

Membership of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, 1952-1967¹

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For the first fifteen years of its existence, 1952-1967, membership of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs was confined to Senators and Members from the Liberal and Country Parties, from the Australian Labor Party (Anti-Communist), a breakaway party of the ALP which became the DLP in 1957, and from the DLP. The ALP Opposition, led at this time by Dr H.V. Evatt and A.A. Calwell, refused to nominate Senators and Members for appointment to the Committee. Not until mid-1967, under the leadership of Calwell's successor, E.G. Whitlam, did Labor Senators and Members join the Committee.

How the Committee was able to discharge its functions for fifteen years without the participation of Opposition Senators and Members, and whether or not it managed to do so satisfactorily are, to say the least, intriguing questions. Any attempt to answer them must rest on an understanding of the following: the reasons for the Committee's appointment; ALP attitudes towards the Committee; the success or otherwise of the Committee's activities during this period; and the implications of such a Committee arrangement for Australia's foreign relations throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1929 a Senate select committee recommended that a standing committee on external (or foreign) affairs be established to examine and report upon matters concerning the League of Nations, mandated territories and other subjects of imperial or international concern.² However, nothing came of this recommendation. Successive governments failed to act upon it and the idea of such a committee received little parliamentary or public attention until the mid-1940s.

Renewed interest in the creation of a committee on foreign affairs — on the part of the Liberal-Country Party Opposition but not the ALP Government — arose after the Second World War. Liberal-Country Party concerns that Dr H.V. Evatt,³ Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs in the Federal ALP Government, might use the Commonwealth external affairs power to bind Australia to international conventions and agreements as a means of achieving domestic change, led the Opposition Leader, R.G. Menzies,⁴ to advocate the establishment of an all-party foreign affairs committee during the 1946 Federal election campaign.⁵

Menzies called for the creation of a foreign affairs committee which could contribute to the formulation of foreign policy and monitor the activities of the executive in matters related to foreign affairs and defence. He stressed that, although the making of foreign policy should remain an executive responsibility, the Committee should be empowered to provide additional information to Parliament,

¹ Research by the author for a biography of Senator E. B. Maher (CP, QLD, 1949-1965), to be included in the forthcoming *Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate* (Vol. I, 1901-*circa* 1970), revealed that for the first fifteen years of its history the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs was without Opposition representation. The present article examines the reasons for this and the effects of such an arrangement on foreign policy formulation and the structure and operations of the Senate and House of Representatives committee systems during the 1950s and 1960s.

² J. Knight and W.J. Hudson, *Parliament and Foreign Policy*, Department of International Relations, ANU and Australian Institute of International Affairs, Canberra, 1983, p.63.

³ H.V. Evatt (1894-1965); MHR NSW (ALP), 1940-1960. Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs, 1941-1949; Leader of the Opposition, 1951-1960, and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, 1950-1951.

⁴ R.G. (later Sir Robert) Menzies (1894-1978); MHR VIC (UAP), 1934-1944 and (LP), 1944-1966. Prime Minister, 1939-1941 and 1949-1966; Leader of the Opposition, 1943-1949.

⁵ Knight and Hudson, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-4.

'additional to what the executive through Evatt chose to give it.'⁶ There was no government response to these arguments, which Menzies repeated while campaigning for the 1949 Federal election.

The Liberal and Country Parties obtained a majority in the House of Representatives on 10 December 1949 (and in the Senate on 28 April 1951). Menzies lost no time in outlining his government's plans for a foreign affairs committee. The Governor-General, W.J. McKell,⁷ in his Opening Speech to Parliament in February 1950, referred to the Government's intention to establish a 'Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs to give opportunities for full study [of foreign affairs and defence matters] and to serve as a source of information to Parliament'.⁸ The Opposition Leader, J.B. Chifley,⁹ emphasised that the ALP neither supported nor opposed the formation of such a committee. Chifley made it clear that for the moment the Opposition would do no more than examine the proposal on its merits.¹⁰

On 9 March 1950, the Minister for External Affairs, P.C. Spender,¹¹ announced the Government's intention to appoint a standing committee on foreign affairs, with 'a broad mandate to study external affairs in the widest sense' and the power to inquire into and report upon matters referred to it by the Minister. Spender was hopeful that the Committee would provide a lead to the Parliament on foreign policy matters, while emphasising that it would have no policy-making role.¹² ALP attitudes towards Spender's proposal were initially favourable. Evatt, as Opposition foreign affairs spokesman, referred to the ALP's 'acceptance in principle of the establishment of an all-party standing committee on foreign affairs [which] might be to the great advancement of Australia's interest'.¹³ When Spender sought to take the matter further in December 1950, however, he received no support from the Opposition,¹⁴ on the grounds that his original proposal had been watered down so much that the Committee envisaged by the Government would be little more than a mouthpiece for the Executive.

These matters rested until R.G. Casey,¹⁵ who succeeded Spender as External Affairs Minister in April 1951, held discussions about the proposed committee with the ALP leadership (Chifley and Evatt until Chifley's death in June 1951 and then Evatt and Calwell).¹⁶ After months of wide-ranging discussions, the Government and the Opposition were unable to agree on proposals concerning the Committee's powers and responsibilities, and it was not until 17 October 1951 that a motion was moved in the House of Representatives to appoint the Committee. The Government proposed that: the Committee should be empowered to consider only matters referred to it by the Minister for External Affairs; it should comprise seven Senators and twelve Members of the House of Representatives; its proceedings (and those of its sub-committees) should take place *in camera*; such proceedings should remain secret; for reasons of national security, the Committee should forward its reports to the Minister for External Affairs, informing the Parliament each time it did so; and it should have no power to send for persons, papers or records without Ministerial permission. Evatt and Calwell opposed the Government motion

⁶ *ibid.*, p.64.

⁷ W.J. (later Sir William) McKell (1891-1985); Governor-General of Australia, 1947-1953.

⁸ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (CPD)*, Senate, 22 February 1950, p.6.

⁹ J.B. Chifley (1885-1951); MHR NSW (ALP), 1928-1931 and 1940-1951. Prime Minister, 1945-1949; Leader of the Opposition, 1950-1951.

¹⁰ *CPD*, House of Representatives, 23 February 1950, pp.56-7.

¹¹ P.C. (later Sir Percy) Spender (1897-1985); MHR NSW (IND UAP), 1937-1940, (UAP), 1940-1944 and (LP), 1944-1951. Minister for External Affairs, 1949-1951.

¹² *CPD*, House of Representatives, 9 March 1950, p.622.

¹³ *CPD*, House of Representatives, 16 March 1950, p.912.

¹⁴ *CPD*, House of Representatives, 7 December 1950, p.3966.

¹⁵ R.G. (later Lord) Casey (1890-1976); MHR VIC (UAP), 1931-1940 and (LP), 1949-1960. Minister for External Affairs, 1951-1960.

¹⁶ A.A. Calwell (1896-1973); MHR VIC (ALP), 1940-1972. Leader of the Opposition, 1960-1967, and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, 1951-1960.

put forward by Casey, asserting that the Spender proposal of March 1950 would have allowed the Parliament and the Committee greater influence over foreign policy formulation than that now being put forward by Casey.¹⁷

The Opposition accordingly moved five amendments to the motion aimed at securing the following: a degree of autonomy for the Committee in determining what matters it would examine (the ALP proposed that the Committee should also be able to examine matters referred to it by either House, or as decided upon by a majority of the Committee); equal representation on the Committee between the Government and the Opposition in the House of Representatives; power for the Committee itself to determine whether or not it would meet *in camera*; authority for either House to decide that a report from the Committee should or should not be published; and power for the Committee to send for persons, papers or records on its own account. These amendments were negated and the original motion agreed to on 18 October 1951.

The Senate did not consider the motion until 26 February 1952, when the Opposition unsuccessfully proposed amendments similar to those moved in the House of Representatives. Senator J.H. O'Byrne¹⁸ summed up Opposition objections to the Committee:

The formation of parliamentary committees is a very important part of the democratic form of government. I believe that it is the right way to obtain the views of the people through their representatives. The variety of angles from which problems are viewed and the clashes of ideas that take place in committees are fundamental to a democratic parliament. But in order to function successfully a committee should not be restricted in its field of investigation. It should be competent to call upon witnesses from whom it considers that it could obtain valuable information. Members of Parliament who are appointed to this type of committee realise the very secret nature of their investigations and respect the need for secrecy. A committee constituted as the Government has proposed would give its members glory without power. Their wings would have been clipped in order to prevent them from fully investigating the subjects referred to them.¹⁹

Despite such objections, the Government's motion was agreed to with minor modifications, and the Committee was established by Senate resolution on 27 February 1952. Dissatisfied with both its powers and its functions, the Opposition in the Senate and the House of Representatives boycotted the Committee.²⁰

The fact that such an important parliamentary committee was without Opposition representation occasioned little academic or journalistic comment.²¹ Knight and Hudson have accurately described the Committee as 'nominally a committee of Parliament, [which] was in fact a committee in the gift of the executive and limited to one side of each house'.²²

The Committee finally emerged with a membership of four Senators and seven Members of the House of Representatives — all from the Government parties. Eight places on the Committee were left vacant should the Opposition decide to join the Committee, which held its first meeting on 5 March 1952. Foundation members were Senators J.G. Gorton, J.A. McCallum, E.B. Maher, R.H. Wordsworth, and, from the House of Representatives, W.D. Bostock, A.R. Downer, D.H. Drummond, F.M. Osborne, H.S. Robertson, R.S. Ryan and W.C. Wentworth.²³ The Committee's beginnings were not auspicious.

¹⁷ CPD, House of Representatives, 17 October 1951, p.787 and 18 October 1951, pp. 898-9.

¹⁸ J.H. O'Byrne (1912-1993); Senator TAS (ALP), 1947-1981.

¹⁹ CPD, Senate, 27 February 1952, p.396.

²⁰ J.R. Odgers, *Australian Senate Practice*, Government Printer, Canberra, 1953, pp. 193-4.

²¹ A noteworthy exception was an article by T.N.M. Buesst entitled 'An Incomplete Foreign Affairs Committee', *Australian Outlook*, (6), 2, June 1952, pp. 85-90.

²² Knight and Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

²³ For Committee membership see Appendix I.

Government-Opposition cooperation on matters relating to the Committee proved difficult to achieve, and the years 1952 to 1967 were to be characterised by largely unsatisfactory Government attempts to accommodate increasingly strident Opposition objections to the Committee's powers, functions and activities.

In the early 1950s, Evatt was more favourably disposed towards the Committee than Calwell. Years later, Senator E.B. Maher, a Committee member between 1952 and 1965, recalled 'very animated discussions' in late 1951 between himself and Gorton and Evatt and Calwell in Casey's office about the proposed committee. Maher remembered Calwell as the main ALP opponent of the Government's proposal to establish such a committee. Calwell, who was to remain the Committee's chief critic after its appointment, objected particularly to what he perceived as the limited opportunities available to the committee to contribute to the formulation of foreign policy, and also to the secrecy provisions surrounding committee proceedings.²⁴ He made repeated comparisons with the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, while ignoring the differences between the American and Australian systems of government in which the respective foreign affairs committees operated. In the opinion of one Committee member, Senator J.A. McCallum:

So long as we have responsible government it is not possible for us to set up a committee on foreign affairs comparable to the Senate Foreign Affairs [sic] Committee in the United States of America. The theory of our Government is that the Executive is responsible to the Parliament, and specifically, to the Lower House of the Parliament. The American executive is completely independent of either house, and in order to have a liaison between the President and his executive, and the legislature, these committees function. The framing of policy is the joint work of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives, and the President and his executive.²⁵

Knight and Hudson have outlined other relevant differences in the way committees function in the American and Australian political systems:

Congressional committees have flowered in Washington principally for two reasons. The first is that the executive (the elected president and his appointed cabinet) and the legislature, Congress, are separate and distinct institutions. It is assumed that one will serve as a check on the other. One outcome is that Congress, and especially the Senate, is powerful. Executives must court it; senior Congressional figures have high standing as members of Congress rather than, as in the British and Australian systems, as members or potential members of the executive. The second reason is that, while the United States has a two-party system, and each party has its own traditions, these traditions are overlaid with regional, institutional and personal loyalties and traditions, and party discipline of the British or Australian kind does not apply.²⁶

Despite Opposition reservations about the Committee's treatment by the Executive, Casey often spoke to the Committee. He also ensured that the Department of External Affairs briefed it frequently about international developments, and kept Evatt informed of the kind of information supplied to the Committee by his department.²⁷ The Government through Casey also offered some concessions: from December 1953 the Minister for External Affairs could, at the Committee's request, authorise it to sit other than *in camera*. Provision was also made for the Opposition Leader to receive copies of the Committee's reports, although this was made conditional on the ALP joining the Committee.²⁸ In October 1954, the Committee's terms of reference were expanded, to allow it greater latitude in the choice of subjects it examined.²⁹ Nevertheless, Casey continued to regard the Committee's primary role as educative and advisory:

²⁴ CPD, Senate, 15 March 1962, pp. 542 and 552.

²⁵ CPD, Senate, 29 September 1954, p. 585.

²⁶ Knight and Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

²⁷ W.J. Hudson, *Casey*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, p. 282.

²⁸ CPD, Senate, 1 and 2 December 1953, pp. 232-3.

²⁹ CPD, Senate, 20 October 1954, pp. 858-859.

For Casey, foreign policy and diplomacy were for ministers and their public servant diplomats. If a committee of Parliament allowed some education for MPs in the arcane problems of foreign policy and diplomacy, it had his blessing. If it aspired to a greater role, if it distracted his External Affairs officers or if it presumed to grill him, he was not benignly disposed.³⁰

Labor remained strongly opposed to the Committee, Senator N.E. McKenna³¹ referring to it disparagingly as little more than 'a study circle',³² and Senator P.J. Kennelly³³ describing it as 'the catspaw of the Minister for External Affairs'.³⁴ In May 1956, with an Opposition change of heart increasingly unlikely, Casey decided to fill the seven vacant places on the Committee with Government Senators and Members until the Opposition consented to join the Committee³⁵ (one had already been filled by an ALP (A-C) Senator).³⁶

Calwell continued to lead the charge against what he termed this 'fatuous' Committee.³⁷ Not to be outdone, Senator J.A. Cooke,³⁸ labelled it 'a puerile and futile body' devoid of achievements.³⁹ Repeated Opposition requests were made for details of the Committee's operations as part of concerted attacks on its performance,⁴⁰ and in March 1962 a major debate was held in both Houses about its future. E.G. Whitlam,⁴¹ Deputy Opposition Leader since 1960, put Labor's position succinctly:

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- ³⁰ Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 283. Casey's early view that the Committee represented 'an effort to create machinery whereby members could have access to information that would improve the calibre of debates on International Affairs' remained largely unchanged during his time as External Affairs Minister. See T.B. Millar (ed.) *Australian Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R.G. Casey 1951-60*, Collins, London, 1972, entry for 18 October 1951 (p.41). A suggestion by Senator J.G. Gorton (LP, VIC) that Casey should include a Committee member in his entourage when he attended major international meetings abroad, was not well received by Menzies, senior External Affairs Department officers, nor, presumably, by Casey himself. See A. Trengove, *John Grey Gorton: An Informal Biography*, Cassell, North Melbourne, 1969, pp. 120-1.
- ³¹ N.E. McKenna (1895-1974); Senator TAS (ALP), 1944-1968.
- ³² *CPD*, Senate, 11 August 1954, p. 146.
- ³³ P.J. Kennelly (1900-1981); Senator VIC (ALP), 1953-1971.
- ³⁴ *CPD*, Senate, 28 September 1954, p.540.
- ³⁵ *CPD*, House of Representatives, 24 May 1956, pp. 2455-60.
- ³⁶ G.R. Cole (1908-1969); Senator TAS (ALP), 1949-1955, (ALP (A-C)), 1955-1957 and (DLP), 1957-1965. A Committee member, 29 February 1956 - 30 June 1965.
- ³⁷ *CPD*, House of Representatives, 25 February 1959, p. 263.
- ³⁸ J.A. Cooke (1904-1981); Senator WA (ALP), 1947-1951 and 1952-1965.
- ³⁹ *CPD*, Senate, 11 April 1961, p. 398.
- ⁴⁰ See, for example, *CPD*, House of Representatives, 30 April 1958, p. 1331; 4 May 1961, p. 1588; and 17 August 1961, p. 295. Second only to Calwell among the Committee's critics was E.J. ('Eddie') Ward MHR NSW (ALP), 1931 and 1932-1963. Ward's attacks usually involved lengthy questions about the Committee's activities. 'On ... 26 March 1963, Eddie Ward set a parliamentary record by submitting 118 questions without notice. They covered a wide range of subjects and were addressed to almost every minister in Cabinet.' See G. Souter, *Acts of Parliament*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1988, p.451.
- ⁴¹ E.G. Whitlam (1916-); MHR NSW (ALP), 1952-1978. Prime Minister, 1972-1975; Leader of the Opposition, 1967-1972 and 1976-1977, and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, 1960-1967.

Our objection to this committee is that it is so circumscribed and so superintended by the executive that it serves no useful purpose at all.⁴²

During the Senate debate on the Committee's composition and powers, Senator Cole argued that it should be given greater scope to contribute to the making of foreign policy, and that the Opposition ought to be represented on the Committee.⁴³ For the next five years, however, existing arrangements remained in place.

Nevertheless, the Committee was approaching a watershed in its history. Between 1964 and 1967 Whitlam and three fellow Members of the House of Representatives — G.E.J. Barwick, P.M.C. Hasluck and P. Howson⁴⁴ — were involved in negotiations which led eventually to Opposition representation on the Committee. Barwick, External Affairs Minister from December 1961, had succeeded in meeting most ALP objections to the Committee by late 1963, but two major obstacles remained: provisions in the Committee's resolution of appointment relating to dissenting reports, and Senator Cole's membership of the Committee. The Opposition maintained that Cole's place on the Committee belonged to an ALP nominee.⁴⁵

Notwithstanding these differences, Whitlam was eager to find a *modus vivendi*, and Howson, a Committee member, acted as an unofficial link between Barwick, Whitlam and the Committee in early 1964 in an attempt to bring this about.⁴⁶ However, on 22 April 1964, the ALP Executive rejected the Government's proposed Committee reforms, which included changes to the Committee's 1964 resolution of appointment, ostensibly because of reservations about provisions concerning the furnishing of dissenting reports. Howson's diary records his understanding of the real reasons: Opposition Leader Calwell's fear that membership of the Committee would result in Labor Senators and Members being 'brainwashed'; Cole's continuing membership of the Committee; and, at a more personal level, Calwell's wish to remind his ambitious deputy that the Opposition leadership ranking was Calwell–Whitlam and not *vice versa*.⁴⁷

Whitlam remained undeterred in the face of this major reversal, and he continued to negotiate, henceforth with Hasluck, who succeeded Barwick as Minister for External Affairs on 24 April 1964. Hasluck shared Whitlam's strong belief in the need for Opposition representation on the Committee. Calwell's attitude remained unchanged. He made it clear that the ALP would join the Committee only if it were established on the same basis as similar committees in Canada and New Zealand.⁴⁸ However, Calwell's views were not shared by many senior Labor Senators and Members.

K.E. Beazley,⁴⁹ who regretted the ALP's lack of representation on the Committee, was convinced that the Opposition would join when Calwell retired.⁵⁰ Knight and Hudson have argued that greater ALP receptiveness at this time derived in large part from Opposition perceptions of Hasluck, who:

⁴² CPD, House of Representatives, 14 March 1962, p. 778.

⁴³ CPD, Senate, 15 March 1962, pp. 568-9.

⁴⁴ G.E.J. (later Sir Garfield) Barwick (1903-); MHR NSW (LP), 1958-1964. Minister for External Affairs, 22 December 1961 - 24 April 1964.

P.M.C. (later Sir Paul) Hasluck (1905-1993); MHR WA (LP), 1949-1969. Minister for External Affairs, 24 April 1964 - 11 February 1969.

P. Howson (1919 -); MHR VIC (LP), 1955-1972. A Committee member, 1962-1964 and its Chairman, 5 May - 11 June 1964.

⁴⁵ CPD, House of Representatives, 22 April 1964, pp. 1307-12.

⁴⁶ See D. Aitkin (ed.) *The Howson Diaries: The Life of Politics*, Viking Press, Ringwood, 1984, entries for 26 February 1964 (p. 80); 18 March 1964 (p. 84); 8 April 1964 (p. 86); and 20 April 1964 (p. 88).

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, entries for 21 and 22 April 1964 (pp. 88-89).

⁴⁸ CPD, House of Representatives, 31 March 1965, p. 511.

⁴⁹ K.E. Beazley (1917-); MHR WA (ALP), 1945-1977. A Committee member, 1967-1969 and its Vice-Chairman, 1967-1969.

... more than most had a reputation for detachment from some of the more Machiavellian aspects of politics and for commitment to principle, and this doubtless encouraged the Opposition to co-operate in an enterprise which might develop along lines likely to meet its and the Parliament's purposes.⁵¹

Calwell retired as Opposition Leader in February 1967, and was succeeded by Whitlam. Hasluck and Whitlam immediately began to press their case for Opposition membership of the Committee. Both believed that Australia's growing foreign commitments — particularly those in South-East Asia — made Opposition representation on the Committee essential. Cole had left the Parliament in 1965, and his place on the Committee had been filled by a fellow DLP Senator, F.P.V. McManus.⁵² The proposals agreed on by Hasluck (representing the Government) and the Opposition Leadership met with general parliamentary approval, before being presented to, and passed by, both Houses in May 1967. However, some Senators and Members expressed reservations. Senator L.K. Murphy⁵³ was concerned that the Committee would remain 'a ministerial committee' rather than a properly constituted parliamentary committee,⁵⁴ while G.M. Bryant⁵⁵ questioned the *in camera* provisions in the Committee's terms of appointment.⁵⁶

The majority of ALP objections to the Committee having been met even before Calwell's retirement, and the presence on the Committee of a DLP Senator apparently no longer an obstacle, three Opposition Senators and five Opposition Members joined the Committee in May 1967. The Committee's 1964 resolution of appointment remained unchanged except for a minor amendment relating to dissenting reports, although Whitlam was quick to point out that Opposition membership of the Committee would not lead to a bipartisan foreign policy.

The reconstituted Committee comprised twenty-one Senators and Members: four Government and three Opposition Senators, one DLP Senator and eight Government and five Opposition Members.⁵⁷ The Government retained a majority on the Committee, which continued to meet *in camera*, while the public disclosure of records of its proceedings remained at the Minister's discretion. However, it now had the power to invite experts to appear before it, and, for the first time, the Leader of the Opposition would receive its reports as a matter of course.

Hasluck summed up the Committee's *raison d'être* thus:

The functions of this Parliament in respect of foreign affairs are, of course, parliamentary functions. Under our parliamentary system the Executive is responsible to Parliament and the Executive is formed from the majority in Parliament. But Parliament itself does not have executive functions. Consequently, this Committee of Parliament does not have functions in respect of foreign policy for which the Executive must bear the responsibility, but it has functions arising from the parliamentary role of review, discussion, and debate. It provides opportunity for members appointed to the Committee to inform themselves more fully, to study more deeply and to consider more thoughtfully the matters involved in the conduct of foreign affairs.⁵⁸

⁵⁰ Aitkin (Howson), *op. cit.*, entry for 22 April 1964 (p. 88).

⁵¹ Knight and Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

⁵² F.P.V. McManus (1905-1983); Senator VIC (ALP (A-C)), 1956-1957, (DLP), 1957-1962 and 1965-1974. A Committee member, 1965-1972.

⁵³ L.K. Murphy (1922-1986); Senator NSW (ALP), 1962-1975.

⁵⁴ *CPD*, Senate, 11 May 1967, p. 1372.

⁵⁵ G.M. Bryant (1914-1991); MHR VIC (ALP), 1955-1980.

⁵⁶ *CPD*, House of Representatives, 4 May 1967, pp. 1790.

⁵⁷ For Committee membership see Appendix II.

⁵⁸ *CPD*, House of Representatives, 4 May 1967, p. 1787.

Between February 1952 and May 1967 the Committee produced six reports, four of which were printed for public circulation.⁵⁹ Committee sub-committees also reported on a broad range of subjects, either to the full Committee or to the Minister. Much of the Committee's work went unnoticed because most of its private briefing papers were never published. However, there is evidence to suggest that significant work was done by the Committee.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, its tangible achievements during these years were comparatively modest, and the failure of the Government and the Opposition to reach agreement at the outset on the Committee's purposes, powers and functions seriously weakened its capacity to contribute to the formulation of Australian foreign policy. Some Liberal-Country Party provisions governing Committee operations — such as that preventing the Committee from sending for persons, papers or records without Ministerial consent — were too stringent; while the ALP's initial insistence on equal Government-Opposition representation on the Committee in the House of Representatives betokened a limited understanding of the realities of political and parliamentary life.

Senators' and Members' knowledge of foreign affairs, and public perceptions of Parliament and parliamentary committees, would have been enhanced considerably by Opposition membership of the Committee. A properly constituted joint committee would certainly have made more useful contributions to the foreign policy debate, especially in relation to South-East Asia, during the 1960s.

The 1967 reforms 'had no discernible impact on executive policy; [nor] did [they] alter the power balance between the executive and the parliament'.⁶¹ However, they did result in the Committee achieving greater prominence and recognition. The successful compromise reached over Opposition membership of the Foreign Affairs Committee provided encouragement to the growing number of parliamentarians of all parties in favour of Committee Office reform in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Among the most prominent voices calling for such reform was that of the Liberal Party MHR, H.B. Turner, who served as Chairman of the Committee between August 1964 and October 1966. Turner believed that the 'failure to read the signs of the times and to devise the institutional forms to make Parliament efficient and apt for the tasks required of it'⁶² had resulted in an increasingly dominant Executive. Turner argued that it was time for the Parliament to reassert itself, particularly through the mechanism of parliamentary committees:

Parliament should insist upon having essential information at its disposal. This must primarily be achieved by bringing legislators face to face with administrators and experts at the committee table, whenever possible making available from the Departments background documents that form the basis of policy decisions, all this resulting later in meaningful and informed debate on the floor of Parliament.⁶³

⁵⁹ *The Peking Peace Conference* (September 1952; Parliamentary Paper No. 132); *The Committee's Activities and Functions* (November 1953; printed but no Parliamentary Paper No.); *Indo-China* (April 1954); *Extradition Arrangements Between Australia and Communist-Controlled Countries* (October 1956); *The Status of Berlin As It Affects the Relationship Between the Major Powers and Australia As An Integral Part of the Western World* (May 1963; Parliamentary Paper No. 202); and *The United Nations* (May 1966; Parliamentary Paper No. 296).

⁶⁰ See, for example, the Howson diaries, op. cit., entry for 10 September 1963 (p.54) in which the diarist recorded the business of that day's Committee's meeting:

Foreign Affairs Committee. Discussion on possible political repercussions if Soekarno visited Australia. The Committee was fairly evenly divided. On my motion we agreed to inform Barwick that it would be inadvisable until public opinion had been conditioned to its value to Australia, and that we should prepare a press campaign as soon as possible. We also agreed to Malcolm Fraser's report on Australia-New Zealand relations.

⁶¹ Knight and Hudson, op. cit., p. 67.

⁶² H.B. Turner, 'The Reform of Parliament', *Australian Quarterly*, (37), 4, December 1965, pp. 56-65, p.62.

⁶³ *ibid.*, p.63.

Turner did not propose a policy-making role for parliamentary committees; he insisted rather on the necessity for a greater number of committees to monitor the activities of government departments and the Executive. The importance of committees within the parliamentary context received increasing acknowledgment as a result of the 1967 Foreign Affairs Committee reforms. These reforms were undoubtedly an important factor in preparing the way for major reform of the Senate and House of Representatives committee systems in the 1970s and 1980s.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Hitherto, ambitious attempts at committee reform had been unsuccessful, and, in most instances, stillborn. See, for example, J.F. Cairns (1914-) MHR VIC (ALP), 1955-1977 on 'the extension of the committee system', *CPD*, House of Representatives, 2 October 1957, p. 967. Senator E.W. Mattner (LP, SA), called for radical committee reform in 1964, stressing the need for Senate standing committees in areas like foreign affairs to improve critical debate. See *CPD*, Senate, 17 March 1964, p. 306.

Appendix I

Membership of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, March 1952.

Senate

J.G. (later Sir John) Gorton (1911-); Senator VIC (LP), 1949-1968 and MHR VIC (LP), 1968-1975 (IND, May-November 1975). Prime Minister, 1968-1971. A Committee member, 1952-1958 and its Chairman, 1952-1956.

J.A. McCallum (1892-1973); Senator NSW (LP), 1949-1962. A Committee member, 1952-1955 and 1959-1962.

E.B. Maher (1891-1982); Senator QLD (CP), 1949-1965. A Committee member, 1952-1965 and its Vice-Chairman for brief periods during the 1950s.

R.H. Wordsworth (1894-1984); Senator TAS (LP), 1949-1959. A Committee member, 1952-1959.

House of Representatives

W.D. Bostock (1892-1968); MHR VIC (LP), 1949-1958. A Committee member, 1952-1955.

A.R. (later Sir Alexander) Downer (1910-1981); MHR SA (LP), 1949-1964. A Committee member, 1952-1958.

D.H. Drummond (1890-1965); MHR NSW (CP), 1949-1963. A Committee member, 1952-1961.

F.M. Osborne (1909-); MHR NSW (LP), 1949-1961. A Committee member, 1952-1955.

H.S. Robertson (1900-1987); MHR NSW (CP), 1949-1965. A Committee member, 1952-1955.

R.S. Ryan (1884-1952); MHR VIC (UAP), 1940-1944 and (LP), 1944-1952. A Committee member, February-August 1952 and its Chairman, March-August 1952. R.G. Casey's brother-in-law.

W.C. Wentworth (1907-); MHR NSW (LP), 1949-1977 (IND LIB, October-November 1977). A Committee member, 1952-1961.

Appendix II

Membership of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, May 1967.

Senate

T.L. Bull (1905-1976); Senator NSW (CP), 1965-1971. A Committee member, 1965-1969.

M.C. (later Sir Magnus) Cormack (1906-); Senator VIC (LP), 1951-1953 and 1962-1978. A Committee member, 1965-1971 and its Chairman, 1967-1969.

A.J. Drury (1912-); Senator SA (ALP), 1959-1975. A Committee member, 1967-1972.

K.A. Laught (1907-1969); Senator SA (LP), 1951-1969. A Committee member, 1962-1969.

F.P.V. McManus (see note 52).

E.W. Mattner (1893-1977); Senator SA (LP), 1944-1946 and 1949-1968. A Committee member, 1959-1962 and 1965-1968.

J.A. Mulvihill (1919-); Senator NSW (ALP), 1965-1983. A Committee member, 1967-1972.

D.R. Willesee (1916-); Senator WA (ALP), 1949-1975. A Committee member, 1967-1969.

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A.A. Armstrong (1909-1982); MHR NSW (CP), 1965-1969. A Committee member, 1967-1969.

L.H. Barnard (1919-); MHR TAS (ALP), 1954-1975. A Committee member, 1967-1969.

K.E. Beazley (see note 49).

D.E. Costa (1900-1976); MHR NSW (ALP), 1949-1969. A Committee member, 1967-1969.

M.D. Cross (1929-); MHR QLD (ALP), 1961-1975 and 1980-1990. A Committee member, 1967-1972.

R. Davies (1919-1980); MHR TAS (ALP), 1958-1975. A Committee member, 1967-1969.

G.O'H. Giles (1923-1990); MHR SA (LP), 1964-1983. A Committee member, 1967-1969.

T.E.F. Hughes (1923-); MHR NSW (LP), 1963-1972. A Committee member, 1964-1969.

J.D. Jess (1922-); MHR VIC (LP), 1960-1972. A Committee member, 1962-1972.

D.J. (later Sir James) Killen (1925-); MHR QLD (LP), 1955-1983. A Committee member, 1964-1969.

P.J. Nixon (1928-); MHR VIC (CP), 1961-1975, (NCP), 1975-1982, (NPA), 1982-1983. A Committee member, May-November 1967.

A.S. Peacock (1939-); MHR VIC (LP), 1966 - . Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1975-1980. A Committee member, 1967-1969.

H.B. Turner (1905-1988); MHR NSW (LP), 1952-1974. A Committee member, 1956-1958 and 1962-1966 and its Chairman, 1964-1966.