The constitutional crisis of 1975 began formally when, on 16 October, the Senate deferred any vote on the Appropriation Bills (that is, the Budget) until the Whitlam Government agreed to submit itself to the people at a general election. Most observers had predicted the event, and pressure for it had built up inexorably over a year or so. The Labor Government had, by a series of errors, sackings, demotions and unpopular decisions, made the course easier to take and to justify.

In the previous chapter, I recounted how we had prepared ourselves, and been moved by our leaders, to the position where, as a political group, we were ready to agree to take this extraordinary and unprecedented course. In this chapter, I will set out the events as they unfolded during the first fortnight of the crisis, how they appeared to a backbench senator, how the pressure built up, how it was manifested, how the main protagonists seemed at the time to be presenting themselves to the public and how each was trying to justify his position and gain maximum support for it.

The first day of the first sitting week of the crisis period was Tuesday, 14 October, and I flew to Canberra on an early plane. There was suppressed excitement at the airport. Headlines shrieked the story of the Khemlani telexes and the story was carried in detail. I recorded: ‘Clearly the web of lies is tightening around Connor and Whitlam too.’
At our party meeting, Malcolm Fraser had trouble—which was unusual for him—getting and keeping silence to start the meeting. The excitement was palpable. He asked for discussion on Connor and the prime minister but not on an election. He invited any person with a particular view to come and see him. Then we went on to deal with legislation seriatim, after which Margaret Guilfoyle presented an education policy document. I then took Senate candidate Misha Lajovic with his wife, Tatjana, to lunch.

In our Senate party room, Reg Withers was calm and reasonable. Reg Wright was all for ‘action’ and for once made sense:

At question time I popped in an innocent ‘fishing’ question to find Govt tactics—they probably do intend to hold back the pension bills.

Finished estimates, played four sets of squash with Fred Chaney and then had dinner with Sid Sax. Had phoned home to find everyone very excited about a new bird.

Children have a way of getting their priorities right—the deferral of Supply was over within a month but the new bird lived with us for some years. It was a budgie but we solemnly called it Bob—short for Bob Hawke. It was, incidentally, an undistinguished budgerigar and never sang for us.

Rex Connor resigned that morning. There was only a brief statement made by the Government and our questions in the Senate were parried. I spoke on the Loans Bill for about half an hour after dinner and then went to see Fraser to offer him my support. I recorded: ‘Election is on!’

I reviewed some of the Connor papers for Carrick and concluded that Connor had been lying; I read and suggested alterations to the social welfare policy for Don Chipp, and did not get to bed until after midnight.

Wednesday, 15 October was the day of the formal start of the constitutional crisis of 1975, the series of events that culminated on 11 November in the dismissals of the prime minister and the Government and, on 13 December, in the landslide election of Malcolm Fraser and the Liberals.

I woke very early. My diary records: ‘Now quite ready and any doubts concerning proper procedure resolved. Phoned Jenny to warn her.’

Many years later I had a personal crisis when I had to resign from the Shadow Cabinet. But on that occasion too I phoned Jenny as soon as the crisis was upon me to bring her into the picture, to allow her to warn our two mothers and our children, and to get the views of family, all of whom were totally supportive of my position and my action. On that later occasion, Jenny joined me in Canberra; in 1975, we kept in touch by telephone.
John Carrick talked me through the likely procedures. I slipped out to see three home units and selected one in Lyons near the Phillip offices. That purchase was completed by the end of the year and we owned the unit until 1989, when we sold it to help finance the purchase of our apartment in Mosman.

There was a secret Senate party meeting at 9.15 am for which no notices had gone out. At this meeting, people expressed clearly their views on the imminent deferral of supply. Alan Missen, Don Jessop, Condor Laucke and Neville Bonner all expressed to the meeting their reservations about the course proposed.

After Senate question time, I finished my contribution to the Loan Bill and ended it with Cromwell’s admonition to the Long Parliament, repeated by Leopold Amery to the House of Commons during the debate that forced the resignation of Neville Chamberlain.¹ That quotation was picked up the next day in The Australian as follows:

You have sat too long … In the name of God, go, Labor is told.

The disgraced remains of the federal Government should take a line from Oliver Cromwell and get out, a Liberal senator said yesterday.

Senator P Baume (NSW) quoted what Cromwell said when dismissing the Long Parliament: ‘You have sat too long here for any good to have been done. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go.’

A day or so later, I received in the mail an anonymous typed comment above a copy of that item from The Australian. It said: ‘This was a splendid idea when first quoted by Duff Cooper to Chamberlain. It has now become an overworked political cliché.’

I noted at the bottom that someone seemed not to like me and, anyway, it was Amery and not Duff Cooper.

Labor speakers were enraged by some of our speeches (including mine) on the Loan Bill and took to us in their subsequent contributions. We had a joint parties meeting at 1 pm, at which Missen again spoke out but at which the others (including Jim Killen) just stated their views. Lynch took Missen out to Fraser’s office. I recorded: ‘I doubt they used rope + water + fire but they probably tortured him. He agreed to go along.’

A press conference followed the meeting—then a sense of let down. I recorded: ‘It’s here! It’s on!’

¹ Journals of the Senate—56th Session, 1975: 905.
When the time came for a vote on the Loan Bill\(^2\) in the Senate, we caught Labor out by moving to delay, rather than voting to defeat the Bill. We caught the press, too, with this unexpected tactic and Whitlam had to delay his press conference for a while. Withers announced our intentions in the Senate soon after 4.35 pm in the following terms:

The Opposition will attempt to delay this Bill and the Appropriation Bill (No. 1) and the Appropriation Bill (No. 2). I will delay them because we have decided that the people must be given a chance to express their will. The only way to force the Government to submit to the people is by this device. The Opposition is not rejecting the Budget. It is not taking action that will cause anyone to suffer. We will pass legislation providing social service and repatriation payments, State grants, and any other legislation of a similar nature. We will give that sort of legislation a speedy passage. Let there be no mistake. We are not cutting off the flow of money to the people. We are merely adopting the constitutional method of giving the people a choice. Immediately the Government agrees to hold an election the Opposition will pass the Loan Bill and the Appropriation Bills. There will then be no delay\(^3\) … In order to bring that about I move:

Leave out all words after ‘That’, insert:

this Bill be not further proceeded with until the Government agrees to submit itself to the judgment of the people, the Senate being of the opinion that the Prime Minister and his Government no longer have the trust and confidence of the Australian people because of—

(a) the continuing incompetence, evasion, deceit and duplicity of the Prime Minister and his Ministers as exemplified in the overseas loan scandal which was an attempt by the Government to subvert the Constitution, to by-pass Parliament and to evade its responsibilities to the States and the Loan Council

(b) the Prime Minister’s failure to maintain proper control over the activities of his Ministers and Government to the detriment of the Australian nation and people and

(c) the continuing mismanagement of the Australian economy by the Prime Minister and this Government with policies which have caused a lack of confidence in this nation’s potential and created inflation and unemployment not experienced for 40 years.\(^4\)

The amendment was agreed to using the fortuitous majority caused by the failure to replace Bert Milliner with a Labor-voting senator.

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\(^2\) Journals of the Senate—56th Session, 1975: 928.
\(^3\) Senate Hansard, vol. S66, 15 October 1975: 1,125.
\(^4\) Received from the House of Representatives on 27 August 1975; Journals of the Senate—56th Session, 1975: 885.
I dined at Maggies Restaurant in Civic with Alan Missen, Kathy Martin, Eric Bessell, Don Jessop and a friend of Missen’s. A note about that dinner appeared in a subsequent edition of the *National Times* newspaper—just emphasises how much on public show one is all the time in Canberra. Back in the Senate we had the then president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Bob Hawke in the gallery. He was certainly noisy and called out loudly; we thought he could have been drunk. We all chose to ignore him and the standing orders that regulate the behaviour of ‘strangers’; we did not want a major story about Hawke being tossed out of the Senate. What a day that was!

On Thursday, 16 October, we had one of those strange artificial days that make up part of parliamentary life. Here we were with a major crisis upon us, arguing in the Senate about supply for the Government—about its very survival—and then adjourning to hold a state luncheon for the Prime Minister of Malaysia, at which we moved into a ‘time bubble’ of truce, sitting together, and listening to formal and banal speeches (there was a general instruction to try not to drink too much at the luncheon). If I found the speeches hard to take, I have no doubt that Whitlam and Fraser found them harder to deliver. I sat near the pathetic Patrick Field, who told me he would stand as an independent at any election. I was also seated close to Race Matthews MP, who was ‘very brittle and brilliant’. The tension was getting to them, too. Later I made a good and strong attack on Rex Connor for 2WL.

During the morning some of our senators had, without warning, exercised their right to speak on the first reading of the Appropriations Bill (a particular Senate right under the Standing Orders of that chamber) and Bob Cotton was furious. We eventually got to the vote on the Appropriation Bill by late afternoon after excellent speeches from Greenwood and Wheeldon. The motion moved was in identical terms to that moved on the Loan Bill the previous day. We had to cross from side to side to vote. As we did so, I had to pass Don Grimes physically as he was passing the other way to oppose us. He called me a ‘cunt’ as we went past each other. I have recorded:

> McAuliffe called me a ‘liar’ and Wheeldon screamed, ‘Go, go, piss off, piss off.’
>
> The bitterness is more than palpable—it charges the atmosphere. There are no friends any more.

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Greenwood also tabled legal opinions from two learned counsel on the power of the Senate to reject Appropriation Bills and on the lack of power of the prime minister or Attorney-General to advise the Governor-General to give assent to any Bills that have not passed the Senate. These documents were important in the public debate then under way about the legality of what was occurring.

I missed the plane and therefore a Sydney function, and made it home by 9 pm. Someone had already talked to the press about Alan Missen holding out.

Friday, 17 October was a working day in Sydney. This was my first day in Sydney since the battle had formally been joined. The press was unfriendly. I heard from Chris O’Connell that the High Court had upheld the validity of federal funding of the Australian Assistance Plan (AAP). Terry Hillsberg spoke to me, too. He told me that my questions at the recent senate estimates had caused a lot of comment in the Department of Social Security. He said it was ‘favourable comment and some “fame” for me—especially on my knowledge of the AAP’.

At my regular Rotary meeting at the St Leonards Club, I got some inkling of the depth of the fears people held. My old friend John Dalton was incredibly agitated, saying, ‘It’s going to happen here. It’s going to happen here.’ His memory is of Europe in the 1930s. I wrote in my diary: ‘I do hope he is wrong.’

In the afternoon I chaired a session at the North Shore Hospital Reunion Week. The title of the seminar was ‘Permissiveness and the Media’. Mungo McCallum contributed and was terrible, and said Fraser had been drunk each night that week. I let it go; it was untrue as far as I know.

Freda Brown did well; Russell Prowse did well enough; John Singleton was unashamed Workers’ Party. After the session was over, I picked up Jenny and we went to the Hospital Dinner Dance. Harry Cumberland, a conservative senior surgeon at RNSH was worried about what Mungo had said about Fraser; I was amazed that he believed rubbish like that.

I heard of Fraser’s bad reception in Hobart that evening; for him, television was better than public rallies. I recorded:

I am depressed by the bitterness and tension—no fear or resiling—just depressed. Agree with Chris Puplick that we are moving to an American situation where only numbers count. Needed Daricon to sleep.

Daricon is the trade name for an anticholinergic agent, and the entry would indicate that I had troublesome epigastric pain. Jenny recalls that only during this time in my political life did I walk in my sleep.

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The weekend that followed was fairly typical of the period: some little time
for family and relaxation, more time for rallies and for work. On the Saturday
I worked in our garden, did some cleaning, got into trouble with Jenny for
trimming the wisteria (again), helped Ian to cover some of a model aeroplane,
and so on. Later we travelled to Wollongong to our good friends the O’Malleys
to help Sue celebrate her fortieth birthday. Sue’s sister Kerry was aggressive
about our course (but knowledgeable about what she was saying):

Very tired indeed on our way home to Sydney. No doubt it is getting to me a bit.
Whitlam is winning the battle of the press and public. Fraser needs to get away
from public to more private functions.

On Sunday morning, I went to the office with our dachshund Barnaby for three
hours’ work. I just could not afford to fall behind in routine work if I wished to
concentrate fully in Canberra on the constitutional crisis.

I then went out to Horsley Park in Sydney's far west with the dog to speak
to 200 Liberals at a barbecue in the rain. Again doing my reassurance act,
I recorded: ‘It’s up to Sir John Kerr—hope I’m right.’ I saw film of a Fraser rally
in Melbourne and felt better and more secure.

On Monday, 20 October, my neighbour Ken Perkins drove me to the North Shore
Medical Centre. He complained that:

[M]y dogs had upset his rubbish (‘impossible naturally’) and told me that we are
being done in over the present crisis. He does not help my self-doubts—after all
it is a balanced situation. Feel clearly Fraser needs now to get to TV and away
from large rallies where Labor disruption attracts the highlight.

Later that morning, still in Sydney, I did normal constituency things. In the
afternoon I went back to RNSH to open a new animal house for the Research
Institute. I had done my training and my doctorate there and was quite at home.

After some more work in the city, I flew to Canberra, worked in the office there
and then fell into bed.

On Tuesday, 21 October, we were back in the Parliament, back in the
confrontation and back in the midst of the unresolved constitutional crisis.
The mail was running against us but the press was less vocal, less knee-jerk and
more thoughtful. We had a revealing meeting of the joint parties. I observed:
‘A gathering of weak hearts needing reassurance. JMF [Fraser] good in face of
some puerile contributions. “Carry on. Be of good heart etc.”’

At the Senate party meeting, Ian Wood again wanted us to call some of his
witnesses but would not reveal in detail who they were or what it was they
might say if called. We had an unsatisfactory rally outside the Parliament; I got
two questions in at question time, had an interview with Merle Hurcombe and Charles Chambers about Sydney City Mission problems, and negotiated acceptable contributions for my column in the *AMA Gazette*.

We had a long scheduled meal with the Pharmacy Guild and learned that they had seen a draft health policy not yet seen by the relevant backbench committee of the parliamentary Liberal Party. This was an unfortunate discourtesy on the part of our front bench, and, sadly, this kind of thing happens still. After dinner I spoke in defence of pharmaceutical companies in a debate on the National Health Bill No. 3. It was well received on our side, with compliments from Carrick, Reg Wright, Bonner and Webster. Labor hated it; they shouted and yelled.

Fraser saw the Governor-General at Yarralumla that evening and Sir Robert Menzies issued a good statement.7 I wrote: ‘This will be interesting. Will watch the papers in a.m.’

The Appropriation Bills were returned the next day with the assertion that the Senate lacked the power to do as we were doing. The words of the motion were:

> That the House of Representatives having considered Message No 276 of the Senate asserts that the action of the Senate in delaying passage of the Appropriation Bill (No 1) 1975/6 and the Appropriation Bill (No 2) 1975/6 for the reasons given in the Senate resolution is not contemplated within the terms of the Constitution and is contrary to established constitutional convention, and therefore requests the Senate to re-consider and pass the Bills without delay.8

There was then a bitter argument in the Senate when we sought time overnight to consider the message and prepare our rebuttal. The procedure we used to achieve delay was to adjourn debate on a motion: ‘that resumption of debate [on the Government motion] be an Order of the Day for a later hour this day.’

We finally had to vote and adjourn that procedural motion, after which the Government moved again to bring on the matter and we amended that motion so that, in the end, it was held over until the next day. To achieve all this required seven bitter and time-consuming divisions. It was a taste of what was to ensue in the next several weeks.

It was on this day, too, that the Leader of the Government, Senator Ken Wriedt, advised the Senate that he had become Minister for Minerals and Energy, that Rex Patterson had become Minister for Agriculture and that the then young Paul Keating had become Minister for Northern Australia.

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On the next day, 22 October, I dined with Stephanie and John Jorritsma at their home; it was all very pleasant. They had been friends since I had attended Stephanie’s father, Douglas, during my doctoring days. I was also trying to be a father—something that is more difficult when one is 300 kilometres from one’s family. Sarah and I had an argument by phone; she wanted (at the age of 10) to attend a concert by Suzi Quatro and our conversation was acrimonious and difficult. I compromised by offering her a record by the same singer. I saw Sheila Kellock from Tony Street’s office, who was angry and depressed about our deferral of the Budget Bills.

In the Senate we voted eventually to assert the rights of the Senate and to send the Appropriation Bills back to the House of Representatives. The Pension Bills about which I had been worried finally arrived and we took them straight through all stages. The actual motion moved by Senator Withers on the Appropriation Bills was as follows:

Leave out all words after ‘That’, insert:

the Senate having considered Message No. 380 of the House of Representatives asserts:

(a) That the action of the Senate in delaying the passage of the Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 1975/6 and the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 1975/6 for the reasons given in the Senate Resolution as communicated to the House of Representatives in Message No. 276 is a lawful and proper exercise within the terms of the Constitution of the powers of the Senate.

(b) That the powers of the Senate are expressly conferred on the Senate as part of the federal Compact which created the Commonwealth of Australia.

(c) That the legislative power of the Commonwealth is vested in the Parliament of the Commonwealth which consists of the Queen, the Senate and House of Representatives.

(d) That the Senate has the right and duty to exercise its legislative power and to concur or not to concur, as the Senate sees fit, bearing in mind the seriousness and responsibility of its actions, in all proposed laws passed by the House of Representatives.

(e) That there is no convention and never has been any convention that the Senate shall not exercise its constitutional powers.

(f) That the Senate affirms that it has the constitutional right to act as it did and now that there is a disagreement between the Houses of the Parliament and a position may arise where the normal operations of Government cannot continue, a remedy is presently available to the Government under section 57 of the Constitution to resolve the deadlock.
(2) That the Senate reaffirms to the House of Representatives its resolution set out in Senate Message No. 276 in respect of each of the Appropriation Bills, namely: That this Bill be not further proceeded with until the Government agrees to submit itself to the judgment of the people, the Senate being of the opinion that the Prime Minister and his Government no longer have the trust and confidence of the Australian people because of—

(a) the continuing incompetence, evasion, deceit and duplicity of the Prime Minister and his Ministers as exemplified in the overseas loan scandal which was an attempt by the Government to subvert the Constitution, to by-pass Parliament and to evade its responsibilities to the States and the Loan Council

(b) the Prime Minister’s failure to maintain proper control over the activities of his Ministers and Government to the detriment of the Australian nation and people and

(c) the continuing mismanagement of the Australian economy by the Prime Minister and this Government with policies which have caused a lack of confidence in this nation’s potential and created inflation and unemployment not experienced for 40 years.

(3) That the foregoing Resolutions be transmitted to the House of Representatives by Message. 9

These messages—in identical or almost identical form or meaning, or in response to responses to messages—passed backwards and forwards across Kings Hall daily, between the Senate and the House of Representatives, during the remaining weeks of the crisis.

Thursday, 23 October, was the third day of this second crisis sitting week. My diary records:

Feel quite depressed—am getting a lot of ‘iron in the spine’ advice but no tactics. Either the Governor-General will side with Reps or with Senate (and that will settle the issue) or one side will back down without the Governor-General. Peter Durack supports me and so does Ken Anderson that the Governor-General will need to be supported … Am holding on.

I recorded a radio segment for Wollongong, finished drafting letters for Fraser, presented a petition and asked some questions. I took the Israeli Ambassador Michael Elizur to lunch at the Lobby Restaurant, which was an awful rush at that hour. I had been worried about some anti-Israel moves within the Inter-Parliamentary Union (the international umbrella parliamentary association)

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but he advised me not to press the matters. Bruce Lloyd and I met Harry Jago and people he had brought up on behalf of the Proprietary Association. Then Jenny arrived and we saw and finally settled on a unit to buy.

Missed a party meeting. I am to do an urgency motion next week with Bonner and Bessell on unemployment. Apparently Withers and Greenwood had a real ding-dong in the meeting—Marriott said please go elsewhere—it all arose out of an urgency motion in the morning.

After a rest, we went to a reception at the Israeli Embassy and then to a parliamentary reception for Princess Margaret. We sighted the princess only distantly. We saw and spoke to Malcolm and Tammie Fraser at supper.

And so another parliamentary week finished. On Friday, 24 October, Jenny and I flew to Sydney on the 7 am plane; looking back, I realise just how much she must have hated getting up so early. We got home to Gordon by 8.45 am and I raced off immediately to a scheduled meeting of our senate standing committee only to discover, on arrival, that the meeting had been called off and neither Naomi nor I had been told. Eventually, I went to Rotary and found them more supportive and more receptive to encouragement than they had been one week earlier. Chris Puplick records in his own diary that he and I spoke at length about the current situation and that he agreed with my assessment ‘that things are on the way up’.

Granny is feeling the strain—aren’t we all?—everyone is a bit short. Labor rally today in Sydney. Sarah says she will ‘vote’ Labor—she is more aware at ten years than many at adult age and I listen with respect to her views. Labor PR is based on lies and is very effective.

Rocky McEwin informs me of projected very successful conclusion to Medibank arrangements with New South Wales.

On Saturday, 25 October, I attended a meeting of childcare associations representing Malcolm Fraser and debated Labor MP John Armitage. During this day, I saw state Liberal MP Steve Mauger, my diary recording: ‘Argued with Steve Mauger about the significance of John Waddy being refused re-endorsement. Mauger was angry and unresponsive. Where is this kind of inward liberalism going?’

The papers contained a story in which Jim Cairns asserted that Whitlam was lying. I recorded: ‘This is the kind of break we needed. This could, just could, open the nut.’

My brother Stephen and his children visited to play with models for a couple of hours and then Jenny and I went to dinner with Russell and Helen Price.
Sunday, 26 October was another mixture of family and political activity. I spent the morning with the children but in the afternoon attended a rally. It was quite a rally—there were 20,000 people at Randwick Racecourse. It was well done and a credit to Alan Viney and Jim Carlton. From there I flew to Melbourne to attend a fundraising event for the Jewish Welfare and Relief Society. John Seleznikov, who met me at the airport, was Labor but most friendly and courteous under the difficult circumstances created by events in Canberra. Because of spending Sunday evening in Melbourne, I had to catch a dawn plane back to Sydney on Monday, 27 October to see my patients. Later I lunched with Professor Bob Walsh, John Morris, Helen Bashir and Gordon Archer. We discussed problems associated with the availability of blood-clotting factors and I arranged to have some questions prepared for the Parliament.

I went home early with Chris Puplick and slept for an hour before taking Sarah up to Bruce Glass; she was just not well and I did not know why. After that I went to the Wentworth for dinner with the Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes Association, with Richard Thompson in the chair and accompanied by his wife, Kim: ‘Gave a very political speech. We were stiffening people’s backbones.’

On Tuesday, 28 October, I returned to Canberra for the third sitting week of the supply crisis. The stakes had increased progressively, the community was more and more polarised and there was less and less room for any compromise. I knew before I reached Canberra that this would be another week of high drama and of the unfolding of great events:

Enormous amount of mail, almost all against us. The party meeting was disorganised and slightly less direction to it. Ian Wood hinted that he might vote for Supply ‘if we did not do things better’. I sneered at him and asked him to be more positive: he was not happy.

The strain is now starting to tell. Everyone is edgy, tired, and on a hair trigger. Senate party meeting concerned with Khemlani—should he appear or not. Left unresolved until we got more detailed information.

Ian Wood then failed to appear for two divisions on the Loan Bill. We think he slept through—I believe him this time. After all he is a very old man.

I went to dinner with Kathy Martin, Fred Chaney (whose birthday it was) and Alan Missen, Eric Bessell, Peter Sim, at the 19th Hole Restaurant. We also saw Tony Street dining with Sheila Kellock and Les Johnson and Reg Bishop dining together.

Felt very tired, worried and flat.

Wednesday, 29 October was a very difficult day for me. It began with another senate party meeting where we agreed on some procedural matters. Rumours were flying that certain vital telexes were available in Sydney—at a price. It was early in the day that some trouble occurred for me. When Labor senators began to present petitions identical to one I had presented earlier in the week, Ivor Greenwood took what I described as ‘a very evil point of order’. He drew attention under Standing Order 87, operating at that time, to the fact that a particular petition referred to matters (namely, the Appropriation Bills) on the notice paper and for that reason should not be received.

Alan Missen objected, pointing out that petitions on family law had been received without objection during debate on the Family Law Bill a few months earlier. He also made clear that the point of order was a personal one and not an Opposition view. I spoke on the same point to observe that an identical petition had been received without objection from me just a day or two earlier.11 I joined Missen in opposing the point of order and received ‘Hear! Hear!’ from all around the chamber.

The press was hypersensitive to any crumb, any small event, and reporters were ready to blow anything out of all proportion. So it was that I was then besieged by reporters asking if my objection to Greenwood’s point of order meant I might be signalling personal distress about deferral of the Appropriation Bills. They really were clutching at straws and I told them so. Nevertheless, Fraser was asked on the ABC program *This Day Tonight* about Baume and Missen attacking Greenwood.

In order to clarify my own mind, I saw Alan Cumming-Thom, the Clerk Assistant, and received assurances that one could reject one only of the Appropriation Bills. He went further and assured me that one could restore an Appropriation Bill to the Notice Paper for a second vote, which was an interesting possibility. He promised to prepare for me some words that might form the basis of an address to the Governor-General from the Senate inviting him to intervene and determine the crisis. I thought it could be ‘a’ or ‘the’ way out.

I attended a Rotary meeting at Woden where all the members were worried by events and by the crisis. I reported:

> Worked at the House to 10pm. Saw Reg Withers on the way out. He was furious with his colleagues, possibly over Khemlani. He too is tired. Shared a car home with George Georges—he is worried. Perhaps Labor will crack. My ulcer hurts and I am tired.

I slept better that night but then found no access to breakfast at the Parliament: ‘The bastards are contracting all services.’

It was a quiet day, although everyone was very tense in the chamber and there was a rather ugly flare-up between James McClelland and Jim Webster in which Webster uttered an aside inaudible to most of us but heard by McClelland, who responded, ‘I will fix you for that’.12 ‘Ian Wood threatened again to cross the floor—he is tricky and irrational. Demands we do things his way.’

I got out of Canberra on the evening plane and returned to Sydney. The next morning, I took a car at dawn and caught an early plane to Dubbo. I went to radio station 2DU, having travelled with the station owner, Janet Cameron, on the plane. I recorded some segments with John Mason and then inspected local industries and the Western Plains Zoo.

Large Liberal lunch—spoke very forcefully (although with low volume) speech intended to assist people to stand firm. Amazed myself. Very well received.

I flew on to Bathurst and attended a dinner for 130 people at which I spoke on the same subjects and with the same aims of stiffening people’s backbones. Misha Lajovic was there and spoke well.

At the end of October the constitutional crisis was well and truly joined and was gripping all political cognoscenti in Australia. There was still no sign of either side backing down; no clear sign of the likely winners and losers. It was a titanic struggle in which I was doing what I could to keep our community and branch supporters with us. It is a well-recorded feature of that time that all political meetings were well attended and all parties experienced great upsurges in interest and participation. The Liberal Party certainly displayed these features and I was frantic in Canberra as a member of the Senate, in the community as a busy Liberal, and at home trying to be a father and husband.
