

The Senate

Committee of Privileges

Person referred to in the Senate

Dr Clive Hamilton

129th Report

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Report

1. On 25 October 2006 the President of the Senate, Senator the Hon. Paul Calvert, received a submission from Dr Clive Hamilton, Executive Director, The Australia Institute Ltd., 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).
2. The submission referred to comments made by Senator the Hon Eric Abetz in the Senate on 18 October 2006 during question time. The President, having accepted the submission as a submission for the purposes of the resolution, referred it to the Committee of Privileges on 30 October 2006.
3. The committee met in private session on 7 November 2006 and, pursuant to paragraph (3) of Privilege Resolution 5, decided to consider the submission. The response, which the committee now recommends for incorporation in *Hansard*, has been agreed to by Dr Hamilton and the committee in accordance with Resolution 5(7)(b).
4. The committee draws attention to paragraph 5(6) of the resolution which requires that, in considering a submission under this resolution and reporting to the Senate, the committee shall not consider or judge the truth of any statements made in the Senate or of the submission.
5. The committee **recommends**:

That a response by Dr Clive Hamilton in the terms specified at Appendix One, be incorporated in *Hansard*.

John Faulkner
Chair

Appendix One

Response by Dr Clive Hamilton Pursuant to Resolution 5(7)(b) of the Senate of 25 February 1988

On 18th October 2006, in reply to a question from Senator Heffernan, Senator Abetz launched a personal attack on me ostensibly in response to my comments on drought relief to Australian farmers. By taking some words of mine wholly out of context, he attempted to defame me by ridiculing my religious experiences.

The same words used by Senator Abetz were used by Senator Parer to attack me on 25th September 1997, in reply to a question from Senator Abetz ostensibly about my views on greenhouse policy. The Privileges Committee recommended that my response to Senator Parer be incorporated in Hansard, which was duly done on 21 October 1997.

In 1994 I was invited by Caroline Jones to be a guest on her ABC Radio program *The Search for Meaning*. *The Search for Meaning* was a long-running program that provided an opportunity for well-known people to discuss their personal spiritual and religious journeys. It was difficult for me to decide whether to accept the invitation to appear because it would require some intimate revelations about my own spiritual journey. I feared that I may be misunderstood and, possibly, ridiculed by people who have little understanding of the subject. After the program, I had many letters and telephone calls from people around Australia thanking me for my candour and willingness to speak of these issues.

Senator Abetz has selected from the one-hour interview my description of the stage of the spiritual journey known as the ‘confrontation with the shadow’, a well-known aspect of the process of ‘individuation’, that is, the process of achieving psychological wholeness. There is an extensive psychological literature on this process.

Many eminent Australians—including authors, scientists, poets, academics and religious leaders—have spoken or written of similar experiences, as any regular listener of Caroline Jones’ program would know. The experience of confronting the shadow is a persistent theme of the world’s literature. Some celebrated examples include Goethe’s *Faust* and Dante’s *Inferno*. I could name dozens more which deal with it explicitly. The theme also figures prominently in Australian literature including the work of A.D. Hope and Patrick White, the latter in his seminal work *Voss*, to name but two.

This literature in turn reflects the graphic treatment of these experiences in the great religious writings of the world. They feature prominently, for example, in both the old and new testaments of the Bible and in the Bhagavad-Gita. Several of the best-known

Christian theologians, including St John of the Cross, Master Eckhart and Hildegard of Bingen, provide detailed accounts of their experiences which closely resemble mine in form, content and resolution.

I was dismayed to hear Senator Abetz use intimate revelations about my spiritual journey in an attempt to smear me as an individual and undermine my credibility as a commentator on drought relief. The very same views on drought relief have been expressed recently by a wide range of experts and commentators including Professor Peter Cullen, Professor Mike Young, Mr Ross Gittins, the Productivity Commission and the Government-endorsed Agriculture and Food Policy Reference Group.

My credentials as a commentator have not been questioned by anyone, but in case any observer should have doubts after Senator Abetz's attack I would like to record the following. I hold a degree in Pure Mathematics from the Australian National University, a First Class Honours degree in Economics from the University of Sydney and a DPhil from the University of Sussex. I have held permanent or visiting positions at the Australian National University, the University of Sydney, the University of Technology, Sydney and the University of Cambridge.

I have published widely, including seven books and many articles in Australian and international refereed academic journals. I have been employed to carry out research by many government, business and community organisations including the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts, the Department of Environment Sport and Territories, the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, and the Sustainable Energy Development Authority.

Clive Hamilton
19 October 2006