

the same sort of thing, looking for a new life. Found a hard life. Hoped it would be better for the children. Each wave of new ones lifted up the last ones. A pioneering spirit in the countryside here. In America, too."

"I love America!" exclaimed the wife of the Australian bicentennial chairman who was sitting across the table. Her cheerful face had been hidden behind an enormous centerpiece of flowers. "When they sing 'New York, New York' I get excited with the best of 'em. It's our second home. It opens your eyes a bit, doesn't it, to get out of your own country."

"When you do, we look awfully small." The speaker was a dour bald gentleman sitting next to her, who might have been seventy, a plywood manufacturer who was rather obstructed by the centerpiece. For the moment, he held the floor. "Our GNP is about the size of the GNP of Los Angeles."

The blond woman said, "Australia's a village, same names always popping up."

The plywood man said, "Americans have got a head start and size and location and better education, and they have more self-confidence."

This resonated with the blond woman's male guest, whose name I never got in all the din and who now decided to talk to me. "We follow America. You regulate the stock market, so we do it, too. You change school curriculum. We do it, too. Don't think about it. Just do it."

"We'd have been better off to start with pilgrims and a revolution, instead of convicts," said the plywood manufacturer.

"We could have used an Alamo," suggested the car dealer. "We had Gallipoli," said the blonde's friend.

"Wouldn't it have been nice to have something in the center besides a red desert?" sighed the plywood man's wife.

The last of the fluffy Pavlova had been scraped from the plates, and the coffee and mints arrived.

The young blond woman suddenly turned to me and insisted, "I reckon I ought to have a quarter of a vote every time you elect a president. I should. After all, we sit here half our time waiting for American to do something. Our prime minister can't make a deal with Gorbachev. No one's wondering what Australia's trade policy will be. We have to depend on you."

"We already do," said the member of Parliament. "Do what?" asked the blonde.

"Depend on America. For defense. For things we really enjoy. Ask any of our school kids. I've done it. 'Where would you like to go on this planet?' and nine out of ten say, 'Disneyland.' The script for every Australian Tonight show was prepared by an American until recently."

The car dealer was saying to Honey, "We never can have anything like the things that you have in America. There're not enough of us Aussies. Disneyland and interstate highways—things that are ordinary to you—are a wonder to us. Space stations. All the museums in Washington, D.C."

"Another reason we can't is what's happening on Pitt Street," intoned the plywood manufacturer.

"The esplanade work?"

"The lack of it. Did you hear the workers complained about passersby harassing them for leaning on their shovels? And that yesterday the arbitration board awarded them a twenty-seven-cent wage increase because of the harassment!"

The blond woman's date said, "Watch them on MacQuarie Street, at the restoration, the workers smearing suntan oil. It would make a good frame for 'still life.' I watched them from my club window yesterday at lunch."

The car dealer said, "Sunday's Herald said United stewards works twice as much as Qantas stewards."

I said, "You see that on flights to Tokyo. The same Qantas crews going up on Monday and coming back on Thursday. And last month the Bridgestone Tire Company president told me his tire plants work three hundred forty-five days in Japan and America, and the Bridgestone plant in Adelaide works only two hundred ten."

The plywood man looked positively funereal. "We're unusual, all right. We pay double time for afternoon work, for overtime, for vacation. We pay for days off on a butchers' picnic and a bakers' picnic—everybody has a picnic and we pay for that. How are we going to compete with the rest of the world when we're on a picnic?"

Now the men were enjoying long cigars and the ladies were doing their best to survive the haze, and my watch said the dinner had already lasted three hours.

Honey said, "I see a lot of Japanese cars and American fast foods, but I don't hear much proper English. Is it because I'm American and just don't notice it?"

"It's because we've changed," said a lady across the table who up till now had been mostly listening. "We moved here in 1978. We decided Sydney winters were better than English summers, so we sold our house in London. Then, Australians still spoke of 'going home' to England. Now, no one talks about 'going home.' Australianness is coming out all round. We're more American, too, but mainly we're prouder of being Australian."

The wife of the member of Parliament said to Honey, "Read our children's books. I'll send you some for your children. Instead of stories about English hobgoblins, there are more about aborigine spirits and stories full of the sounds of frogs croaking and of the didgeridoo, hostile and growling like the bely of the earth."

Honey said, "The new Sheraton in Yulara was lovely, brown like the desert and built like sails."

The wife of the M.P. said, "Our Australianness came out all right when they tried to kill the brumbies in the Snowy Mountains. Put a stop to that."

Honey said, "We've seen a lot of Australia in David Williamson's plays and Mary Gilmore's poetry and Ken Done's bright splashy painting . . ."

" . . . and Fred Elliot's old marine watercolors even if he was drunk a lot," I added. The wife of the plywood manufacturer said, "And I believe we're learning that our harsh vast spaces and distance from everyone sometimes can be a wonderful advantage." Those were the first words she had uttered in nearly two hours.

From behind the centerpiece of flowers came the cheerful contribution of the wife of the bicentennial chairman. "Eight hundred ten of our eight hundred thirty shires have bicentennial committees."

The member of Parliament added, "At least now we toast the queen of Australia instead of the empire." His wife, on my right with white dress and earrings, asked me, "Have you tried the wicket grubbs, the moth larvae the abos used to eat? They're all the rage. Large and crispy and in all the best restaurants."

"No," I said, "but I have been to the beaches and I have thought about those convicts who were laughing at the aborigines standing there sandy and naked and greasy. Now, the descendants of some of those first-fleet convicts are on the same beaches, sandy and naked and greasy."

The member of Parliament had arranged himself into speaking position. "Remember. The English left us. We didn't leave them. They joined the Common Market. Gave us five years to adjust our exports."

This roused the car dealer, who said, "It goes back to the last war. Churchill said,

'Let them have Australia. We'll win it back.' Our boys were on the other side, fighting in North Africa and in Europe and the Japanese were bombing Darwin four times a day. The Americans saved us."

His wife, who was finishing off his mints, too, agreed. "Two Christmases ago there were ten thousand American sailors in Perth and some family took every one of 'em home for the holidays."

The lights dimmed and the official bicentennial film began. Trumpets heralded the arrival of the first fleet of "settlers" on Australia's Identity Day, January 26, 1788, and violins moved the story quickly along into the nineteenth century, and then lingered amid the excitement of the gold rush at Ballarat.

I whispered to the wife of the member of Parliament, "It didn't mention that the 'settlers' were convicts."

"No worries," she said. "The first bicentennial logo forgot Tasmania. Had to make a new one. But it's a good thing, our bicentennial. Helps us remember important things."

SENATE RESOLUTION 51—RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES AND PLEDGING TO OPPOSE EFFORTS TO REDUCE FEDERAL WORKFORCE PAY AND BENEFITS, ELIMINATE CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROTECTIONS, UNDERMINE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, AND INCREASE THE USE OF NON-FEDERAL CONTRACTORS FOR INHERENTLY GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. MARKEY, Ms. WARREN, Mr. CARPER, Mr. FRANKEN, Mrs. MURRAY, and Ms. CANTWELL) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs:

S. RES. 51

Whereas Federal agencies are tasked with the fundamental responsibility of serving to protect, promote, and preserve the rights and interests of the people of the United States;

Whereas the activities of the Federal Government encompass a broad range of activities, including—

- (1) conducting and supporting military operations;
- (2) protecting the homeland, including transportation, communications, financial, and other systems;
- (3) preserving and enhancing public health;
- (4) supporting the least fortunate;
- (5) defending the rights and interests of individuals and consumers;
- (6) enhancing and preserving the environment of the United States; and
- (7) promoting and facilitating commerce;

Whereas, to achieve these objectives, many Federal agencies conduct operations 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, and 365 days per year;

Whereas, according to the Office of Personnel Management, the Federal Government directly employs approximately 2,100,000 individuals to carry out the functions of the Federal Government;

Whereas, in the past 50 years, the population of the United States increased from approximately 198,000,000 individuals to more than 321,400,000 individuals, while the Federal workforce actually decreased from approximately 2,200,000 employees to approximately 2,100,000 employees;

Whereas the Federal Government functions most effectively, and the interest of the public is served, when the Federal Government offers fair compensation, including pay, health, retirement, and other benefits, to attract and retain qualified, diverse, and dedicated Federal employees;

Whereas, to ensure the integrity of the Federal civil service, it is essential that Federal employees have access to constitutionally protected due process rights and the ability to bargain collectively;

Whereas full- or part-time Federal employees should primarily be responsible for the activities and functions of the Federal Government;

Whereas the effective functioning of the Federal Government and the integrity of the civil service have been undermined by efforts to decrease pay and benefits and reduce rights with respect to due process and collective bargaining;

Whereas, through these efforts, Federal employees have already contributed more than \$180,000,000,000 to the reduction of the Federal deficit, primarily in the form of higher retirement contributions and foregone wages;

Whereas reductions to pay and benefits, the removal of collective bargaining rights, and the elimination or degradation of civil service due process rights would make it harder for the Federal Government to attract the best and brightest to public service;

Whereas reinstatement of the “Holman Rule” by the House of Representatives as part of the Resolution entitled “Resolution adopting rules for the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress”, approved January 3, 2017, presents a direct threat to the employment and compensation of Federal employees, will not result in substantial savings to the Federal Government, and serves primarily to undermine the morale of the Federal workforce;

Whereas the Federal hiring freeze ordered by the President on January 23, 2017, will impact the ability of the Federal Government to provide services across the United States, including the ability to process the payment of Social Security and other benefits and conduct workplace, food, and product safety inspections; and

Whereas it is in the interest of Congress and the United States for the Federal Government to be able to attract a diverse, dynamic, and dedicated workforce in order to serve the people of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate will deny the passage of any legislation, and challenge any action of the executive branch, that—

(1) erodes fair compensation for Federal employees, including by reducing wages, unjustifiably raising health insurance premiums, and unnecessarily or irresponsibly reducing the overall Federal workforce, such as an appropriations bill passed by the House of Representatives that contains a provision adopted by the House of Representatives under section 3(a) of the Resolution entitled “Resolution adopting rules for the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress”, approved January 3, 2017;

(2) undermines the value of employee retirement programs, including by reducing earnings on retirement savings, unjustly increasing employee contribution levels, or seeking to transition fully to a private-sector styled plan consisting solely of cash or deferred arrangements described in section 401(k) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986;

(3) diminishes the ability of Federal employee unions to effectively represent and protect the rights of employees;

(4) reduces fundamental protections for civil servants, including the right to due process; or

(5) increases the use of non-governmental contractors to perform inherently governmental functions.

SENATE RESOLUTION 52—AUTHORIZING EXPENDITURES BY THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. HATCH submitted the following resolution; from the Committee on Finance; which was referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration:

S. RES. 52

Resolved, That, in carrying out its powers, duties, and functions under the Standing Rules of the Senate, in accordance with its jurisdiction under rule XXV of such rules, including holding hearings, reporting such hearings, and making investigations as authorized by paragraphs 1 and 8 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee on Finance is authorized from March 1, 2017, through September 30, 2017; October 1, 2017, through September 30, 2018; and October 1, 2018, through February 28, 2019, in its discretion (1) to make expenditures from the contingent fund of the Senate, (2) to employ personnel, and (3) with the prior consent of the Government department or agency concerned and the Committee on Rules and Administration, to use on a reimbursable or non-reimbursable basis the services of personnel of any such department or agency.

SEC. 2a. The expenses of the committee for the period March 1, 2017, through September 30, 2017, under this resolution shall not exceed \$4,710,670, of which amount (1) not to exceed \$17,500 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, as amended), and (2) not to exceed \$5,833 may be expended for the training of the professional staff of such committee (under procedures specified by section 202(j) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946).

(b) For the period October 1, 2017, through September 30, 2018, expenses of the committee under this resolution shall not exceed \$8,075,434, of which amount (1) not to exceed \$30,000 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, as amended), and (2) not to exceed \$10,000 may be expended for the training of the professional staff of such committee (under procedures specified by section 202(j) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946).

(c) For the period October 1, 2018, through February 28, 2019, expenses of the committee under this resolution shall not exceed \$3,364,764, of which amount (1) not to exceed \$12,500 may be expended for the procurement of the services of individual consultants, or organizations thereof (as authorized by section 202(i) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, as amended), and (2) not to exceed \$4,166 may be expended for the training of the professional staff of such committee (under procedures specified by section 202(j)

of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946).

SEC. 3. The committee shall report its findings, together with such recommendations for legislation as it deems advisable, to the Senate at the earliest practicable date, but not later than February 28, 2017.

SEC. 4. Expenses of the committee under this resolution shall be paid from the contingent fund of the Senate upon vouchers approved by the chairman of the committee, except that vouchers shall not be required (1) for the disbursement of salaries of employees paid at an annual rate, or (2) for the payment of telecommunications provided by the Office of the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper, United States Senate, or (3) for the payment of stationery supplies purchased through the Keeper of the Stationery, United States Senate, or (4) for payments to the Postmaster, United States Senate, or (5) for the payment of metered charges on copying equipment provided by the Office of the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper, United States Senate, or (6) for the payment of Senate Recording and Photographic Services, or (7) for payment of franked and mass mail costs by the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper, United States Senate.

SEC. 5. There are authorized such sums as may be necessary for agency contributions related to the compensation of employees of the committee from March 1, 2017, through September 30, 2017; October 1, 2017, through September 30, 2018; and October 1, 2018, through February 28, 2019, to be paid from the Appropriations account for Expenses of Inquiries and Investigations.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEE TO MEET

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I have one request for a committee to meet during today's session of the Senate. It has the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to Rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committee is authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

The Committee on Finance is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Monday, February 6, 2017, in S-216, the President's Room of the U.S. Capitol, during a vote on the Senate floor, currently expected to occur circa 6 p.m.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my defense fellow, Captain James Hart, be granted floor privileges for the remainder of this calendar year.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the privileges of the floor be granted to the following member of my staff: Erin Robinson.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.