

Parliament

Some MPs should stay in the old House as museum pieces

The most telling argument in favour of keeping the present Speaker's chair of the House of Representatives in the old Parliament House when the parliamentarians move up the hill is that the status of the old Parliament House as a parliamentary museum will be reduced and usurped if it is bereaved of this crucial piece of furniture.

The more I think of this unanswerable argument the more it seems to me that the principle applied to this holy and historic pew, incorporating as it does some pieces of Benjamin Disraeli's toilet seat, the butt of the grouse-decimating Harold Macmillan's favourite arquebus and a plank from the rowing boat rowed by Rat in Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*, might well be extended to other ornaments of the old Parliament House.

There are several works of art which have such strong associations with the old Parliament that they should be allowed to stay there (and some, like Mr Albert Tucker's surreal depiction of our current Governor-General being attacked by pink flamingos which should be put in a cupboard and forgotten) and then there are several parliamentarians who would decorate such a parliamentary museum.

I do not say that to be cruel but because it seems to be the trend to incorporate living, and what I believe are called "hands-on" exhibits in modern museums and because there are some Members and senators who seem so appropriate to the old House that to remove them to the new, whizz-bang, space-age, meaningful and relevant and aware House would be an act of wrenching cruelty equivalent to kicking little old ladies out of the thatched cottages where they have lived for 99 years and making them live in high-rise apartments.

It is up to various Members and senators to volunteer to stay in the old House to perform this valuable function, but since some will be too modest to brag of their own suitability I will take it upon myself to champion some of them from time to time.

What, for example, of Senator Walters (Lib. Tas), whose quaint, indefinable charm seems appropriate to the charming other-worldly environment against whose wood-pannelled walls she has ricocheted her interjections for aeons?

Watching and listening to the senator yesterday, and enjoying, for the umpteenth time, her courageous refusal to allow logic or sequential thinking to interfere with anything she says, I was moved to think that she will be ill at ease in the new Parliament, like a koala taken from Australia to mope in a Nipponese zoo.

Senator Walters asked a question of Senator Ryan, the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister (as if such a statesman needed any assistance) on the Status of Women.

Senator Walters said she had heard there was a Government plan to investigate the way in which women are portrayed in the Australian media and, for a worrying moment, there seemed a danger that Senator Walters was about to say something supportive about her sisters and hence entirely out of keeping with her legendary reputation as a dry Tory untainted by any of the trends of this century.

But no, Senator Walters, wanted to know if Senator Ryan would investigate instead the portrayal of men in the media and in particular the portrayal of men who are womanisers in "a positive light".

While I racked my brain to think of who on earth the Senator had in mind and to think of any men in television advertisements who were portrayed in this way, (my mind turning to but quickly dismissing the vaguely suggestive Flick Man and the lothario in a white coat who seems to be inviting housewives up to his laboratory to see his "complete cleaning system") Senator Walters went on to reveal that she was speaking of our very own Prime Minister.

Senator Walters then read what is from memory the only disparaging passage in Ms Blanche d'Alpuget's hagiography of

WARDEN in the Gallery



the Prime Minister (soon to be made into a major motion picture starring Meryl Streep as Mr Hawke, her most challenging role to date), the passage which refers to Mr Hawke's "drunken bad temper", his "womanising" and "his outrageous propositioning of women when drunk".

Some government senators had a giggle at Senator Walters' expense and a giggle based, I fear, on boyish allegations that she was only disgruntled about this because she had never been the subject of one of those flattering propositions.

A bemused Senator Ryan, who must have wondered what on earth this had to do with the pretext for Senator Walters' question, said that in fact the investigation Senator Walters referred to was a response to a degree of unease expressed by women of all types and stations about the way in which women were portrayed in the media and especially in advertising.

Senator Ryan said that there were two areas of concern. They were the gratuitous use of women as sexual adornments to enhance products; those kinds of advertisements in which women dressed like Raiders wriggle on behalf of gaskets, panty hose and Pajeros. And then there was the use of women as caricatures of housewives; those kinds of advertisements which show women finding the same kind of fulfillment in choosing a margarine that their appalling families will eat without complaining as Dawn Fraser got from winning Olympic gold medals, or that Queen Boadicea got from fighting the Romans.

— IAN WARDEN

Government plans to handle extra tourists

The Government will hold urgent talks with the Australian Tourist Commission to work out how to provide transport for the expected two million visitors to Australia next year.

The Minister for Tourism, Mr Brown, told Parliament yesterday that he had discussed the problem with the Minister for Transport and Communications, Senator Evans.

He said that about five million visitors were expected to travel to Australia by the year 2000 and that Qantas was to maintain its half share of the market if it would need an enormous injection of funds.

Qantas would be flying 16 supple-

mentary flights a week in the peak period, and people would have the opportunity to take charter flights to Australia.

"Every effort will be made to see that not one passenger intending to come to Australia is disappointed," Mr Brown said.

He added that although the situation needed to be dealt with, the problem of "too many people" wanting to come to Australia was one that 157 countries around the world would like to have.

In the Senate, Senator Evans said the extra Qantas flights during the peak summer period amounted to an additional 137 international flights.

Laws to protect ozone layer due soon: Brown

Legislation implementing controls on the use of ozone-depleting substances would be introduced soon to Parliament, the Government said yesterday.

The Minister for the Environment and the Arts, Mr Brown, called on the Opposition to support the legislation, which he said was made more urgent by recent scientific tests showing a significant deepening in the ozone hole over the Antarctic.

Mr Brown said Australia last month became a

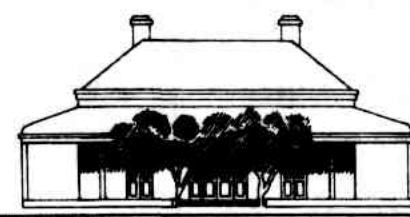
party to the Vienna convention on the earth's ozone layer which provided the framework for international action to protect the ozone shield.

After the finalisation of the protocol to the convention in Montreal on September 16, countries

now would take steps to control the emission of chemicals known to damage the layer.

The Government supported the protocol and would give early consideration to Australia becoming a signatory to it.

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NSW to decide soon on further woodchipping near Eden

By JEANNIE ZAKHAROV

The NSW Government is expected to make a decision soon on how much state forest in the Eden region will be made available for woodchipping to the Harris-Daishowa woodchipping project, the Minister for the Environment and the Arts, Senator Richardson, said yesterday.

The company is seeking the renewal of its export licence for 20 years from 1989, which has been strongly opposed by conservationists but supported by people in the area, part of the marginal Eden-Monaro electorate, who are wor-

ried about the loss of jobs. The Federal Government decides on the export licence but the NSW Government decides first what timber resources it will make available for woodchipping from state forests.

In particular, it will decide whether the Tantawangala and Coolangubra forests will be logged, areas which conservationists want turned into national parks.

Speaking in the Senate, Senator Richardson said the final environmental-impact statement on the Harris-Daishowa company's project was finished last December.

The NSW Government would make its decision on logging areas soon, and final recommendations to the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, Mr John Kerin, on an export licence would follow.

Senator Richardson was responding to a question from Senator Norm Sanders (AD, Tas), who had asked whether logging was being carried out in areas nominated for inclusion in the National Estate in the Eden region.

Senator Richardson denied that logging was taking place in areas on the interim list at present.

Sole parents' income 'will be protected'

The Minister for Social Security, Mr Howe, reassured yesterday sole parents affected by the new Child Support Scheme that their total income would be protected.

He was seeking to allay the fears of sole parents that they will be worse off financially after the scheme, which will force non-custodial parents to pay maintenance, is introduced.

"Sole parents are being frightened without cause," Mr Howe said. "Children of separated parents will be able to get adequate support."

The Age, Melbourne, quoted the Council for the Single Mother and Her Child yesterday as saying the Government seemed to consider the child-support scheme to be a way to save money rather than a help for single parents and their children.

3 major Bills to be introduced

Three major pieces of legislation dealing with Australia's handling of Nazi war criminals, speeding up the divorce process and making extradition between Australia and other countries easier, will be introduced this week.

Government officials said the Attorney-General, Mr Bowen, would take the Bills into Parliament after they had been ratified by caucus.

The War Crimes Amendment Bill will enable suspected Nazi war criminals uncovered in Australia to be tried by an Australian court. Under the current system their cases would be heard by a military court.

The Government is believed to have the names of some 240 to 250 Nazi suspects. Australian internal investigations are thought to have turned up 70 suspects, with the rest supplied by groups such as the Nazi-hunting Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Vienna.

The Family Law Amendment Bill aims to make inroads into the red tape surrounding divorces, in the hope of streamlining the process and leading to less heartache for all concerned.

Officials said the problem was especially bad in Sydney, where a backlog of cases forced some to wait up to three years to have an uncontested divorce processed.

The legislation would also make the division of property easier by allowing all the various matters associated with divorce to be heard in one court.

As the law exists now, some matters must be referred to other courts, such as the Federal Court, which again slows down the divorce process.

The Extradition (Repeat and Consequential Provisions) Bill is a significant part of the Government's "crime-busting" package. Mr Bowen will be enacting extradition cooperation arrangements between Australia and a series of other countries, making it easier to send criminals back to countries where they are sought.

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