foremost parliamentary advocate in the post World War II period of lower tariffs and freer trade.

At a time when it was unfashionable to do so he, almost single handedly, argued in Parliament for less government regulation and other economic policies now commonly described as economic rationalism.

He withstood ridicule and attack from both sides of politics.

In time he was to see the ideas he championed almost alone for so long enjoy much wider political support.

Bert Kelly argued his cause with high intelligence and superb humour. A Kelly speech from the backbench always attracted a good attendance in the House.

His "Modest Members" column in *The Australian Financial Review* became synonymous with the push for greater economic liberalism.

His admirers formed the Society of Modest Members which became a power forum for further debate.

He faithfully represented the rural electorate of Wakefield in South Australia for 19 years. He served as Minister for Works in the Holt Government and as Minister for the Navy in the Gorton Government.

I particularly remember the kindness that he and his fellow South Australia Liberal, Jim Forbes extended to me as a new member when I entered parliament in 1974.

Those now on the Australian political scene who take it as given that the contemporary economic debate is largely about the pace of further change, not whether we should return to the days of high protection, should remember the immense debt of gratitude which is owed to Bert Kelly.

On behalf of the Liberal Party of Australia I record my appreciation for his years of service and loyalty to our party. To his wife Lorna and his family I extend my deep sympathy on their great loss.

19 January 1997
(Canberra)