



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

FRIDAY, 21 NOVEMBER, 1980

DEATH OF SIR JOHN McEWEN

Sir John McEwen was a very great Australian.

He served this country in many different capacities in the Federal Parliament for more than 36 years - a very large part of his working life.

Sir John was elected to the House of Representatives in 1934. Three years later he was appointed to his first Ministerial post, Minister for the Interior.

In the early days of World War 2, he was Minister for External Affairs. Sir John was appointed Minister for Air and Minister for Civil Aviation in 1940, and held these portfolios for a year until the defeat in Parliament of the Fadden Ministry.

On the election of the first post-war Menzies Ministry in 1949, he became Minister for Commerce and Agriculture, a portfolio he held until 1956, when it was renamed Trade.

He held the portfolio of Minister for Trade from 1956 to 1963, and Trade and Industry from then until his resignation from Parliament in 1971.

Sir John always regarded one of his more significant achievements as denying some of the Pacific islands to the axis powers as Foreign Minister in the early days of the War.

These are events beyond the memory of a large number of Australians, but they show the breadth of time over which John McEwen served Australia in many different capacities.

Sir John is best remembered as Leader of the Country Party, as Deputy Prime Minister to Sir Robert Menzies and then to later Liberal leaders. In that capacity, he served Australia very well, and very truly.

One of the precious memories I have of being in Federal Parliament, was being able to learn by watching and listening to John McEwen. It was a privilege to serve with him.

His death will be very much noticed throughout Australia. I hope at this time that all Australians will just pause to think for a moment of the very great service that he gave for this country - not just for his Party, but for the whole nation.

He was one of those politicians who had the capacity to put the national interest first, and as I believe, he always did.

I regarded John McEwen as a very close personal friend. I want - and am very sure many others would want me, on their behalf - to convey my sincere condolences and sympathies to Lady McEwen.

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