

March 1981



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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIAWEDNESDAY, MARCH 4 1981

CONDOLENCE SPEECH FOR THE LATE SENATOR JOHN KNIGHT

Mr Speaker, I move that the House expresses its deep regret at the death this day of Senator John William Knight, a Senator for the Australian Capital Territory from 1975 and Government Whip in the Senate from 1980, places on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tenders its profound sympathy to his widow and the members of his family in their bereavement.

John Knight was born in 1943 at Armidale in New South Wales. He was an Honours graduate from the University of New England. He was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship in 1968, and took a Masters Degree at the East West Centre in Hawaii. In 1975 he was a visiting Fellow at the A.N.U..

He joined the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1965, and served in India, Fiji and Saudi Arabia. He was Senior Private Secretary to the then Leader of the Opposition from 1973-74. He was elected to this Parliament in 1975 as Liberal Senator for the A.C.T., and was subsequently re-elected in 1977 and in 1980.

John Knight was a Member of this Parliament only for a short time. But he had already made his mark. He was active on a wide variety of committees, he represented the Parliament and the Government on a number of overseas delegations, he had been Government Deputy Whip in the Senate from 1978 and was elected Government Whip in the Senate less than four months ago.

John Knight lived an active and vigorous life. He was a dedicated representative of the A.C.T.. He was concerned with the design of Canberra, and with all aspects of its welfare.

He was patron of the A.C.T. Rugby Union, the A.C.T. Amateur Swimming Association, and the A.C.T. Life Saving Association. He had a particular concern and involvement with the International Year of the Disabled Person. He had just finished the final manuscript of a book on the role of the backbench in foreign policy.

This simple factual account of John Knight's career, while showing his significant work, inadequately depicts his contribution to life in the Australian Capital Territory, and its rich promise for the future.

There is no doubt that John Knight would have had a significant career. He not only represented the people of the A.C.T. well but he had a broad interest in international affairs. He was a contributor, a thinker - he was concerned.

His colleagues on both sides of Parliament will miss him for this.

We all admired and valued his personal quality.

Whatever the loss to the Senate, the Parliament and the Australian Capital Territory might be, at this time we are all thinking much more of his wife, Karla, and the children.

We are all deeply conscious of their tragedy in losing a husband and a father, so young and with so much promise. The real tragedy and the deepest loss is theirs.

All that we can do is to hope that our recognition of the quality and promise of John Knight's life will provide some comfort at this tragic time.

The tragedy of John Knight's death has been compounded by the death of his father on Sunday.

To Karla, who gave him tremendous love and support, and to his children and family, we extend our deepest sympathy.