

MR Allan SCOTT (motion) – 27 Nov 08

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:30): I move:

That this house acknowledge the enormous contribution made by the late Allan Scott to every aspect of South Australian society and further recognise the part he played in the Australian transport industry.

Much has been said about the late Allan Scott by many people, from prime ministers to farm labourers, and it is hard to find something to say about him that has not already been said or read. But this man loomed so large over South Australian life that it is worth saying again, especially in this place, to which he once sought office.

I speak of Allan Scott as he was born in my electorate at Milang, a quiet little town on the shores of the now shrivelling Lake Alexandrina. It is ironic that Milang was once renowned as a transport hub for those 'trucks' of early South Australian country commerce, the river boats.

Although Allan spent most of his life in Mount Gambier and was a vigorous advocate for that rural city, he never forgot his roots or the people he grew up with at Milang. I must, at this point, pay special tribute to his biographer, Graham Greenwood, author of *A Truckie's Life*, from which much of my detail was gleaned.

Members may be surprised to learn that one of Allan's ancestors was a US army general, regarded by many as one of its finest. General Winfield Scott played a part in numerous wars in the early to mid 1800s, including the War of Southern Independence and the American Civil War.

General Scott was described as 'brave, resourceful, energetic and perceptive—a remarkable strategist'. Allan Scott, it seems, has a pedigree. General Scott was his great, great grandfather. General Scott's son became a lawyer and moved from America to settle in Strathalbyn, so beginning a family line that led to Allan—born in January 1923, the last child born at the Milang hospital.

Like so many young country lads, Allan was up early doing farm chores before walking several kilometres to school; returning later to more jobs. Unable to afford to buy a bicycle, Allan made himself one. He yearned to be a farmer, a dream that took decades to realise, by which time he was already a successful transport operator.

He began working at the age of 14, although by that time Allan had had many jobs and little enterprises. In 1940, at 17, he joined the army, was a sergeant at 18 and fought in New Guinea. He always felt that the army taught him how to make decisions quickly and conclusively.

His truck empire began in 1947, with one truck he purchased for £180. By 1952, he was in Mount Gambier running stock. He pioneered the three deck stock crate, which everyone said at the time would fall over at the first corner. It did not, and neither did his business.

Allan got into the fuel business in the early fifties. Fifty years later, he owned the biggest Mobil fuel agency in Australia. The petrol business led to takeaway food, as Allan was constantly mindful of opportunities, wherever and whatever they were.

By 2005, the group's truck fleet numbered some 2,000 vehicles, with depots in every Australian state and New Zealand. The group's own weekly fuel bill is in the millions! Trucks were purchased in multiples of ten, with the bill calculated in millions. But for all his buying power, Allan Scott always dealt locally. He worked hard to establish good business relationships, was fiercely loyal to them and expected the same in return. Allan called up that loyalty from time to time, challenging even major oil companies to honour it.

Part of his success came from a willingness to make the service suit the customer, rather than expecting the customer to fit the service. If it presented an opportunity, he invested in it. This led him into all manner of transport fields: refrigerated trucks, fuel tankers, wine tankers, timber trucks and other specialised rigs. The diversity of his business interests

expanded exponentially as one door led to another and another. Contracts covered a huge variety of goods and products: brewery, wine, newsprint, fuel, timber, etc.

Outside transport, there were hotels, motels, restaurants, real estate, property development, pastoral interests, thoroughbred breeding, retail stores, abattoirs, vineyards—the list goes on.

Amongst his highest profile interests were media companies: radio stations 5DN, 5MU and 5AD, as well as television stations SES8 in Mount Gambier and a TV station at Loxton. The acquisition of the South-East newspaper, the *Border Watch*, led to it becoming a pacesetter in South Australian rural newspapers, leading the way with technological advances that were daunting for many but seen by Allan as essential investments in the paper's future.

An example of Allan's resilience and resourcefulness came in a well-publicised case that came to light in 2002 of an employee who defrauded a subsidiary company of some \$15 million. That loss would have sunk most businesses, but Allan Scott took immediate control and not only saved the company and all its employees but actually turned a record profit within two years.

Allan's desire to see things dear to him survive and flourish have been evident in many ways. He was passionate about South Australia, passionate about Mount Gambier (his adopted home) and passionate about his birth place, Milang.

At one end of the scale, Allan would strive to save major South Australian icon companies from being lost to the state, companies such as Elders, SA Brewing and the Bank of Adelaide, to name a few. These efforts often involved putting together consortia to raise tens of millions of dollars, some of which was his own. He lamented at one stage after saving a local meatworks and its 120 jobs—for no gain I might add—that 'no-one in South Australia seems to want to fight to keep business here'. He was often lured interstate by attractive offers to relocate, but his sense of loyalty to his community and state always overrode those temptations.

At the other end of the scale, Allan was a frequent visitor to Milang, supporting all sorts of clubs and community events and projects. Over the decades, Allan was a frequent visitor at the tiny Milang Football Club where he had played as a lad, always happy to be a part of their events. He recently contributed \$10,000 to the Milang Memorial Gardens, which he was to open last September, before the last stages of his illness denied him that pleasure. It was pleasing to be present at the opening, and his son, Ray, took part in the proceedings.

He was a friend to many politicians, and a foe to others. Despite his association with the Liberal Party, he held no fear or favour for any strain of politics, counting people from both parties among his friends. Bob Hawke knew him well enough to warn the Transport Workers Union not to take him on, as he would not be beaten. Allan also admired Don Dunstan as a progressive leader and was particularly pleased by Dunstan's decentralisation policies, which appear to have waned under his successors. Allan became friends with journalist Prue Goward, now a New South Wales state politician. During her time as Equal Opportunities Commissioner, Ms Goward often spoke with Allan Scott. He feared no-one and spoke his mind, with or without support from others. His lone voice often won the day.

Allan Scott's sporting interests and affiliations were myriad: football, basketball, hunt clubs, bowls clubs, wheelchair sports, speedboat racing, horse racing and, car rallying and even included several years of sponsoring a Mount Gambier based V8 supercar at Bathurst. His involvement in sport was as a player, a competitor, administrator and sponsor.

One story that sums up his love of sport and community occurred when the North Gambier Football Club—arch-rival of his beloved East Gambier—fell on hard times. Allan Scott assisted North Gambier to get back on its feet, a move designed to keep the local competition strong. His association with Port Adelaide Football Club—the mighty Power—

Mr Pengilly: Who?

Mr PEDERICK: —the mighty Power—has been well documented, and several major sporting venues in South Australia bear his name in recognition of his generous and unswerving support.

His support for charities amounts to some \$2 million a year. Organisations that have enjoyed his benevolence include: Foodbank, The Royal Flying Doctor Service, Boandik Lodge for the Aged, the Life Education Centre, the Millicent Police Youth Club, the Freemasons, the Women's and Children's Hospital, Safety Beat; the RSL, the Barnes Memorial Trust; the Mount Gambier CFS; Constable Care; Bedford Industries, the Variety Club, the Mount Gambier City Band, Youth Farm, the St Martin's Lutheran Church Project, St Vincent de Paul and the RW Page Child-Care Centre. No doubt there are many others.

Two high-profile projects to have enjoyed his patronage are the *One and All* and South Australia's 1987 America's Cup Challenge. Then there are the official awards, from his 1986 OAM and 2006 AO for services to the community, to Lions and Rotary service club awards and Australia Post and Telstra business awards. These mark the exceptional esteem held for him at all levels of society.

On a personal level, Allan took a close and paternal interest in the wellbeing of those around him and close to him. His wealth was never flaunted or squandered, but it enabled him to be generous and magnanimous in giving others a helping hand. A family friend from Milang was Bob Honor, a long-time Milang resident whose father, Charles, was one of the 645 sailors lost on the HMAS *Sydney* in 1941. Allan had known Charles's family and was well aware of the loss his death would inflict on young Bob and his family. Bob has been surprised and humbled ever since by the occasional and unheralded offer of support to him from a man who took it upon himself to keep a fatherly eye on him.

Bob Honor fondly tells a story that demonstrates Allan's humility and good humour. Seven years ago, Bob's Aunt Una—a former teacher, now 98—was speaking to the crowd at a Back to Milang School reunion. Allan was chatting quietly to someone at the back of the hall. Miss Roberts resumed her teacher's mantle saying to him sternly, 'I was telling you to be quiet as a student and I'm telling you now!' to which Allan—a chastened but smiling Allan—replied, 'Sorry, Miss Roberts.'

Allan's contribution to all aspects of life in South Australia is far greater and broader than most will ever know, perhaps even to some of the 3,000 people currently employed by the 80 companies of the Scott Group. To sum up, I would like to quote directly from Graham Greenwood's book:

It was once said that perhaps the true contribution of Allan Scott will not be recognised by the Mount Gambier and South Australian community until after his death. Only then will it be truly appreciated how many organisations have benefited so much from Allan Scott's generosity.

On behalf of all South Australians, I offer my deepest sympathy to Allan's family for their loss, and my heartfelt thanks for the life of an extraordinary man. I commend the motion.

(Following contributions from several other members Mr Pederick closed the motion as follows;-)

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:00): I thank everyone for their kind words today on the late Allan Scott. He was certainly a very large man, not just in the transport industry but also in South Australia and Australia as a whole. As the member for Morphett just indicated, I sincerely hope that his business lives on and that the legacy of Allan Scott lives on. May the mighty Power rule! With those few words, I commend the motion to the house.

Motion carried.