



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PRIVILEGE**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 8 February 2001**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 8 February 2001  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Pyne, Chris, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr PYNE** (Sturt) (3.28 pm)—Mr Speaker, I seek your indulgence to outline a matter of breach of privilege I referred to earlier. The matter concerns attempts to intimidate me in the parliamentary function I discharge as Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and as a member of the House. The attempted intimidation is, to my mind, both improper and such as to constitute substantial interference to my parliamentary duties.

Last night the member for Rankin and the member for Lilley at different times threatened and intimidated me in relation to my work as chairman of the electoral matters committee and as a member of this House.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr SPEAKER**—The member for Sturt will resume his seat. There are some members who have forgotten that I have already warned them. I am reluctant to issue a general warning, but that sort of behaviour will provoke such action from the chair—with its obvious consequences. The member for Sturt, in common with every member in this House, has the right to be heard in silence and the House provides forms that allow those who feel they have been misrepresented to address that misrepresentation.

**Mr PYNE**—This occurred outside the precincts of the House in the Canberra suburb of Kingston. The member for Rankin—

**Mr Tanner**—Tell the truth!

**Mr SPEAKER**—The member for Melbourne clearly seeks to defy the chair, and he is warned.

**Mr PYNE**—The member for Rankin approached me unsolicited while I was talking with a group of people and I was required to turn around and speak with him. He mentioned the work of the Joint Committee on Electoral Matters—particularly its inquiry into the integrity of the electoral roll—and referred disparagingly to my work on that inquiry. That is clearly a matter for him; he is entitled to his opinion. However, he went much further than that: he threatened and intimidated me, using phrases such as 'You're going to pay for it' and 'We'll destroy you' and a string of vulgar four-letter words too foul to repeat here. A number of people were present in the near vicinity and witnessed this conversation.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr SPEAKER**—The member for Sturt has the call.

**Mr PYNE**—The member for Rankin approached me again later and repeated much of his earlier threatening conversation—again, witnesses were present nearby. The member for Lilley approached me unsolicited about half an hour after my conversation with the member for Rankin. Once again, I was required to stop talking to the people I was with and talk to him. He, too, referred to the electoral matters committee, particularly its inquiry into the integrity of the electoral roll.

**Mr SPEAKER**—I warn the member for Brisbane!

**Mr PYNE**—He also referred disparagingly to my role in the inquiry. While that is also a matter for him, he went much further: he threatened and intimidated me using phrases such as 'What goes around comes around'—

**Mr Martin Ferguson**—Sit down, you ponce!

**Mr SPEAKER**—The member for Kingsford-Smith!

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr Brereton**—I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER**—This is not a matter for frivolity. As the member for Batman knows, I have endeavoured to recognise an error made yesterday. The member for Batman has made a statement that should not be allowed to stand on the parliamentary record and he will withdraw it.

**Mr Martin Ferguson**—Mr Speaker, I accept that the ledger is now square from yesterday. I also withdraw the suggestion that the member for Sturt is a ponce.

**Mr SPEAKER**—The member for Batman will return to the dispatch box and withdraw, without qualification, both statements that he has made.

**Mr Martin Ferguson**—I withdraw without qualification the suggestion that the member for Sturt is a ponce.

**Mr SPEAKER**—The member for Batman will excuse himself from the House under the provisions of standing order 304A.

*The member for Batman then left the chamber.*

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr SPEAKER**—The member for Batman's action was a direct reflection on the chair.

**Mr PYNE**—Mr Speaker, the member threatened and intimidated me using phrases such as, 'What goes around comes around, mate,' 'We're going to get you' and 'You're going to pay for it.' There were a number of people close by who witnessed the tenor of the conversation. Both members threatened and intimidated me; I felt that they were trying to warn me off my work as chairman of the electoral matters committee and as a member of this House. Mr Speaker, I ask you to consider the matter and determine whether there is a prima facie case of breach of privilege.

*Government members interjecting—*

*Opposition members interjecting—*