

1996

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

No. 31

MONDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 1996

1 The House met, at 12.30 p.m., pursuant to adjournment. The Acting Speaker (Mr Nehl) took the Chair, and read Prayers.

2 LINDSAY ELECTORAL DIVISION—ISSUE OF WRIT

The Acting Speaker informed the House that he had issued today a writ for the election of a Member to serve for the Electoral Division of Lindsay, in the State of New South Wales, the Court of Disputed Returns having declared the election held on 2 March 1996 for the said Division absolutely void. The dates in connection with the election were fixed as follows:

Close of rolls.....Monday, 23 September 1996.

Date of nominationsFriday, 27 September 1996.

Date of polling.....Saturday, 19 October 1996.

Return of writOn or before Wednesday, 25 December 1996.

3 PROCEDURE—STANDING COMMITTEE—REPORT—STATEMENT BY MEMBER—MOTION TO TAKE NOTE OF PAPER

Mrs Sullivan (Chair) presented the following papers:

Procedure—Standing Committee—Operation of standing order 143: Questions to Members other than Ministers—

Report, September 1996.

Minutes of proceedings.

Ordered—That the report be printed.

Mrs Sullivan made a statement in connection with the report.

Mrs Sullivan moved—That the House take note of the report.

In accordance with standing order 102B, the debate was adjourned, the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for the next sitting, and Mrs Sullivan was granted leave to continue her speech when the debate is resumed.

4 FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE—JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE—REPORT—STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—MOTION TO TAKE NOTE OF PAPER

Mr Brereton presented the following papers:

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade—Joint Standing Committee—Australian aid program—Proceedings of a seminar, 31 July 1996, Canberra—

Report, September 1996.

Minutes of proceedings.

Ordered—That the report be printed.

Mr Brereton, Mr Taylor, Mr Jones and Mr Bradford made statements in connection with the report.

The time allotted for making statements on the report having expired—

Mr Brereton moved—That the House take note of the report.

In accordance with standing order 102B, the debate was adjourned, the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for the next sitting, and Mr Brereton was granted leave to continue his speech when the debate is resumed.

5 COMMUNICATIONS, TRANSPORT AND MICROECONOMIC REFORM—STANDING COMMITTEE—REPORT—STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—MOTION TO TAKE NOTE OF PAPER

Mr M. A. J. Vaile (Chair) presented the following papers:

Communications, Transport and Microeconomic Reform—Standing Committee—Keeping rural Australia posted—An inquiry into Australia Post: Rural and remote letter service delivery—

Report, August 1996.

Evidence received by the committee.

Minutes of proceedings.

Ordered—That the report be printed.

Mr M. A. J. Vaile, Mr P. F. Morris, Mr McArthur and Mr Willis made statements in connection with the report.

The time for consideration of committee and delegation reports having expired—

Mr M. A. J. Vaile moved—That the House take note of the report.

In accordance with standing order 102B, the debate was adjourned, the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for the next sitting, and Mr M. A. J. Vaile was granted leave to continue his speech when the debate is resumed.

6 PROTEST RALLY AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE

Mr E. H. Cameron, pursuant to notice, moved—That this House:

- (1) condemns those protesters who invaded Parliament House on Monday, 19 August 1996, and recognises the action as being un-Australian, unacceptable and an anathema to Australia's democracy;
- (2) recalls the words of Mr Bill Kelty that if the Coalition won Government the unions would declare war;
- (3) condemns the ACTU for its instigation of the violence and Mr Kelty for describing the action as a successful protest;
- (4) condemns the Leader of the Opposition for his intemperate language used at the rally to further incite the crowd;
- (5) commends the Parliament House security staff and the Australian Federal Police for their professional handling of the violent, un-Australian conduct of the unions; and
- (6) considers it appropriate that those responsible for the damage to Parliament House pay for the damage they caused as part of any judicial sentence, and not leave the financial burden to the taxpayers of Australia.

Debate ensued.

It being 1.45 p.m., the debate was interrupted in accordance with standing order 106A, the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for a later hour this day, and Mr L. D. T. Ferguson was granted leave to continue his speech when the debate is resumed.

7 MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Members' statements were made.

8 MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr Fischer (Acting Prime Minister) informed the House that, during the absence abroad of Mr Howard (Prime Minister), he would answer questions on his behalf.

Mr Fischer also informed the House that, during the absence abroad of Mr Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), he would answer questions on his behalf.

9 QUESTIONS

Questions without notice being asked—

Paper: Mr Beddall, in accordance with standing order 321, having called for a document quoted from by Mr Fischer (Acting Prime Minister)—

Mr Fischer presented the following paper:

Telstra office closures—Copy of letter from Mr B. Samarq, Director, Federal Government Relations, Telstra to Mr P. J. Lindsay, MP, 13 September 1996.

Questions without notice continued.

10 PETITIONS

The Acting Clerk announced that the following Members had each lodged petitions for presentation, viz.:

Mr Causley, Mr Charles and Mr Cobb, from 14, 10 and 628 petitioners, respectively, praying that the SkillShare program be defended against funding cuts.

Mr K. J. Andrews and Mr Tanner, from 5 and 80 petitioners, respectively, praying that proposed cuts to labour market programs be rejected.

Mr Bevis and Mr Marek, from 60 and 101 residents of Queensland, respectively, praying that legislation that would impact upon existing quality, affordable child care not be passed.

Mr Hatton and Mr McLeay, from 2 and 96 petitioners, respectively, praying that the proposed removal of operational assistance from Family Day Care not be endorsed.

Mr Marek and Mr Neville, from 219 and 47 petitioners, respectively, praying that certain reforms to the Child Support Scheme be implemented.

Mr Albanese, from 830 petitioners, praying that certain action be taken to assist small businesses affected by the acquisition of houses in Sydenham, NSW.

Mr Albanese, from 28 electors of the Division of Grayndler, praying that Australia Post maintains current facilities and services in the area.

Mr Anthony, from 285 residents of the Northern Rivers Region, NSW, praying that funding to the ABC not be decreased and advertising not be introduced.

Mr Beazley, from 47 residents of Western Australia, praying that gun laws be uniform and certain action be taken in relation to gun licence control.

Mr Bevis, from 1349 petitioners, praying that certain action be taken to ensure the future provision of affordable, appropriate and quality public housing.

Mr E. H. Cameron, from 2966 petitioners, praying that action be taken to stop the practice in China of extracting bile from caged bears for medical purposes.

Mr E. H. Cameron, from 1309 residents of Western Australia, praying that Medicare funding of D & X abortions be opposed.

Mr E. H. Cameron, from 103 petitioners, praying that certain moves to tighten gun laws be supported.

Mr E. H. Cameron, from 30 residents of Western Australia, praying that uniform gun laws agreed to at the Police Ministers' meeting be implemented.

Mr Causley, from 14 petitioners, praying that certain action be taken to prevent further activities which would threaten the Hinchinbrook, Qld, World Heritage area.

Mr Dondas, from 1157 petitioners, praying that certain action be taken to reduce the tax on fuel.

Mr Entsch, from 68 petitioners, praying that child care funding be maintained and extended.

Mr Entsch, from 24 petitioners, praying that certain proposed amendments to the Native Title Act be opposed.

Mr Hatton, from 323 petitioners, praying that Holsworthy be opposed as a site for Sydney's second international airport.

Mr Langmore, from 141 petitioners, praying that funding cuts to the ABC be rejected and certain other action be taken in relation to the ABC.

Mr Latham, from 684 residents of Campbelltown and Liverpool, NSW, praying that any plan to construct an airport at Holsworthy, NSW, be abandoned.

Mr McClelland, from 1691 residents of Sydney, praying that action be taken to revoke the decision to increase usage of the east/west runway at Sydney (Kingsford-Smith) Airport and to expedite the construction of a second airport at Badgery's Creek.

Mr McMullan, from 1353 petitioners, praying that budget cuts to Worksafe Australia be reversed.

Mr McMullan, from 15 petitioners, praying that funding arrangements for the ABC be retained and that ABC services be free of commercial sponsorship and advertising.

Mr Nairn, from 1306 petitioners, in similar terms.

Mr P. F. Morris, from 181 electors of the Division of Shortland, praying that the Belmont, NSW, Medicare office remain open.

Mr Nehl, from 157 residents of New South Wales, praying that the current level of funding to the ABC be maintained.

Mr Neville, from 23 members of the Biloela community Qld, praying that the quantity of available child care is equal to all families, regardless of employment status.

Mr Neville, from 20 members of the Biloela community Qld, praying that child care funding not be determined on the basis of income.

Mr Ronaldson, from 6 residents of Victoria, praying that the proposed closure of the Wendouree, Vic., office of the Department of Social Security, not be supported.

Mr Sinclair, from 559 residents of the New England area, NSW, praying that action be taken to prevent funding cuts to ABC Regional Radio, Tamworth, NSW.

Mr K. J. Thomson, from 602 electors of the Division of Wills, praying that a post office sub-branch in the vicinity of Pascoe Vale Station, Vic., be licensed.

Mr Truss, from 211 petitioners, praying that tough uniform censorship laws be developed to restrict access to media containing excessive violence.

Mr Truss, from 39 petitioners, praying that the high cost of private health insurance cover be addressed.

Petitions received.

11 PROTEST RALLY AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE

The order of the day having been read for the resumption of the debate on the motion of Mr E. H. Cameron—That this House:

- (1) condemns those protesters who invaded Parliament House on Monday, 19 August 1996, and recognises the action as being un-Australian, unacceptable and an anathema to Australia's democracy;
- (2) recalls the words of Mr Bill Kelty that if the Coalition won Government the unions would declare war;
- (3) condemns the ACTU for its instigation of the violence and Mr Kelty for describing the action as a successful protest;
- (4) condemns the Leader of the Opposition for his intemperate language used at the rally to further incite the crowd;
- (5) commends the Parliament House security staff and the Australian Federal Police for their professional handling of the violent, un-Australian conduct of the unions; and
- (6) considers it appropriate that those responsible for the damage to Parliament House pay for the damage they caused as part of any judicial sentence, and not leave the financial burden to the taxpayers of Australia—

Debate adjourned, and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for the next sitting.

12 CYPRUS

The order of the day having been read for the resumption of the debate on the motion of Mr Brereton—That the House:

- (1) deplores the recent tragic outbreak of communal violence in the UN buffer zone in Cyprus;
- (2) applauds the efforts of the UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus, including officers of the Australian Federal Police who continue to make a vital contribution to its operations;
- (3) recognises the terrible humanitarian cost that the continued division of Cyprus imposes on the communities of the island;
- (4) deplores the fact that more than 22 years after the 1974 Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus, Cyprus remains artificially and tragically divided and that there is still no lasting political settlement in sight;
- (5) expresses its strong belief that the status quo on Cyprus is unacceptable and that the continued division of Cyprus, including the presence of Turkish troops in northern Cyprus, has no place in an international climate of reconciliation and cooperation;
- (6) reaffirms its total support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus as the only legitimate authority on the island;
- (7) reaffirms Australia's support for relevant UN Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 939 of 1994 which calls for a solution to be based upon a sovereign, independent and unified Cyprus comprised of a bi-communal and bi-zonal federal republic free of foreign interference;

- (8) reaffirms the position that all foreign troops should be withdrawn from the territory of the Republic of Cyprus;
- (9) commends the efforts of the UN Secretary-General to resolve the Cyprus dispute in a just and viable manner;
- (10) calls on the international community to take urgent action to overcome the deadlock in negotiations to restore justice for Cyprus and to bring about a long-term resolution to Cyprus' problems; and
- (11) urges the Government to take the lead in insisting that the international community, and members of the UN Security Council in particular, take immediate steps to promote a just resolution of the Cyprus dispute, based on relevant Security Council resolutions, including incentives to encourage progress in negotiations—

Debate resumed.

Photograph: Mr Dondas, by leave, presented a photograph of the killing of Anastasios Isaak, Cyprus, 11 August 1996.

Suspension of standing and sessional orders—Private Members' business: Mr McLeay, by leave, moved—That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the question on the motion being put forthwith.

Question—put and passed.

And the question—That the motion moved by Mr Brereton be agreed to—was put accordingly, and passed.

13 GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Pursuant to the provisions of standing order 106, the order of the day having been read—

Question proposed—That grievances be noted.

Debate ensued.

The time allotted for the debate having expired—

Question—That grievances be noted—put and passed.

14 MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL—ASSENT TO BILL

A message from His Excellency the Governor-General was announced informing the House that His Excellency, in the name of Her Majesty, had assented to the following Bill:

12 September 1996—Message No. 42—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment 1996.

15 TARIFF PROPOSALS

Mr Prosser (Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs) moved—

Customs Tariff Proposal No. 2 (1996); and

Excise Tariff Proposal No. 1 (1996).

Debate adjourned (Mr P. J. Baldwin), and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for the next sitting.

16 PARLIAMENTARY ZONE—CONSTRUCTION OF GLASS CANOPY AND DRAINAGE GRATING TO PORTE COCHERE OF HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES MAIN ENTRY, PARLIAMENT HOUSE—APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL

Mr W. L. Smith (Minister for Sport, Territories and Local Government), pursuant to notice, moved—That, in accordance with section 5 of the *Parliament Act 1974*, the House approves the following proposal for work in the Parliamentary Zone which was presented to the House on 10 September 1996, namely: Construction of a glass canopy and a drainage grating to the porte cochere of the House of Representatives main entry of Parliament House.

Question—put and passed.

17 APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 1) 1996-97—BUDGET DEBATE

The order of the day having been read for the resumption of the debate on the question—That the Bill be now read a second time—*And on the amendment moved thereto by Mr G. J. Evans (Deputy Leader of the Opposition), viz.—That all words after “That” be omitted with a view to substituting the following words: “whilst not declining to give the Bill a second reading, the House notes that:*

- (1) the Budget betrays the Australian promise of working towards a more fair, just, inclusive and united society;
- (2) the Budget is both mindless and heartless, and its prescriptions are not what the Australian economy needs at present;
- (3) the Budget will have a savagely contractionary impact on economic growth and make impossible the job creation necessary to reduce Australia’s still unacceptably high level of unemployment;
- (4) with stronger economic growth the Budget could be restored to underlying balance over the life of this Parliament through a much more moderate program of fiscal consolidation;
- (5) the spending cuts and tax increases contained in the Budget are, on the evidence of the Government’s own Budget Papers, not necessary to reduce the Commonwealth Government’s debt-to-GDP ratio and will not produce a significant improvement in the current account deficit;
- (6) the Budget not only offers no hope to the unemployed but actively harms their prospects of finding a job by cutting labour market programs and privatising the previously publicly provided employment service function of the CES;
- (7) the Budget will have unfair and unjust consequences for the struggling and disadvantaged in our midst—the poor, the old, the sick, indigenous Australians and newly-arrived migrants;

- (8) the many spending cuts concerned with education and training, research and development, trade development (including breaches of promise with respect to EMDG, ITES and IAMP), production bounties, and other business support, will be counter-productive in their longer term consequences;
- (9) there is deception involved in the family tax package contained in the Budget, whereby what the Prime Minister appears to be putting into one pocket is for most middle Australian families being taken right out of the other by the Treasurer in higher education fees, Austudy changes, higher nursing home charges, higher fees and charges;
- (10) there are many breaches of Coalition election promises contained in this Budget, which amount to over \$17 billion over four years, and which will cause hardship, insecurity and dismay for millions of Australians;
- (11) the Budget involves a massive betrayal of regional Australia through the abolition of the \$150 million regional development program, large cuts to road funding, the closure of regional Government offices such as Medicare and CES offices, and the cuts to the ABC and university funding;
- (12) the mean-spirited decision to introduce large, up-front entry fees and massively increased daily fees for nursing homes, and increase user-charges will harm elderly Australians;
- (13) the abolition of Childcare Operational Subsidies will impact heavily upon community based child care centres;
- (14) the reduction of \$800 million over four years in public hospital funding will cause longer waiting lists for the sick and reduce the quality of hospital and medical assistance for millions of people;
- (15) the Budget involves a breaking of the Government's so called 'core' commitment to maintain Medicare in its entirety through cuts to rebates for numerous items under Medicare;
- (16) the cruel decision to abolish the Commonwealth Dental Health Programme will cause serious problems for the less well off;
- (17) harsh and promise-breaking decisions will force Australian families to pay substantially more for the cost of their prescription medicines;
- (18) the massive funding cuts to education, the increased HECS charges and AUSTUDY changes will penalise the less well-off;
- (19) the Budget's comprehensive and ideological assault on the public sector will cost 10 500 jobs in 1996-97 alone;
- (20) the Government has failed to honour its election commitment to maintain the environment budget and to provide an additional \$84 million in the 1996-97 Budget, instead cutting by 13 per cent the environmental budget and forward estimates;
- (21) the reckless decision to reduce funding for the National Highway by \$622 million over four years, breaches a clear Coalition election commitment at

- the 1996 election, and with other decisions will reduce the level of public infrastructure investment, especially in regional Australia;
- (22) the decision to impose a 500 per cent increase in the taxation arrangements for visits to the Great Barrier Reef will discourage tourism and cost jobs in Queensland;
 - (23) the Government has failed to honour its promise to not cut Australia's foreign aid beyond the election commitment to abolish the DIFF program, and in doing so will allow the estimated ODA/GDP ratio for Australia in 1996-97 to fall to 0.29 per cent;
 - (24) the Government has failed to honour its election promise that Defence expenditure would not be cut, whilst cutting \$165 million from the 1995 Defence Budget estimates for 1996-97, and reducing Defence expenditure as a percentage of GDP to its lowest level since 1939;
 - (25) the mean-spirited and discriminatory approach to migrants and ethnic communities will harm outworkers, hurt newly-arrived migrants and refugees, cut humanitarian aid and penalise asylum seekers;
 - (26) the substantial cuts to ATSIC and to indigenous-related Commonwealth programs represent a massive setback to the process of reconciliation in Australia;
 - (27) the savage cuts to the ABC, of \$209 million over four years, are in complete breach of the Coalition's solemn election promise to maintain existing levels of Commonwealth funding to the ABC;
 - (28) the Budget has failed to honour the promise to maintain levels of arts funding and spend an additional \$60 million over three years; and
 - (29) the Government's plan to substantially increase Commonwealth court and tribunal fees, coupled with deep cuts to legal aid, will result in a severe curtailment of access to justice by many Australians"—

Debate resumed.

18 ADJOURNMENT

It being 10.30 p.m.—The question was proposed—That the House do now adjourn.

Debate ensued.

The House continuing to sit until 11 p.m.—The Acting Speaker adjourned the House until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

PAPERS

The following papers were deemed to have been presented on 16 September 1996:

Acts Interpretation Act—Statement relating to failure to furnish report within specified period—National Health and Medical Research Council—Report for 1995.

Australian Federal Police Act—Regulations—Statutory Rules 1996 No. 171.

Civil Aviation Act—Civil Aviation Regulations—Civil Aviation Orders—Exemptions 1996 Nos. 172/FRS/184/1996, 173/FRS/185/1996.

Health Insurance Act—Health Insurance (Pathology—Licensed collection centres) Determination (No. 6) (Amendment).

Jervis Bay Territory Acceptance Act—

Administration Ordinance—Determination under section 3B—30 April 1996.

Ordinance 1996 No. 1.

Privacy Act—Determination 1996 No. 2.

Public Service Act—Determinations 1996 Nos. 158, 159, 161, 164, LES 24, LES 25.

ATTENDANCE

All Members attended (at some time during the sitting) except Mr Brown, Mr Downer, Ms Ellis, Mr Forrest, Mr Griffin, Mr Halverson, Mr Hawker, Mr Holding, Mr Howard, Mr Katter, Mr Lieberman, Mr McClelland, Mr Ronaldson, Mr Sinclair, Dr Theophanous and Mr Truss.

I. C. HARRIS

Acting Clerk of the House of Representatives