T-Shirt Threatens The System. Parliament Security Cracks Down.

Summary:
BRN CEO threatened with eviction from Parliament House .... for wearing a T-Shirt. Is this what has become of Australia? Have we forgotten about cherished rights and freedoms? Will the Speaker of the House Tony Smith adjust the rules regarding protest? If people can't protest peacefully what are their alternatives?

While NAB's CEO Phil Chronican was in the dock at the House Economics Committee someone complained about a T-Shirt. This is what happened next ....

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October last year this was OK. Well for all but one. Now there's a clamp down. If you can't protest peacefully .... what's

Bank Reform Now T-Shirt Causes a Commotion In Canberra

For about three years now the BRN T-Shirt has made regular appearances at Parliament House. Previously security told us the front was OK - it just displayed the movement's name - Bank Reform Now. Some had a worry with the back of the shirt where we call for the corruption and lies to stop. Over the last twelve months the House Economics Committee (HEC) welcomed the assistance of BRN

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supporters in and out of the shirt. Who can forget the famous photo of NAB's previous CEO Andrew Thorburn surrounded by T-Shirt wielding bank warriors in the middle of Parliament House (see link below)?

Last Friday - in the middle of the NAB House Economics Committee hearing - I stepped out of the Committee room and **two security officers told me to cover my shirt or I'll be thrown out.** I told them I've been wearing it at these hearings for over 12 months. I'd been told previously it was OK in the committee room but not in other parts of the building. Tim Wilson even commented at a previous hearing how good it was to see the T-Shirt wearing warriors in the room.

As you can imagine **I was fuming** about this attack on my rights. Perhaps the well meaning security chaps hadn't heard of the **UN Declaration of the right to wear whatever you bloody well like.** As we discussed the issue I kept thinking about Australia - "free country," "freedom of thought, speech and belief" - and other fundamental rights we supposedly enjoy.

The problem boiled down to there being a "rule" prohibiting protest in Parliament House. **So from security's point of view it wasn't a free speech issue, it was a protest issue.** They interpreted my wearing of the shirt as a form of protest that was prohibited.

I can understand the rule as far as disruptive protest goes. So of course there should be a rule against disruptive, noisy and violent protest. People shouldn't be bringing posters, flags and large banners into the building - **BUT a T-SHIRT..??**

I told the security chaps that I have no problem with them enforcing the rules but this rule is not consistent with our country's values. I think they agreed and understood my position and feelings. They had mortgages too and I mentioned that warriors are battling to see a fair banking system so that they and their kids could afford a home of their own.... they got it. I also pointed out that having the front of the shirt visible was not in anyway an issue because the whole HEC grilling is about bank reform .... **so what's the problem?**

The security chaps said I must zip up my jacket to cover the shirt. If I went back into the Committee room and took off my jacket they would grab me and escort me from the building.

Now I'm no troublemaker so of course I zipped the jacket up and went back into the room.

At the lunch break I made my feelings about this very clear to HEC Chairman Tim Wilson. He was very sympathetic. He is well know for his support of fundamental rights and freedoms. He said the only way to change the rule is for the Speaker of the House to be convinced of the need. Other warriors agreed - the way protests are being interpreted and the way this rule has been applied has crossed a critical threshold. **This is not in line with Australian values** and it is not consistent with life in a Liberal democratic nation.

During the lunch break Leon Ashby assisted me to contact the Speaker's rooms. The situation was explained and they arranged for the Serjeant-at-Arms to meet with us for a discussion. This too was interesting and informative. We talked about the free speech issue, the nature of the shirt and that me sitting quietly in the room with **a shirt calling for bank reform is hardly a protest in a meeting about bank reform.** The Serjeant made a very good point - "**what if there were more of you. Say ten or twenty sitting in the front row right in front of the Committee members?"** I agreed with him. Yep ... that would be a protest. Therefore though the lens of logic - **quiet protest of that nature should be allowed. The rule really does need to be changed.** He wished us luck with the Speaker - the Honourable Tony Smith.

The security chaps and Serjeant did not reveal who complained about my wearing of the T-Shirt on that morning but we suspect it was a low level bank staffer who was trying to be smart. Initially I was very angry but I have channeled that anger toward making something productive come out of it. Just like my anger about bank misconduct led to BRN in the first place. I am now pleased that this event has occurred because the **right to protest is fundamental and the Speaker of the House will be convinced to modify the rules.** Not by just one pissed off character in a black T-Shirt but hopefully by thousands of people sending him an email telling him to modify the rules about protest

in Parliament House.

Parliament is our House. Australians pay every person that works there. They work for us. If there is any place in the country where peaceful protest should be welcome that's it.

Let's unpack this situation a little more and think about some related issues.

If I took the jacket off and security came into the room I would have been sitting quietly in my chair. If I was stunned and just remained in my chair several guards would have dragged or carried me out of the building.

If other warriors were upset and began to use their phones to video the eviction **security would demand them to delete the video footage. If the warriors refused this demand their phones would be confiscated.**

In a public space if there is a disturbance people can make a recording. If a public official behaves properly then there is no problem with the recording being made. Later the recording would be deleted by the owner of the phone anyway as there is no reason to waste phone memory with an irrelevant recording. BUT if the public official did not act appropriately then the recording becomes significant evidence and should be kept. **The public official should not be able to have it deleted or make moves to confiscate the phone.**

Similarly this applies to journalists and whistleblowers. If they are exposing embarrassing government misconduct or corruption they mustn't be targeted with these sorts of heavy handed tactics of intimidation and harassment. Their phones and computers are their property. Property rights are also fundamental in a free country.

Don't forget we are in Australia in 2019. Not Stasi controlled East Germany or today's China. There is a reason much of the world has just celebrated the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The Serjeant said context was important too. What's the event? Who is there? How does the shirt's message resonate in that particular situation? This got me thinking. Yes - context is important. Let's say a group of activists in China decided to make an important point. They mount a campaign. Wearing a black T-Shirt will signify that you want the deaths in Tienanmen Square to be remembered as a push towards freedom in China. What does that mean? Well if one black shirted guy walks into a government building in China or through Tienanmen square before this protest group's aims are well known - nothing will happen. Once it is known - if twenty black shirted people walk into a public building Chinese security force will likely harass them, throw them out or arrest them.

This is creeping authoritarianism.

For a similar thing to be happening in Australia is a serious concern. **Aussies who are keen to protect our people's freedoms should take a stand right now.** T-Shirts making your views known and hopefully respected are OK ..... Molotov cocktails are not. **If peaceful protest is not allowed then violent protest will follow.** BRN has always encouraged peaceful and respectful mass action. There is no place for violence in a civilised society. In fact radical protesters are in part responsible for the government's crackdown. The Speaker and his political colleagues better appreciate the difference. **Peaceful protest must be respected and encouraged.**

Our government is attacking our right to protest in many ways. For example Treasury refused to publish the submissions it received regarding the **Cash Ban Bill.** What was the reason? They said it was an organised campaign. Well guess what? It is only organised mass action that can bring about reforms. Especially in a two party system where the parties are almost identical and dependent on donations from elite interests.

The good news is that well organised peaceful protest works. Treasury was convinced to publish the submissions just the other day by people protesting. That's why some politicians don't like well

organised protest. I'm pretty sure the Speaker of the House is not one of those.

I can very well understand that the Speaker wants everyone to behave properly in Parliament House. One of the security chaps pointed out that there are various rules that apply to the MPs and Senators too. Yes we do need rules. They just need to be appropriate. All Australians would understand that the Speaker wants certain standards from everyone in the building.

You can't allow people to behave badly or in a rowdy fashion. It should not to tolerated for people to yell & scream or be rude & obnoxious. I forgot to check with the security chaps whether the Senate and House of Reps chambers were exempt from the rules of appropriate behaviour.

Take Action Now To Protect Your Right To Protest

BRN and its supporters will now **encourage people to contact the Speaker.** We live in a democracy where certain rights and freedoms are cherished - see link below. People should be free to wear whatever they want to .... and let it be known what issues they are concerned about in a respectful and quiet way inside and outside of the Parliament. As long as the T-Shirt is not offensive anything goes. Bank issues / health issues / environment issues / whistleblower and journalist protections / homelessness - **people should not be censored especially in their Parliament.**

RIGHT NOW - Please contact Speaker of the House - the Honourable Tony Smith MP - (02) 6277 4000 / Tony.Smith.MP@aph.gov.au

The rules regarding protest must be changed. I have contacted some relevant people, including the Speaker, already. **Hopefully many of you do too.**

Maybe Tony Smith should read **Say it loud: Protecting Protest in Australia - a 2018 Human Rights Law Centre document** - attached below**.**

Also below - download the Peaceful Protest Campaign pdf - cut out the 12 pamphlets and give them out at work, at the gym, to friends and family. That's a great help to spread the word and change bad rules & laws. The right to protest is critical and pollies who play lip service to rights overseas but ignore Aussie's rights will be laughed out of office.

After the China scandal blew and two Aussie Pollies were banned from visiting China because of their stance on Human Rights Scott Morrison thundered - "we're an open democracy, we speak our minds as individuals and certainly James and Andrew have always been known for that, we'll always be who we are."

Once the rules are changed you can roll up to Parliament House in your very own BRN T-Shirt.

Aussie Pollies speak up to protect human rights ... in China..!!



Maybe they need to take more interest in Aussie rights & freedoms

File Attachments:

Attachment	Size
Say it loud: Protecting Protest in Australia - Human Rights Law Centre	1.36 MB
Download - 12 leaflets per page - cut up and distribute. That's how you change bad laws and rules.	225.1 KB

Related Links: Australia's Bill of Rights and Responsibilities
NAB Bank - Grilled Or Toasted?

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