

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

THE SENATE

COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES

PERSON REFERRED TO IN THE SENATE

(THE HONOURABLE TOM UREN)

(29TH REPORT)

DECEMBER 1990

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 17 December 1990 the Honourable Tom Uren wrote to the President of the Senate, Senator the Honourable Kerry W. Sibraa, seeking redress under the resolution of the Senate of 25 February 1988 relating to the protection of persons referred to in the Senate (Privilege Resolution 5). The letter referred to comments made by the Minister for Defence, Senator the Honourable Robert Ray, in the Senate during question time on 12 December 1990. The President, having accepted Mr Uren's letter as a submission for the purposes of the resolution, referred the letter to the Committee of Privileges on 17 December 1990.
2. The Committee met in private session on 18 and 19 December 1990 and decided, pursuant to paragraph (3) of Privilege Resolution 5, to consider the submission from Mr Uren. In considering the submission, the Committee did not find it necessary to confer with either Mr Uren or the Minister. After deciding to recommend to the Senate that an agreed statement be incorporated in Hansard, the Committee contacted Mr Uren and the statement at appendix 1 has been agreed to by Mr Uren and the Committee in accordance with Resolution 5(7)(b).
3. The Committee recommends:

That a response by the Honourable Tom Uren, in the terms specified at appendix 1, and agreed to by Mr Uren and the Committee, be incorporated in Hansard.

Patricia Giles
Chair

RESPONSE BY THE HONOURABLE TOM UREN
AGREED TO BY MR UREN
AND THE COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES
PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION 5(7)(B) OF THE SENATE OF
25 FEBRUARY 1988

I ask pursuant to Privilege Resolution 5(1)(b) of the Senate of 25 February 1988 that the Senate allow me to respond to comments made in the Senate by Senator Ray on 12 December 1990 (Hansard, pp 5507-8). Might I draw your attention to the wide publicity in press, radio and television of Senator Ray's comments.

Senator Ray said, "It is a long-standing principle that Australians travelling overseas, particularly those who have held high office, do not disparage their own country or necessarily their own Government while they are overseas." Let me make it quite clear. I do not disparage our country - to the contrary; my stand in war and peace is for the love of our country and its people.

Senator Ray chides me about what I should have said to the Iraqis. I was on a mission to seek the release of the Australian hostages - so that they could return to Australia to their loved ones. My record of fighting for democratic and human rights is on the record in the Australian Parliament - the streets and gaols of Queensland and in the records of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Finally, I wish to deal with the statement that hurt most and deeply: "Maybe some of that leadership of the Left will look back to the era when Mr Uren regularly briefed former Prime Minister Fraser on internal divisions within the Labor Party." This is not correct.

In relation to the Fraser incident I wrote the following in a letter to a friend, which I commenced on the night of 29 June 1982:

Then, out of the blue I received a telephone call from our dear old Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser.It was Monday night 28 June, Malcolm said, "Tom you don't have to talk to me."..... I said, "What is it Malcolm?". He replied, "Have you still got the numbers for Bill?". I replied, "Yes". "Are you still supporting him?" I said "Yes, but with certain conditions attached to it, but Malcolm that is as far as I am prepared to discuss it.". He said "OK Tom".

For the record apart from that telephone call from Malcolm Fraser - the only other time he has phoned me was on two occasions relating to my going as an Australian representative to Lord Louis Mountbatten's funeral in 1979. I understand from press reports that Mr Fraser was contacted in Tokyo and that he has denied the statements made by Senator Ray relating to me.

In conclusion - I have served the Australian Labor Party and Labor Movement for over 30 years. I would never be a traitor to the ideals of our party and our movement.

TOM UREN