

Australian Letters Disprove Palace “Collusion” in 1975 Dismissal of Prime Minister



Nova Scotia-reared monarchist Mitch Ramsay-Mader

BY MITCH RAMSAY-MADER

Mitch Ramsay-Mader is a town planner who works within local government in Melbourne, Australia. He grew up in Sydney, Nova Scotia and is a member of the Monarchist League of Canada.

Supporters of the monarchy achieved a significant win in a recent Australian High Court challenge which resulted in the release of previously-classified letters between former Governor-General Sir John Kerr and Buckingham Palace. The action was launched by supporters of the Australian Republican

Canada’s purely Westminster system of government. In Australia, the party that controls the most seats in the lower house governs, but the elected Senate is an active force and is by no means bound to support legislation forwarded by the lower house for approval. In 1975, the opposition-controlled Senate refused to allow supply (the funds required to undertake government), which resulted in severe deadlock, with neither government nor the opposition agreeing on a remedy. Eventually, the Governor-General was left with no choice but to dismiss

tures the mood of this very controversial period.

Despite the fact that the dismissal took place only to allow an election, conspiracy promoters had long suggested that other forces were at work in Whitlam’s downfall, who was and remains by far the most left-wing prime minister in Australian history. One ARM theory alleged intimate involvement by the Palace to ensure removal of the radical prime minister, thus promoting the notion that the monarchy allowed unelected ‘foreign’ powers to interfere with Australia’s internal affairs.

Of course, anyone with an understanding of our constitutional monarchy – the principles of which are the same in Australia as they are in Canada – knows that neither the Palace nor Her Majesty would ever involve themselves in such a plot. Moreover, the Australian Constitution does not provide such powers to Her Majesty; reserve powers relating to the dismissal of a prime minister are given only to the Governor-General, even when Her Majesty is present in Australia.

Not surprisingly, the letters released by the National Archives confirmed that not only did the Palace have no involvement in the dismissal, but also that the Governor-General did not even inform the Palace prior to doing so. His Excellency took the decision on his own, in accordance with the powers delegated to him in the Constitution. The republicans did attempt to manipulate what the content of the letters meant, but most Australian public and media rejected these attempts at blatant manipulation of the facts, and the whole episode concluded by injuring the republican cause in this country.

In the end, the Republicans spent a considerable sum attempting to have these letters released; however, the real beneficiary was the Crown and the monarchist movement in Australia. The truth is that, whilst controversial, the Governor-General and the Queen acted absolutely constitutionally; nor was there evidence or any conspiracy to unseat Mr Whitlam – a fact that even Mr Whitlam himself acknowledged later in life. The entire episode, conspiracy theories and all, can now be put to bed and the nation can move on, confident in its system of constitutional monarchy; a very happy outcome.



Official Secretary to the Australian Governor General reads proclamation dismissing Whitlam (listening, behind left) on Parliament House steps, 1975. Recently-released documents show Queen acted in accord with the Australian Constitution and played no part in the dismissal.

Movement (ARM) who believed that the letters contained evidence of Palace collusion in the 1975 dismissal of former Australian prime minister Gough Whitlam. In fact, their contents disproved completely the republican conspiracy theories.

In 1975, Australia was stuck in parliamentary deadlock between the House of Representatives, controlled by Mr Whitlam’s Labor Government and the Senate controlled by the opposition Liberal Party, led by Malcolm Fraser (an interesting Canadian connection exists here as Mr Fraser’s grandparents were Scottish Gaels from Pictou, Nova Scotia). The Australian Parliament is a combination of the Westminster and American systems, often dubbed ‘Washminster’, and differs from

the prime minister after Whitlam refused to advise a full election of both houses in order to allow voters to decide.

When the Governor-General dismissed Whitlam, he appointed Fraser as caretaker prime minister on condition that he would immediately request the dissolution of both houses of Parliament and call an election – which is what happened. Fraser and his Liberals were returned by the Australian people by a large majority. The dismissal is best remembered for the line spoken by Whitlam on the steps of Old Parliament House immediately following his sacking in which he said, ‘well may we say God save the Queen, because nothing will save the Governor-General,’ which cap-

