

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

THE SENATE

COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES

PERSON REFERRED TO IN THE SENATE

(SIR WILLIAM KEYS)

(31ST REPORT)

MARCH 1991

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Senator Patricia Giles (Western Australia), **Chair**

Senator Vicki Bourne (New South Wales)

Senator Bruce Childs (New South Wales)

Senator John Coates (Tasmania)

Senator Barney Cooney (Victoria)

Senator Austin Lewis (Victoria)

Senator Baden Teague (South Australia)

The Senate

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

REPORT

1. On 27 November 1990, the President of the Senate, Senator the Honourable Kerry W. Sibraa, referred to the Committee of Privileges a letter from Sir William Keys, relating to remarks made in the Senate on 15 November, as a submission under privilege resolution 5. The Committee reported to the Senate on this reference on 29 November, recommending that a response be incorporated in Hansard. The Committee's report was adopted on that day.
2. On 10 December 1990 Sir William again wrote to the President in relation to further remarks made in the Senate on 5 December during debate on a motion that the Senate take note of the Committee's earlier report. In this letter Sir William did not request a further reference of his complaint to the Committee. The President decided, however, to refer the letter to the Committee on 11 December, to enable the Committee to clarify Sir William's intentions.
3. The Committee considered the letter at its meeting on 17 December 1990. The Committee agreed that Sir William be informed that the Committee had taken note of his concerns, and of a number of matters raised in his letter. The Chair wrote accordingly to Sir William on 20 December and forwarded a copy of this letter to the President of the Senate.
4. On 28 December 1990 Sir William Keys replied to the Chair's letter, requesting that the Committee give consideration to including the substance of his complaint, as outlined in his letter of 10 December, in Hansard. Senator Giles wrote to Sir William on 8 January 1991 acknowledging receipt of his letter and advising him that the Committee would consider his letter early in the Autumn sittings.

5. The Committee considered Sir William's request at its first meeting in 1991, on 21 February 1991, and decided, pursuant to paragraph (3) of privilege resolution 5, to consider the letter dated 10 December 1990 from Sir William Keys as a submission.
6. After deciding to recommend to the Senate that an agreed statement be incorporated in Hansard, the Committee contacted Sir William and the statement at appendix 1 has been agreed to by Sir William and the Committee in accordance with Resolution 5(7)(b). The Committee did not find it necessary to confer with either Sir William or Senator Newman, to whose remarks the response now agreed to by Sir William and the Committee is directed.
7. The Committee recommends:

That a response by Sir William Keys, in terms specified at appendix 1, and agreed by Sir William Keys and the Committee, be incorporated in Hansard.



Patricia Giles

Chair

11/3/91

RESPONSE BY SIR WILLIAM KEYS
AGREED TO BY SIR WILLIAM KEYS AND THE COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES
PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION 5(7)(B) OF THE SENATE OF
25 FEBRUARY 1988

In the Senate on 5 December Senator Newman further discussed matters relating to me, and I again ask that I make a response under Resolution 5.

Let me first deal with the visit to defence establishments in Northern Queensland in 1987.

For many years the RSL had complained to successive governments about Australia's weak northern defences, so when I received an invitation from Minister for Defence, Kim Beazley, to visit some of these new and improved facilities, I accepted, realising the time spent with the Minister would also give me the opportunity to canvass thoroughly matters affecting conditions of service in the case the League had put to the Government. We visited installations at and near Townsville.

Subsequently, I flew with the Minister and senior Air Force personnel to Weipa to visit the site of the new airbase. All in all, a very helpful programme which would allow the RSL to make more informed and helpful comments about Defence arrangements.

Senator Newman was in Townsville at the same time, where she was promoting the concept that funds should be transferred from the Defence re-equipment programme to Defence conditions of service. The media asked me to comment. I said that many conditions of service were in need of upgrading, expressly emphasising the need for coverage for Defence personnel under the Veterans' Entitlements Act, Turbulence Allowance, Housing and entitlements to the Defence Service Homes Scheme.

However, I went on to say that to transfer funds from equipment to personnel would not be wise, especially having regard to the long lead-time required to purchase the sophisticated and high-technology equipment we were acquiring.

I went on to say that in my view what was required was a consumption tax of one kind or another to fund an adequate Defence budget.

This proposal was quickly rejected by the Prime Minister. It is interesting to note that Senator Newman's party has now adopted a very similar proposal.

Let me now go on to Senator Newman's suggestion that I had not, over the years, effectively served well the interests of veterans and dependants in my negotiations with successive governments.

The record of my work over 45 years provides an effective response to this. Because I believe it is essential to successful representation, I made a point of developing good working relations with all Prime Ministers and Ministers for Repatriation and Veterans' Affairs.

I have received supportive testimony from Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke and Liberal Minister for Repatriation in the Fraser Government, Tony Messner. If needed, I am certain I can obtain similar support from Prime Ministers and Ministers for Repatriation and Veterans' Affairs who were in office over the years, from both sides of Parliament. Indeed, I obtained benefits from Senator Newman's husband when he was briefly Minister for Repatriation. Also added to that can be the testimony of Sir Arthur Lee and Sir William Hall who were the National Presidents during my 17 years as National Secretary.

SIR WILLIAM KEYS