

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

THE SENATE

COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES

PERSON REFERRED TO IN THE SENATE

(SIR WILLIAM KEYS)

(27TH REPORT)

NOVEMBER 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 David MacGibbon (Victoria)

Senator Baden Teague (South Australia)

The Senate

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

REPORT

1. On 21 November 1990 Sir William Keys 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 remarks made by Senator Newman and Senator Herron in the Senate during discussion of a matter of public importance on 15 November 1990. The President, having accepted Sir William's letter as a submission for the purposes of the resolution, referred the letter to the Committee of Privileges on 26 November.
2. The Committee met in private session on 27 November and decided, pursuant to paragraph (3) of Privilege Resolution 5, to consider the submission from Sir William. In considering the submission, the Committee did not find it necessary to confer with Sir William, or with Senators Newman and Herron. After deciding to recommend to the Senate that an agreed statement be incorporated in Hansard, the Committee contacted Sir William and the statement at appendix 1 has been agreed to by Sir William and the Committee in accordance with Resolution 5(7)(b).
3. The Committee recommends:

That a response by Sir William Keys, in the terms specified at appendix 1, and agreed to by Sir William Keys and the Committee, be incorporated in Hansard.

Patricia Giles
Chair

**RESPONSE BY SIR WILLIAM KEYS, A.C., O.B.E., M.C.
AGREED TO BY SIR WILLIAM KEYS
AND THE COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES
PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION 5(7)(b) OF THE SENATE OF
25 FEBRUARY 1988**

In the Senate on Thursday, 15 November, I was the target of most insulting remarks from Senators Newman and Herron. I write to ask that my response to these attacks and to the issues from which they arose might be presented to the Senate.

Senator Newman referred to me as a Government "stooge" because of my support for hospital integration. Let me begin by saying that for 27 years, 17 as National Secretary and 10 as National President of the RSL, I was the principal negotiator for the war veterans and dependants of Australia. In this role I developed sound working relations with Prime Ministers from Robert Menzies to Robert Hawke. I believe I also had the respect and confidence of my own constituency and the Ministers and Governments of the day, regardless of their political persuasion.

The results achieved for veterans and dependants over that period are a matter of record and speak for themselves.

I briefly retrace this history of my efforts for veterans and dependants to make the point that Senator Newman's interjection was not only deeply offensive, it was untrue. I am nobody's "stooge" and never have been. The views I express are at all times my own.

It is not the personal attack on me which concerns me: rather, it is the attack on the concept of integration. As National President of the RSL I negotiated the integration arrangements with Prime Minister Hawke and Veterans' Affairs Minister Humphreys. The views expressed in my letter, quoted by Senator Tate, represented views adopted by organisations such as the Korea and South East Asia Forces Association and the TPI Association.

Subsequently, in supporting Senator Newman's attack, Senator Herron was incorrect in his statement to the Senate in relation to a National Conference of the AMA on 26 May at which I spoke.

He said I had returned from overseas that morning. In fact, I had returned 5 days before.

He said I had delivered a speech that I had not actually read. In fact, the speech I read was the third draft of an address on which I had worked with the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) in which I provided the general thrust and the professional people provided the supporting data - a fairly normal procedure for such a speech.

He is correct in saying that I did anger my audience. I told them if they did not adopt a more flexible attitude to the assessment of the professional skills of overseas-trained doctors, they were in danger of becoming irrelevant.

The merits of the points I made were subsequently endorsed by the Australian Medical Council which, as a result of its own review, greatly changed its assessment procedure to make it a far more practical process and thus give overseas-trained doctors a far greater prospect of obtaining recognition and registration.

I make this submission in an endeavour to clear my name and reputation. I trust that appropriate action can be taken.

SIR WILLIAM KEYS