



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Sir Robert Carrington Cotton KCMG, AO

SPEECH

Tuesday, 6 February 2007

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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Questioner
Speaker Brandis, Sen George

Source Senate
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Minister for the Arts and Sport) (4.15 pm)—It was my great good fortune to know Sir James Killen. Although I would not claim an intimate association with him, I knew him well enough to come to appreciate the measure of the man and to be enchanted by his very distinctive personality. I last saw Sir James Killen some four months ago, on 30 September last year, at the opening of the new Moreton electorate office, which he performed with his customary poise and aplomb. I remember my conversation with him. I was much exercised at the time—and you might remember this, Mr Acting Deputy President Chapman—with the question of sedition laws and the laws concerning the threat of terrorism. As well as being a distinguished parliamentarian, Sir James was a notable barrister. He engaged me for some time about the importance of the rule of law and how liberals and conservatives—because in the different senses of those many-hued words he was both—should never lose sight of the paramountcy of the rule of law and rights of the individual citizen, even in necessitous times.

Prior to that, I had attended a luncheon with Sir James in November 2005. It was a most touching occasion. It was the 50th anniversary of the Upper Cavendish Road branch of the Liberal Party at the Pacific Golf Club. As all of us in political parties know, those whom we value most are the true believers who stay with their party through thick and thin, who seek no political rewards for themselves but only seek to serve the cause and values they believe in. We can all think of such people in our lives. I will never forget that day because there were there, along with Sir James Killen, four of the foundation members of the Upper Cavendish Road branch of the Liberal Party: Ailsa Scurr, Ruth Lines, Peg Organ and Oliver Cowley—all of whom had worked on Sir James's first campaign in 1955 when he was elected as the member for Moreton. Indeed, the Upper Cavendish Road branch was formed, as I understand it, for the purpose of assisting Sir James to win the seat of Moreton at the 1955 election. Also there was one of Sir James Killen's great companions in arms, Mr Bill Hewitt—later a distinguished member of the Queensland parliament to whom I will return in a moment.

Others have observed—and one cannot speak of Sir James Killen without making the observation—that he brought to this parliament, as he brought to his daily life, a very distinctive, in many ways anachronistic, but very memorable air. The period of history with which he identified was the great period of English parliamentarianism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries—the days of Edmund Burke, Richard Brinsley Sheridan and the other parliamentarians of the Fox-North-Burke period, and beyond the Napoleonic Wars into the days of the Regency. He seemed to be a displaced essence from that period who walked among us. He adopted its airs and he adopted its generous, formal, courtly and elegant language. He brought to everything he did the qualities which we associate with that period—chivalry, eloquence and a somewhat Rabelaisian approach to life. It was the period appropriately ordained by that rather lush English historian, Sir Arthur Bryant, as *The Age of Elegance*. It was that age of elegance which Sir James embodied in our more prosaic times.

He loved quoting Edmund Burke and, as we heard from Mr Whitlam in his eulogy to Sir James at St John's Cathedral two weeks ago, he conceived the idea—how empirically supported I am not sure—that he was a descendant of Richard Brinsley Sheridan on his mother's side. Although political scientists might say that he was not a deep scholar of Burke in an academic sense, nevertheless he understood the point of Burke's view of life. Burke was never a Tory; he was a Whig. He always sat with the Whig party. Sir James Killen, like Burke, was sometimes mischaracterised as a conservative but was really a Whig—to the extent to which that antique term has meaning in today's politics. He was always on the progressive side, always on the side of the individual. Nevertheless, like a true Whig, he maintained a deep reverence for established institutions. He understood that age, he understood its values and he evoked its spirit. Never more so did he do that than in his Alfred Deakin Lecture of 1975 when he spoke of parliament—the role of parliament, the uniqueness of parliament, the spirit of parliament, the changeable moods of parliament. His rhapsody to the parliamentary institution is something which will never be forgotten by those who happened to hear a broadcast of it, as I was fortunate to do, or who have since read the text of it.

Sir James Killen was the subject of many anecdotes—some, it must be said, of his own creation; he certainly was somebody who was fain to nurture his own anecdotes. We have heard the famous story of the apocryphal

Menzies telegram after the 1961 election. But there is another anecdote about Sir James Killen, widely believed at the University of Queensland Law School—at least it was while I was a student—which I would like to contribute to the record.

It was widely believed that Sir James, or Jim Killen as he then was, when an external law student was having a bit of trouble with a constitutional law paper which, it was said, he asked the then Attorney-General, Sir Garfield Barwick, to assist him in completing at a parliamentary function. As the legend has it, the then Dr Kevin Ryan, later the sainted professor and Justice Kevin Ryan, who marked the constitutional law paper, was as little impressed by Sir Garfield Barwick's contribution as he was by Jim Killen's. Nevertheless, Jim Killen did get his pass in constitutional law and subsequently graduated LLB in the same graduating class as the present Governor of Queensland, Quentin Bryce.

It is also said about Sir James Killen, and rightly so, that he was a person who spanned all walks of life. Never was that more memorably illustrated to me than at a dinner that was held to commemorate his 70th birthday in 1995—appropriately, at the Guineas Room at Eagle Farm Racecourse. There was, as is customary on such occasions, a series of tributes from all manner of people. And there were some who, by reason of distance or by reason of illness, were not able to be present that evening, so they recorded their tributes on videotape which was broadcast to the room.

One of the tributes was by former President George Bush, whom Jim Killen had encountered when George Bush was a Vice-President in the Reagan administration and Sir James Killen was the Minister for Defence in Australia, and with whom he had maintained a correspondence and, obviously, a warm friendship. So we had this tribute from the former President of the United States of America, and then the next video to appear was by a man well known in legal circles in Brisbane as 'Tom the barber'. Tom the barber cut Sir James's hair for decades, as he cut the hair of most of the judges and most of the barristers—in fact, he used to cut my hair. Tom the barber was a real character among the legal community—and the racing community, indeed—of Brisbane. The juxtaposition of a message from the former President of the United States and the much-loved Tom the barber to me summed up Sir James's capacity to embrace people from all walks of life. The funny thing was that they both, George Bush and Tom, evoked almost precisely the same qualities.

As Senator Ian Macdonald has pointed out and as Senator Santoro, who I understand will speak in a moment, will no doubt also advert to, Sir James was the inaugural president of the Young Liberal Movement in Queensland, an office in which both Senator Santoro and I had, many years later, the honour to follow him. I have been provided by Bill Hewitt, whom I mentioned before, who was the fourth president of the Young Liberal Movement, with a document which Sir James authorised and which was published in about 1950, entitled *A Manifesto to the Youth of Queensland*. This was the foundation document of the Young Liberal Movement of Australia, Queensland Division. It followed the style of that other famous Liberal Party foundational document or testament of beliefs, *We Believe*. But rather than the rather modest dozen or so declarations of principle in the *We Believe* document, which became the Liberal Party's most famous statement of doctrine, Sir James Killen's 'We believe' document contains dozens of affirmations of Liberal faith, which he wrote when he was a very young man. Some of them sound a little antique today, such as:

WE BELIEVE in loyalty to our Queen and Throne, as we believe the institution of Monarchy to be indispensable to the British way of life.

But there are others that sound as contemporary as if they had been written yesterday:

WE BELIEVE that government interference with the lives and liberties of people is not desirable in itself, and should only arise when national and international circumstances demand, and we further believe that the full circumstances should be made quite clear to the people—

the very point he made to me only some four months ago when I last spoke with him. This document, which obviously bears his authorship, says:

WE BELIEVE that the entry of people into Parliament for any other reason than service of the nation is to be deplored, as we also believe that all those who enter Parliament should receive political training before their entry—

one of the principal reasons, of course, why the Young Liberal Movement was founded. The document also says:

WE BELIEVE it right to condemn the fall in the prestige of Parliament, as we believe it right to regard Parliamentary service as a high and noble form of service to one's fellow men.

WE BELIEVE in a strong and independent judiciary, as we believe in our system of Law which makes all equal before the Law.

And so it goes on. But the document with which I have been furnished by Bill Hewitt is not just a manifesto to the youth of Queensland, not only the original inspiration of Young Liberals in the 1950s, but very much a testament of Jim Killen's political faith—to which he maintained fidelity through good times and bad, with impressive consistency throughout 28 years in parliament and in the years before and after his parliamentary career.

I want to finish by putting on the public record some reflections about Sir James Killen which I asked Bill Hewitt to write when I heard of Sir James's death. I asked for some recollections of the times when the Young Liberal Movement was founded, and also of the famous 1961 campaign when the government of Australia hung by a thread and in which Sir James was successful. Bill Hewitt was his campaign director on that memorable occasion. If I may detain the Senate for just a moment, I will read onto the record Bill Hewitt's reflections on Sir James Killen:

Jim Killen became the Young Liberals' Foundation President in 1949. I met him when I joined in early 1952. He presided over the Metropolitan Zone that met each Thursday in Edward Street, the City. We marvelled at his depth of knowledge, his oratory skills and his tireless energy. The times were exciting—'An Iron Curtain has descended over Europe,' Churchill had said—and Jim attracted to him a galaxy of talent in the young members, many destined to enjoy political or legal careers. Guest speakers from a variety of professions and interests submitted to questions and challenges from members, often led by Jim himself. Debates, sometimes Debating Union fixtures, more often Young Liberal clashes against supporters of opposing causes, were always stimulating. Killen himself often participated in a one on one discussion—memorable among those is the night he debated and comprehensively defeated the President of the Fabian Society.

Even before his election in 1955, succeeding army minister Jos Francis in Moreton, Jim was a regular contributor to the *Bulletin* and an eager participant in election campaigns. Outside the Alliance Hotel in Spring Hill or the Wharfies' Tally Room were not places to hold street corner meetings for timorous Liberals. Not Jim! The sites were always prominent on the list and he took the fight to anyone who wanted to take him on.

Jim's great contribution to the Young Liberals was the organisation of the Young Liberal Winter School of Political Science held annually at Montville on the Queen's Birthday weekend for most of the 1950s. Barwick, Casey, Latham, Chester Wilmot and many other distinguished persons gave us a greater understanding of current issues. They were wonderful days! Under Jim's presidency, a manifesto to the Youth of Queensland was printed. These many years later, the principles stated stand firm.

In 1961, as Area Chairman for Moreton, past Young Liberal President and long-time Killen friend and supporter, I accepted the role of Campaign Director in Moreton for the forthcoming federal election. The impact of the 1960 mini-budget had been prolonged and severe. There were fears of some impact on the election results, although overall a feeling of optimism prevailed. Nevertheless, we campaigned hard in Moreton. Street meetings in the early evenings and Saturday mornings, distributions, booth manning, appeals and section voting filled the last three hectic weeks. Voting concluded at 8.00 pm and booth workers proceeded to the Killen Ekibin residence to enjoy a backyard barbecue and follow results. The heavens opened and we retreated into the house. At midnight it was pouring rain. The carpets were ruined and we were 2000 votes behind. As the week progressed and seats around the nation, including seven in Queensland, had fallen, the fate of the government depended on Moreton. The ensuing ten days were tortuous, but with a disciplined flow of QLP preferences and a small leakage of Communist preferences—the ultimate irony—Jim held the seat by 110 votes and he went on to reach impressive heights.

Our friendship prevailed, albeit in different spheres of government. It was my great privilege to propose his Life Membership of the Liberal Party in 1994. I likened his career to the life story of David Lloyd George, *Tempestuous Journey*. Happily Jim returned to tranquil waters and spent his twilight years in quiet contemplation.

Vale Sir James Killen: a great Liberal, a great Australian, a great Queenslander; a person whose values, standards and beliefs we would do well to emulate.