

PLATYPUS AND PARLIAMENT

The Australian Senate

in

Theory and Practice

DR STANLEY BACH has published extensively on the United States Congress and other legislatures and has worked as a consultant on parliamentary process in Asia, Africa, South America and Eastern Europe. For more than 30 years he worked with and provided advice to Senators and Representatives on the operations of the US Congress. From 1988 to 2002 he held the office of Senior Specialist in the Legislative Process for the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress.

In 2002 Dr Bach was awarded a Fulbright Senior Scholar Award to study bicameralism in Australia. While in Canberra he was a Fellow in the Political Science Program of the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University. He was also awarded a fellowship in the Department of the Senate which enabled him to observe the operations of the Commonwealth Parliament at first hand.

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Theory and Practice

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Department of the Senate

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... having called into existence two strong houses, and especially a senate the like of which will not be found in any constitution that is in existence, or has ever been in existence in the world, we ought to make provision for great, important, probably historical occasions when those coordinate houses may be brought into serious conflict. ... Now, in an ordinary constitution, where we have an upper house not elected by the people, or not elected on the same basis as the lower house, that second chamber would be disposed to yield to the pressure of the lower chamber elected upon a popular basis; but here, where we are creating a senate which will feel the sap of popular election in its veins, that senate will probably feel stronger than a senate or upper chamber which is elected only on a partial franchise, and, consequently, we ought to make provision for the adjustment of disputes in great emergencies.

Dr John Quick
Sydney, 1897

We are creating in these two chambers, under our form of government, what you may term an irresistible force on the one side, and what may prove to be an immovable object on the other side.

Alfred Deakin
Sydney, 1897