Pat Morton

Philip Henry (Pat) Morton (28 October 1910 ? 18 January 1999) was an Australian businessman and politician . Born in Lismore in Northern New South Wales to a prominent political family and educated at Lismore High School , Morton left school at fourteen to be employed in a legal firm , before branching out into various businesses . Moving to Sydney , Morton first entered politics in 1944 as an Alderman on Mosman Municipal Council , rising to be Mayor in 1946 . Morton then entered the New South Wales Legislative Assembly on 3 May 1947 , representing the Electoral district of Mosman for the Liberal Party of Australia .

Morton soon rose through the party ranks , becoming touted as a possible leader . When the Liberals lost their third election under party leader Vernon Treatt , Morton contested the leadership in July 1954 . Although Morton was defeated , Treatt did not stay long , resigning in August . Morton then stood , but was deadlocked against party whip , Robert Askin , and Askin then asked Murray Robson to take the leadership . Robson proved ineffective and was deposed in September 1955 in a party spill and Morton was elected to succeed him as Leader of the New South Wales Opposition .

Morton contested as Leader the 1956 and 1959 elections , gaining seats each time but failing to defeat the long @-@ standing Labor Government . A few months after the 1959 election , Morton was deposed as Leader by now @-@ Deputy Leader Askin in July 1959 . He remained on the backbenches until Askin led the Liberal Party to its first electoral victory in May 1965 , whereupon Morton was appointed as the Minister for Local Government and Minister for Highways . He served in the cabinet , becoming prominent and controversial in his role in the reorganisation of the City of Sydney as Local Government Minister and state planning regulations , until he retired from parliament in June 1972 . He died in Mosman aged 88 in 1999 .

Early life and background

Pat Morton was born on 28 October 1910 in Lismore , New South Wales , the son of Arthur Richmond Morton and Maria Morton . Although born on the north coast of New South Wales , Morton 's family were prominent members of the Shoalhaven District on the New South Wales south coast . Morton 's grandfather , Henry Gordon Morton , born in Edinburgh , Scotland in 1828 , arrived in Australia in 1852 and was a surveyor for the Berry Estate and the first Mayor of Numbaa , the private town founded by Alexander Berry .

Henry Morton and his wife Jane Fairless had eight sons : Mark Fairles Morton , who served as Mayor and Alderman on Nowra Municipal Council and the NSW Parliament from 1901 to 1938 for Shoalhaven , Allowrie and Wollondilly ; Henry Douglas Morton , who served the NSW Parliament from 1910 to 1920 for Hastings and Macleay and as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in 1913 ; Philip Henry Morton , who served as member for Shoalhaven from 1889 to 1898 and later as an Alderman on the Sydney City Council from 1904 to 1908 ; and Pat 's father , Alexander Richmond Morton , who , after serving as an Alderman on Nowra Municipal Council , moved with his wife to Lismore and served as an Alderman on Lismore Municipal Council .

Morton was educated at Lismore High School , which he left at the age of 14 to be employed in a law firm , but had a varied career in many different businesses . On 31 March 1937 , He married Nance Maude on 31 March 1937 and had two daughters , Patricia and Margaret . Morton moved to Mosman , New South Wales , where he was elected to the Mosman Municipal Council in December 1944 as an Alderman , rising to become Mayor in 1946 . He would remain on council until September 1951 .

Political career

As an Alderman , Morton joined the new Liberal Party of Australia , becoming a member of the Balmoral local branch and a federal councillor . Morton soon joined the NSW Branch under party Leader Vernon Treatt and stood for the New South Wales Legislative Assembly seat of Mosman at

the state election on 3 May 1947 . At the election he succeeded in defeating the conservative Independent member , The Reverend Donald Macdonald , with 55 @.@ 56 % of the vote .

Treatt led the Coalition again at the 17 June 1950 election , which resulted in a hung parliament , with the Coalition gaining 12 seats and a swing of 6 @.@ 7 % for a total of 46 seats . With the Labor Party also holding 46 seats , the balance of power lay with the two re @-@ elected Independent Labor members , James Geraghty and John Seiffert , who had been expelled from the party for disloyalty during the previous parliament . Under a legalistic interpretation of the ALP rules , Seiffert was readmitted to the party and , together with the support of Geraghty , Premier James McGirr and Labor were able to stay in power . Morton was re @-@ elected with 77 @.@ 28 % . Morton also finished his term on Mosman Municipal Council in 1951 .

At the 14 February 1953 election , Morton retained his seat with 75 @.@ 59 % , The Liberals , however , suffered a total loss of ten seats and a swing against them of 7 @.@ 2 % . Reversing the gains made at the previous election , confidence in Treatt 's leadership decayed . The Liberal Party soon descended into factional in @-@ fighting , culminating in the resignation of Deputy Leader Walter Howarth on 22 July 1954 , who publicly announced it on 4 July citing that he felt that Treatt doubted his loyalty . He was replaced by Party Whip Robert Askin . The resignation split the party and sparked a leadership challenge from Morton , who criticised Treatt 's " lack of aggression " towards the Labor Government . At the party meeting on 6 July , Treatt narrowly defeated Morton with 12 votes to 10 .

With party support eroded , Treatt did not remain long as leader afterwards . On Friday 6 August 1954 , Treatt announced that he would resign as leader on 10 August . At the following party meeting , after a deadlocked vote between Askin and Morton , Askin persuaded Murray Robson to accept the Leadership of the Liberal Party as a compromise candidate . Like other senior members of the party , after having no conservative government since Alexander Mair in 1941 , Robson had no experience in government , he had little interest in policy except for Cold War anti @-@ communism , ignored majority views of his party and fellow parliamentary colleagues and further alienated party members by trying to forge a closer alliance with Michael Bruxner 's Country Party . Over a year after Robson had assumed the leadership , at a party meeting on 20 September 1955 , senior party member Ken McCaw moved that the leadership be declared vacant , citing that Robson 's leadership lacked the qualities necessary for winning the next election . The motion was carried 15 votes to 5 . Robson then moved a motion to prevent Morton , who was the only person nominated for leader , from taking the leadership . This was defeated 16 votes to 6 and Morton was elected unopposed as leader , with Robert Askin remaining as Deputy Leader .

= = = Leadership = = =

As Leader of the New South Wales Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition , Morton had to direct the campaign for the upcoming election in early 1956 . At the official campaign launch on 15 February , Morton began by accusing the Cahill government of losing its way and wasting public funds , while promising to invest in public works , education and health . At the election on 3 March 1956 , the Liberals gained five seats (Coogee , Drummoyne , Georges River , Parramatta and Sutherland) and the Country Party under Michael Bruxner regained the seat of Armidale , reducing the government 's majority from twenty to six . Morton retained Mosman with 78 @.@ 74 % . Although the Coalition had failed to win government , an official report from the Liberal Party State Council blamed the defeat on the seat redistribution , the abolition of postal voting and the strong right @-@ wing Labor support for Premier Cahill .

Morton again led the opposition to the ballot at the 21 March 1959 election , which resulted in an overall gain of three seats but the loss of Sutherland and Parramatta to Labor . After counting was finalised the Cahill Government was left with an overall majority of four seats . Many attributed the loss to the Opposition 's failure to back up its promises with actual figures , which led Premier Cahill to nickname Morton " Promising Pat " . Morton retained Mosman again with a significant 90 @.@ 16 % of the vote .

During his time as leader , Morton had refused to give up his various business interests , including

as a manager of a motor accessories distributor from 1956 until 1965 and a director of Coventry Tool and Gauge Company in 1958 , among others . This led many to accuse him of not focusing on his political responsibilities , including a Sydney Morning Herald article that said called Morton a " part @-@ time " leader and stated that : " One of the points that told against Morton was his refusal to renounce or curtail his considerable business interests . In fact he increased them during the life of the last Parliament . " Morton 's leadership was further undermined when in April 1959 , Liberal backbench MP for Manly , Douglas Darby , challenged Morton for the leadership . Although Morton won the vote 22 votes to 6 , the result was interpreted as only occurring because there was no other alternative to Morton . For his last few months as Leader , confidence in his leadership did not recover .

On 14 July 1959 , three Liberal MLAs (Geoffrey Cox , Ivan Black and Douglas Cross) called on Morton to resign , stating that the party needed a full @-@ time leader and that Morton no longer commanded the majority support of his colleagues . Morton refused and instead called an emergency meeting on 17 July to confirm his leadership . Soon after , the two main opponents to Morton , the Member for Earlwood , Eric Willis , and Deputy Leader Robin Askin , declared that they would only take the Leadership if they were given an absolute majority of 28 votes . At the party meeting , Morton was removed as Leader by two votes . Willis then surprised many by deciding not to put his name forward for nomination , leaving Askin as the only contender . Askin was subsequently elected unanimously as leader , with Willis eventually becoming Deputy Leader . Unlike his predecessor , Robson , Morton accepted his loss well , declaring that there would be " no recriminations " and pledged loyalty to Askin .

On his deposition , a Sydney Morning Herald editorial summed up his leadership thus : " True , the margin [of the last election] was slender . And , true , Morton campaigned vigorously . But his punches seemed to be rather wild . He would have done better by directing his blows to a few vital points instead of trying to hit at anything in sight . In addition to losing the last election , when Labour seemed at its most vulnerable after 18 years of office , Mr Morton further disappointed his colleagues ? indeed , antagonised some of them ? by expanding his private business interests when he was being urged to concentrate wholly on the job of Leader of the Opposition . However , the sad truth is that the genial Mr Morton has never measured up as a sagacious , inspiring leader . "

At the 3 March 1962 election , Askin led the Coalition to another defeat to the Labor Party , now under Bob Heffron , who had become Premier following Cahill 's death in October 1959 . Morton retained his seat again with 80 @.@ 76 % . Heffron was Premier until his retirement on 30 April 1964 . He was succeeded by Jack Renshaw , whose tenure was perceived to be the last days of a party which , after almost a quarter of a century in government , was tired . At the May 1965 election , Askin led the Coalition to its first ever state electoral victory , gaining eight seats and a swing of 5 @.@ 6 % to achieve a majority of two . Askin became the first Liberal Premier . Morton was re @-@ elected with 82 @.@ 30 % .

= = = Minister of the Crown = = =

Askin then named Morton as the Minister for Local Government and Minister for Highways , being sworn in by the Governor of New South Wales , Sir Eric Woodward at Government House , Sydney on 13 May 1965 . As Minister , Morton was involved in the first dismissal of Warringah Shire Council in April 1967 which was triggered by the gaoling of two councillors for bribery . The Councillors involved , Dennis Thomas and George Knight , were prosecuted under the Secret Commissions Prohibition Act 1919 (NSW) for receiving bribes from a development company to influence planning and development decisions , and both received gaol sentences . From 1967 to 1968 he appointed several public servants as Administrators to serve until a new council could be elected .

As a Minister of the Crown , Morton oversaw the rapid escalation of building development in inner @-@ city Sydney and the central business district , which followed in the wake of his controversial 1967 abolition of Sydney City Council and a redistribution of municipal electoral boundaries that was aimed at reducing the power of the rival Australian Labor Party . On its abolition , Morton commented that it was " essential for Sydney 's progress " and replaced the City Council with a

Commission , headed by his predecessor , Vernon Treatt . At the 24 February 1968 election , Askin increased his majority by six seats . Morton retained his seat with 73 @.@ 55 % .

Morton soon gained a reputation as a strong advocate for allowing free enterprise and business to take precedence over planning controls and government regulation . His time as Minister was marked by increasing strains on state infrastructure and his pro @-@ development stance was largely attributed as an attempt to alleviate these problems . Despite this , Morton and his State Planning Authority were continuously criticised for not being totally accountable to the public , particularly as the pro @-@ business Sydney Commissioners worked side @-@ by @-@ side with the Planning authority to increase developments in the Sydney CBD to their highest levels ever , embodied by the construction of the MLC Centre , the demolition of the Theatre Royal , Sydney and the Australia Hotel . Among the most controversial schemes planned by his government were also a massive freeway system that was planned to be driven through the hearts of historic inner @-@ city suburbs including Glebe and Newtown and an equally ambitious scheme of ' slum clearance ' that would have brought about the wholescale destruction of the historic areas of Woolloomooloo and The Rocks . This eventually culminated in the 1970s Green ban movement led by Unions Leader Jack Mundey , to protect the architectural heritage of Sydney .

At the 13 February 1971 election , Askin 's majority was reduced by four seats to the Labor Party under Pat Hills . Morton retained his seat , despite a significant reduction in his majority to 62 @.@ 68 % . Morton stayed in office for another year when , on 16 June 1972 he retired from politics . At the time of his departure it had been rumoured that he had been threatening to dismiss Blacktown City Council if they did not stop blocking a $ 200 million development in Mount Druitt .

= = Retirement = =

On 18 July 1972 , Queen Elizabeth II granted him retention of the title " The Honourable " for life , for having served as a Minister of the Crown and on the Executive Council of New South Wales . Morton 's mid @-@ term retirement caused a by @-@ election in his seat of Mosman . At the 29 July 1972 by @-@ election he was succeeded by Liberal candidate David Arblaster with 51 % of the primary vote . On his retirement , Morton was appointed as a Trustee of the Zoological Parks Board of New South Wales , becoming chairman in 1976 . He died on 18 January 1999 at his Mosman home , survived by his eldest daughter , Patricia . His youngest daughter Margaret having died of melanoma in 1987 . His funeral was held at St Luke 's Anglican Church , Mosman , on 22 January 1999 .