

1996

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS**

No. 32

TUESDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 1996

1 The House met, at 2 p.m., pursuant to adjournment. The Acting Speaker (Mr Nehl) took the Chair, and read Prayers.

**2 MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS**

Mr Fischer (Acting Prime Minister) informed the House that, during the absence of Mr W. L. Smith (Minister for Sport, Territories and Local Government), Mr Jull (Minister for Administrative Services) would answer questions on his behalf.

**3 QUESTIONS**

Questions without notice were asked.

**4 AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT—PUBLICATION OF PAPER**

The Acting Speaker presented the following paper:

Audit Act—Auditor-General—Audit report No. 7 of 1996-97—Performance audit—IT acquisition councils.

Mr Reith (Leader of the House), by leave, moved—That:

- (1) this House authorises the publication of the Auditor-General's audit report No. 7 of 1996-97; and
- (2) the report be printed.

Question—put and passed.

**5 REFERENCE OF REPORT TO STANDING COMMITTEE**

Mr Reith (Leader of the House), by leave, moved—That the Auditor-General's audit report No. 6 of 1996-97—Performance audit—Commonwealth guarantees, indemnities and letters of comfort, presented on Thursday, 12 September 1996, be referred to the Standing Committee on Financial Institutions and Public Administration.

Question—put and passed.

## 6 DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE—JOB SECURITY OF WORKERS AT AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL

The House was informed that Mr Tanner had proposed that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely, “The job security of workers at Australian National”.

The proposed discussion having received the necessary support—

Mr Tanner addressed the House.

*Paper:* Mr Tanner, by leave, presented the following paper:

Future of Australian National—Copy of letter from Mr Sharp, Minister for Transport and Regional Development to Mr J. Smorgon, Chairman, Australian National Railways Commission, 15 August 1996.

Discussion ensued.

Discussion concluded.

## 7 EXPORT CONTROL ACT—REGULATIONS

Mr Anderson (Minister for Primary Industries and Energy), pursuant to notice, moved—That, pursuant to section 49 of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901*, the House approves the making of regulations the same in substance as the regulations contained in Statutory Rules 1995 Nos. 386, 387 and 388 and Statutory Rules 1996 No. 22 made under the *Export Control Act 1982*, which were deemed to have been disallowed by the House.

Debate ensued.

Question—put and passed.

## 8 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.

Debate adjourned (Mrs Johnston), and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for a later hour this day.

**9 BILLS REFERRED TO MAIN COMMITTEE**

Mr Cadman (Chief Government Whip), pursuant to notice, moved—That the following Bills be referred to the Main Committee for further consideration:

Appropriation (No. 1) 1996-97;

Appropriation (No. 2) 1996-97; and

Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) 1996-97.

Question—put and passed.

**10 ADJOURNMENT**

Mr Miles (Parliamentary Secretary (Cabinet) to the Prime Minister) moved—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 9.30 a.m.

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**ATTENDANCE**

All Members attended (at some time during the sitting) except Mr J. N. Andrew, Mr Brown, Mrs Crosio, Mr Downer, Ms Ellis, Mr Fitzgibbon, Mr Forrest, Mr Griffin, Mr Halverson, Mr Hawker, Mr Holding, Mr Howard, Mr Katter, Mr Lieberman, Mr McClelland, Mr Ronaldson, Mr Sinclair, Mr W. L. Smith, Mrs Sullivan, Dr Theophanous and Mr Truss.

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**I. C. HARRIS**  
Acting Clerk of the House of Representatives