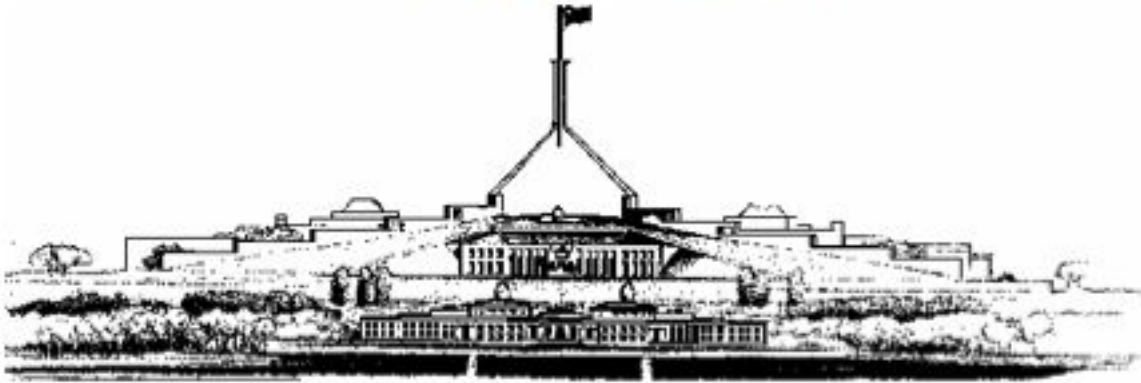




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE
PROOF
ADJOURNMENT
Wind Industry
SPEECH

Tuesday, 17 June 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

<p>Date Tuesday, 17 June 2014 Page 103 Questioner Speaker Madigan, Sen John</p>	<p>Source Senate Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Senator MADIGAN (Victoria) (23:20): I rise to speak tonight on the privilege of this parliament to operate without fear or favour. Members and senators have the right to undertake their duties freely to represent their constituents—it is the reason we are here. Any attempt to gag a senator or member of parliament, any attempt to exert influence by means of threat or intimidation is a breach of parliamentary privilege. This could incur the most serious penalties. Tonight I will speak of such an attempt by a high-profile Australian academic. This academic has a track record of making fun of people in regional and rural communities who are sick. He trades in scuttlebutt. He makes consistent attacks on anyone who makes a complaint against his network of corporate buddies. This academic has become the poster boy for an industry which has a reputation for dishonesty and for bullying.

I have a policy of playing the issue, not the man. Policies should always go before personalities. It is a personal credo, one I have practised all my life and specifically in my professional duties since my election in 2010. But since I have been investigating matters related to wind turbines for almost 10 years now I have recorded a consistent track record of vilification, denigration and attack by those on the other side of this debate. This is an industry that sucks hundreds of millions of dollars in subsidies from the public purse. This industrial power generation sector is an industry that masquerades under a false veneer of 'saving the environment'.

The wind industry is about one thing in this country: it exists to make people rich at the expense of many rural and regional Australians, their lives and their communities. My investigation shows it does not decrease carbon dioxide, it does not reduce power costs, it does not improve the environment. And this academic in question stands shoulder to shoulder with the wind industry companies and their colourful—and I use that term deliberately—executives. He promotes their products. He attacks their critics. He attends their conferences. He rubs shoulders with their henchmen. He is, in the words of the former member for Hume, Alby Schultz—who was a great campaigner on this issue, I might add—devoid of any decency and courage.

But, first, some background. My party, the Democratic Labour Party, has a long tradition of standing up

for principle in the face of enormous opposition. My party was born in conflict and forged in sacrifice. No other political party in Australia can boast that its parliamentary founders—51 in total, including 14 ministers and a state Premier—were prepared to sacrifice promising political careers to uphold the belief dedicated to freedom from undue and corrupt influence. The DLP was the first Australian political party to promote the vote for 18-year-olds. We were the first political party to call for equal pay for equal work and equity in education funding. We were the first political party to call for an end to the White Australia policy. And when our veterans returned from Vietnam, bloody but unbowed, DLP parliamentarians marched in their ranks while the rest of Australia turned their backs.

The DLP is a party of principle. We respect the dignity and the sanctity of life. From the womb to the grave, from the primary school to the factory floor, we see every life as unique and having intrinsic value. This is the cornerstone of the DLP; this is the foundation upon which I place every vote. That is why my attention has been turned to the wind industry for almost a decade now, even before my election to the Senate. I have seen firsthand the devastation it has caused communities. I have listened firsthand to the stories of wrecked families' lives: family farms destroyed and small outback areas torn apart. I have seen the empty homes in Victoria at Waubra, Macarthur, Cape Bridgewater and Leonards Hill. I have listened to country people tell me stories of corporate bullying and deceit, and of corporate fraud in matters of compliance. I have repeatedly called for one thing on this issue: independent Australian research into the health problems that wind farms apparently cause. That is all—independent research. It is a question of justice. It is about getting to the bottom of this issue.

So when I spoke with Alan Jones onto 2GB on 27 March, I made one simple point. I told Mr Jones we need to be careful about people who profess to be experts in this area. For the benefit of the Senate I repeat what I said in that interview:

... when we talk about people, using the title, using a title, such as Professor, let us be clear crystal clear here Alan. Most people in the community assume that when you use the title Professor, that you are trained in the discipline of which you speak. And I ask people,

look and check. What is the person making these proclamations about other people's health? What is the discipline they are trained in of which they speak? Because most people in the public assume when you speak of an issue of health, that you are trained in the discipline of which you speak, and there are people making pronouncements and denigrating people who are not trained in human health.

I stand by this statement. It is fair and reasonable to encourage people to look behind the blatant campaigning done by people like Professor Chapman of the University of Sydney.

But it is the statement that has prompted him to threaten me, utilising a law firm that was instrumental in the set-up of Hepburn Wind. He has threatened to sue me for libel over this statement unless I pay him \$40,000 plus costs. He has threatened to sue me for libel unless I organise an apology on the website of 2GB and an anti-wind farm website called Stop These Things. He has threatened me with contempt of parliament and a breach of parliamentary privilege if I raise these matters in the Senate. This reaction by Professor Chapman is something that my more experienced parliamentary colleagues have labelled a blatant try-on. It is another attempt by the wind industry to silence me, to scare me off and to intimidate me. It is a case of a Sydney university academic firing shots across the bow of the blacksmith from Ballarat. This is something he has done before now, tweeting about my position on this issue, always in the context of my background as a blacksmith—a background, I add, that I am enormously proud of. I remain one of the wind industry's most stubborn and outspoken critics. I will not be silenced. I will not give up on the injustice inflicted on people who claim to be impacted by living near turbines. I will not stop. My comments to Alan Jones were a series of rhetorical statements or questions about the assumptions members of the public should be entitled to make when somebody professes to be qualified to speak about an issue of public health. In other words, I was asking people to check that so-called experts on this issue are relevantly trained and qualified. It is a reasonable request. Our media and the internet are crawling with self-appointed experts. Daily we operate in a cacophony of opinion presented as fact.

Professor Chapman has been an outspoken critic of those who have dared to question the wind farm orthodoxy. But is Professor Chapman a medical doctor? Is he legally entitled to examine and treat patients? Is he qualified in acoustics or any other aspect of audiology? Is he a sleep specialist? Does he hold any qualifications in bioacoustics or physiology or neuroscience? How many wind farm victims has he interviewed directly? How many wind farm impacted homes has he visited? Professor Chapman claims to

receive no payment from the wind industry. How many wind industry conferences, seminars and events has he spoken at? How many wind industry events has he attended? Writing on the Crikey website in November 2011, Professor Chapman lamented how many conferences do not pay speaker's fees, and, when one conference organiser refused to pay his hotel bill, he withdrew. This is the same Professor Chapman who was photographed at a campaign launch in Melbourne by the Danish wind turbine manufacturer Vestas. Did Vestas pay your hotel bill and other costs, Professor Chapman? These are reasonable questions—they put in context his actions.

I take this opportunity to draw the attention of the Senate to the discovery of a 2004 PowerPoint presentation by Vestas employee Erik Sloth to the former Australian Wind Energy Association, now the Clean Energy Council. This demonstrated Vestas knew a decade ago that safer buffers are required to protect neighbours from noise. Vestas knew their preconstruction noise models were not accurate. I draw the attention of the Senate to a quote from the presentation that Vestas knew then that 'noise from wind turbines sometimes annoys people even if the noise is below noise limits.' This is confirmation that the global wind industry have known for more than a decade that their turbines impact on nearby residents. How can Professor Chapman reconcile his ridicule of the reasons numerous people have been forced to abandon their homes with the knowledge that the company initiating this campaign he attended knew a decade ago there were problems?

As a public health academic, Professor Chapman displays a lack of compassion for people who claim to be suffering debilitating effects from pervasive wind turbine noise. Professor Chapman's undergraduate qualifications were in sociology. His PhD looked into the relationship between cigarette smoke and advertising. I question his expertise, I question his qualifications and I question his unbridled motivation to promote and support the wind industry at the cost of people's lives, homes and communities. I question Professor Chapman's lack of interest in speaking with wind industry victims. Professor Chapman has a record of public denigration of victims. I refer to his tweet in February this year about 'wind farm wing nuts'.

One of the important things about this fight that is going on across rural Australia is that it is country women who are in the front line. Farmers' wives are running hard, fighting to save their families, fighting to save their homes, fighting to save their communities. It is often these women who suffer the most denigration. It is a roll call of honour—people like Mary Morris of South Australia; Dr Andja Mitric Andjic in Victoria; Sonya Trist, Joanne Kermond and Melissa Ware at

Cape Bridgewater; Colleen Watt in New South Wales; and, of course, the extraordinary Sarah Laurie in South Australia.

One more example: Annie Gardner and her husband, Gus, have lived and worked happily and healthfully for 34 years on their farming property in south-west Victoria. This came to a sudden halt in October 2012 when the first 15 turbines of the Macarthur wind farm began operation. In a recent letter to the AMA Annie said she is now able to get only two or three hours sleep each night in her own home. She writes: 'At the time of writing this letter, I am suffering terribly from the infrasound emitted by the 140 turbines located far too close to our property. I have a bad headache. I have very strong pains shooting up through the back of my neck and into my head. I have extremely sore and blocked ears and very painful pressure in my nose. I have pressure in my jaws and my teeth. My heart is pounding. I can feel the vibration going through my body through the chair like an electric charge. The infrasound in our bedroom was appalling. I could feel the vibration through the mattress and the pillow like an electric charge through my body. My head felt as if a brick was on it, and the pressure and pain in my nose was extreme.'

Annie Gardner would be what Professor Chapman would call a 'wind farm wing nut'. Writing on a green movement website earlier this year, Professor Chapman said protesting against wind farms is a fringe activity as if to suggest that the hundreds of people who attended and spoke at anti-wind farm forums I have held across my home state of Victoria and interstate are simply collateral damage. I cannot live with such a utilitarian view. As I said, even putting aside the highly questionable environmental, social and economic benefits of wind farms, every life matters and every life is important. I have sat in people's homes and kitchens. I know firsthand the suffering they experience from these industrial developments. Professor Chapman's attempts to gag me are the same as his attempts to silence those who object to the great wind farm scam. It is part of a greater attempt to silence open and transparent debate on this issue. It does no service to academia or to science already under much attack. It does nothing to advance discussion or progress.

Surely the big businesses behind this attempt—the entities who are funding it, like Bleyer Lawyers, who have worked for Hepburn Wind—should remember cases such as McDonald's and Gunns. For the environmental movement to attempt this shallow legal shooting of a mere messenger is poor judgement in my view. Bullies corporate or otherwise never get far. Surely it is apparent that companies that use the courts to silence opposition lose out in the court of public

opinion. To borrow words from the great human rights campaigner Malcolm X:

I'm for truth, no matter who tells it. I'm for justice, no matter who it's for or against.

If Professor Chapman proceeds with this action, I look forward to having him answer in court those questions I have raised here tonight—questions about his qualifications, his expertise and his links with the wind industry financial or otherwise. I look forward to his cross-examination under oath as equally as I look forward to mine. I say this: his action, if it proceeds, is doomed in a legal setting or elsewhere for one reason; it is not based on the truth.

Senate adjourned at 23:39