

LAWS OF FIJI

CHAPTER 5

PARLIAMENTARY POWERS AND PRIVILEGES

CHAPTER 5

PARLIAMENTARY POWERS AND PRIVILEGES

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(Act No. 26 of 1965.)

AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE POWERS AND PRIVILEGES OF
*PARLIAMENT.

[26th November, 1965]

PART I-PRELIMINARY

Short title

1. This Act may be cited as the *Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act.

Interpretation

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires-
 - t"Clerk" means Clerk to the House of Representatives or Clerk to the Senate as the context may require, and where not so defined, means the Clerk to either House;
 - "committee" means any standing, sessional, select or other committee of the *House of Representatives or the Senate;
 - t"House" means either House of Parliament;
 - "journals" means the minutes of the *House of Representatives or the Senate or the official record of the votes and proceedings thereof;
 - "member" means any member of *either House of Parliament;
 - t"officer" means an officer of Parliament and includes the Clerks of both Houses or any public officer authorised in writing by the Speaker or President or any person acting within the precincts of Parliament other than when serving a summons under the provisions of subsection (3) of section 2 under the orders of the Speaker or President and includes any police officer on duty within the precincts of Parliament;
 - f"Parliament" means the Parliament of Fiji as defined in the Constitution;
 - "precincts of *Parliament" means the chamber and offices of the *House of Representatives and Senate and any places provided for the use or accommodation of strangers, members of the public or representatives of the press and includes, while *either House is sitting, and subject to

ⁿ Amended by Order 8th October, 1970.
Inserted by Order 8th October, 1970.

any exceptions made by direction of the Speaker or President, the entire building in which the chambers of the *two Houses are situated, and any forecourt, yard, garden, enclosure or open space adjoining or appertaining to such building and used or provided for the purposes of *Parliament;

"President" means the President of the Senate and includes any other member when such other member is presiding at a meeting of the Senate;

"Speaker" means the Speaker of the *House of Representatives and includes any other member when such other member is presiding at a meeting of the *House of Representatives;

"Standing Orders" means the Standing Rules and Orders of either House of Parliament for the time being in force;

"stranger" means any person other than a member or an officer of either House of Parliament.

PART II-PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES

Immunity from legal proceedings

3. No civil or criminal proceedings may be instituted against any member for words spoken before, or written in a report to, *either House of Parliament or to a committee thereof, or by reason of any matter or thing so brought by him by petition, Bill, motion or otherwise.

Freedom from arrest

4. No member shall be liable to arrest-
- (a) for any civil debt whilst going to, attending at or returning from a sitting of *either House of Parliament or any committee thereof;
 - (b) within the precincts of *Parliament while *either House of Parliament or a committee is sitting, for any criminal offence without the consent of the Speaker¹¹ or the President, as may be appropriate.

Service of process

5. No process issued by any court in the exercise of its jurisdiction shall be served or executed within the precincts of *Parliament while *Parliament is sitting or through the Speaker, the President, the Clerk or any officer of *Parliament.

*Entry to *Parliament*

6. No stranger shall be entitled, as of right, to enter or to remain within the precincts of *Parliament.

*Regulation of admission to *Parliament*

7.-(1) The Speaker is hereby authorized to issue such orders as he may in his discretion deem necessary for the regulation of the admittance of strangers to the precincts of the *House of Representatives.

" (2) The President is hereby authorized to issue such orders as he may in his

¹¹ Amended by Order 8th October, 1970.

Inserted by Order 8th October, 1970.

^o Amended by Act 14 of 1975.

[·] Amended by Act 24 of 1976.

discretion deem necessary for the regulation of the admittance of strangers to the precincts of the Senate.

(3) Copies of orders made under this section shall be duly authenticated by the Clerk to the House of Representatives or Clerk to the Senate, respectively and exhibited in a conspicuous position in the precincts of *Parliament, and such copies when so authenticated and exhibited shall be deemed to be sufficient notice to all persons affected thereby.

Order of withdrawal

8.-(1) The Speaker may at any time order any stranger to withdraw from the precincts of the *House of Representatives.

'(2) The President may at any time order any stranger to withdraw from the precincts of the Senate.

Exclusion of suspended member

9. A member who has been suspended from the service of *either House of Parliament shall not enter or remain within the precincts of *Parliament whilst such suspension remains in force, and if any such member is found within the precincts of *Parliament in contravention of this section he may be forcibly removed therefrom by any officer thereof.

PART III-EVIDENCE

Power to order attendance of witnesses

10. The *House of Representatives or the Senate or any committee may, subject to the provisions of sections 15 and 17, order any person to attend before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or before such committee and to give evidence or to produce any paper, book, record or document in the possession or under the control of such person.

Attendance to be notified by summons

11.-(1) Any order to attend to give evidence or to produce documents before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee shall be notified to the person required to attend or to produce the documents by a summons, in such form as may be prescribed, under the hand of the Clerk to that House issued by the direction of the Speaker for President or, in the case of a committee, by the chairman and so described on the face of such summons. Every such summons, if purporting to bear the signature of the Clerk to that House, shall be deemed prima facie to be lawful and to be issued by the direction of the Speaker for President or the chairman, as the case may be.

(2) In every summons under subsection (1) there shall be stated the time when and the place where the person summoned is required to attend and the particular documents which he is required to produce, and the summons shall be served on the person mentioned therein either by delivering to him a copy thereof or by leaving a copy thereof at his usual or last known place of abode in Fiji with some adult person; and there shall be paid or tendered to the person so summoned, if he does not reside within four miles of the place of attendance specified in the summons, such sum for his expenses as may be prescribed.

Amended by Order 8th October, 1970.
Inserted by Order 8th October, 1970.

(3) A summons under this section may be served by an officer of *Parliament or by a *Police officer.

Power to issue warrant to compel attendance

12.-(1) If a person to whom a summons under section 11 is directed does not attend before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or the committee at the time and place mentioned therein, the Speaker or President may, upon being satisfied that the summons was duly served, or that the person to whom the summons is directed, wilfully avoids service, direct the Clerk to that House to issue a warrant, in such form as may be prescribed, to apprehend him and bring him, at a time and place to be stated in the warrant, before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or committee.

(2) A warrant issued under this section shall be executed by a *police officer.

(3) The Speaker or President, on directing the issue of a warrant under this section may, if he thinks fit, by ordering an appropriate endorsement on the warrant, direct that the person named in the warrant be released after arrest on his entering into such a recognizance before a court for his appearance before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or committee as may be required in the endorsement.

(4) Every warrant issued under the provisions of this section and every endorsement upon such warrant shall, if purporting to bear the signature of the Clerk to that House, be deemed prima facie to be lawful and to be issued or made under the direction or order of the Speaker or President.

Witnesses may be examined on oath

13. The *House of Representatives or the Senate or any committee empowered to order the attendance of witnesses may require that any facts, matters and things relating to the subject of inquiry before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or such committee be verified or otherwise ascertained by the oral examination of witnesses and may cause any such witnesses to be examined upon oath, which the Clerk to that House or the chairman of the committee or other person specially appointed for that purpose by the *House of Representatives or the Senate or by such committee is hereby authorised to administer.

Objection to answer question or to produce papers

14.-(1) Subject to the provisions of section 15, where any person ordered to attend to give evidence or to produce any paper, book, record or document before the *House of Representatives or the Senate refuses to answer any question that may be put to him or to produce any such paper, book, record or document on the ground that the same is of a private nature and does not affect the subject of inquiry, the Speaker or President may excuse the answering of such question or the production of such paper, book, record or document, or may order the answering or production thereof.

(2) Subject to the provisions of section 15, where any person ordered to attend or to give evidence or to produce any paper, book, record or document before any committee refuses to answer any question that may be put to him or to produce any such paper, book, record or document on the ground that the same is of a private

Amended by Order 8th October, 1970.

Inserted by Order 8th October, 1970.

nature and does not affect the subject of inquiry, the chairman of the committee may report such refusal to the Speaker for President with the reasons therefor; and the Speaker for President may thereupon excuse the *answering* of such question or the production of such paper, book, record or document, or may order the answering or production thereof.

Privileges of witnesses

15.-(1) Every person summoned to attend to give evidence or to produce any paper, book, record or document before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee thereof shall be entitled, in respect of such evidence or the disclosure of any *communication* or the production of any such paper, book, record or document, to the same right or privilege as before a court of law.

(2) Except with the consent of the *Prime Minister no person in the employment of the Government shall, before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee-

- (a) produce any paper, book, record or document; or
- (b) give evidence,

concerning any naval, military or air force matter, nor shall secondary evidence be received by or produced before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee of the contents of any such paper, book, record or document.

(3) Except when in the opinion of the *Prime Minister it would be contrary to the public interest and the *Prime Minister so directs, no person in the employment of the Government shall refuse-

- (a) to produce before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee any paper, book, record or document; or
- (b) to give evidence before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee,

relating to the correspondence of any department of Government or to any matter affecting the public service; secondary evidence shall not be received by or produced before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee of the contents of any such paper, book, record or document which the *Prime Minister has directed shall not be produced.

(4) An answer by a person to a question put by the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee shall not be admissible in evidence against him in any civil or criminal proceedings except in the case of criminal proceedings for an offence against this Act or for perjury, subornation of perjury or defeating or obstructing the course of justice.

*Evidence of proceedings in *House of Representatives or the Senate or committee not to be given without leave*

16.-(1) Save as provided in this Act, no member or officer of the *House of Representatives or the Senate and no person employed to take minutes of evidence before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or any committee shall give evidence elsewhere in respect of the contents of such minutes of evidence or of the contents of any document laid before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or such committee, as the case may be, or in respect of any proceedings or examination held before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or such

Amended by Order 8th October 1970.

Inserted by Order 8th October, 1970.

committee, as the case may be, without the special leave of the *House of Representatives or the Senate first had and obtained.

(2) The special leave referred to in subsection (1) may be given during a recess or adjournment by the Speaker 'or President or, during any dissolution of the *House of Representatives or the Senate, by the *Governor-General.

*Questions relating to evidence and production of documents before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or committee to be determined in accordance with usage of Parliament*

17. Where at any time any question arises in the *House of Representatives or the Senate or in a committee in regard to-

- (a) the right or power of the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee to hear, admit or receive oral evidence; or
- (b) the right or power of the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee to peruse or examine any paper, book, record or document, or to summon, direct or call upon any person to produce any paper, book, record or document before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or committee; or
- (c) the right or privilege of any person (including a member of the *House of Representatives or the Senate or committee) to refuse to produce any paper, book, record or document or to lay any paper, book, record or document before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or committee,

that question shall, subject to the preceding provisions of this Act and except in so far as express provision is made in those provisions for the determination of that question, be determined in accordance with the usage and practice of the Commons House of Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

PART IV-OFFENCES AND PENALTIES

Proceedings to be deemed judicial proceedings for certain purposes

18. When a person gives evidence or produces a paper, book, record or document before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee in pursuance of this Act, the proceedings shall be deemed to be judicial proceedings for the purposes of a prosecution for perjury, subornation of perjury or defeating or obstructing the course of justice.

*Offences relating to admittance to *Parliament*

19. Any person who-

- (a) being a stranger, enters or attempts to enter the precincts of *Parliament in contravention of any order of the Speaker for the President; or
- (b) being a stranger, fails or refuses to withdraw from the precincts of *Parliament when ordered to withdraw therefrom by the Speaker for the President; or
- (c) being a stranger, contravenes any order made under the provisions of this Act by the Speaker for the President regulating the admittance

* Amended by Order 8th October, 1970.

of strangers to the precincts of *Parliament or either House thereof;
or

- (d) attends a sitting of the *House of Representatives or the Senate as the representative of any journal after the general permission granted under an order made under the provisions of this Act or under the Standing Orders to the representative or representatives of that journal has been revoked,

shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding fifty dollars or, in default of payment thereof, to imprisonment not exceeding three months, or to such imprisonment without the option of a fine or to both such fine and imprisonment.

Other offences

20. (Notwithstanding the provisions of section 17, any person who-
- (a) disobeys any order made by the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee for attendance or for production of papers, books, documents or records, unless such attendance or production be excused as hereinbefore provided; or
 - (b) refuses to be examined before, or to answer any lawful and relevant question put by the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee unless such refusal be excused as hereinbefore provided; or
 - (c) offers, whether directly or indirectly, to any member or officer of *Parliament any bribe, in order to influence him in his conduct as such member or officer, or offers to any member or officer of *Parliament any fee, compensation, gift or reward for or in respect of the promotion of or opposition to any Bill or matter submitted to or intended to be submitted to the *House of Representatives; or
 - (d) assaults, obstructs, molests or insults any member coming to, being within, or going from the precincts of *Parliament or endeavours to compel any member by force, insult or menace to declare himself in favour of or against any proposition or matter pending in or expected to be brought before the *House of Representatives; or
 - (e) assaults, molests, insults, resists or obstructs any officer of *Parliament while in the execution of his duty or while proceeding to or from *Parliament knowing or having reasonable grounds for believing him to be such an officer; or
 - (f) creates or joins in any disturbance, or incites any other person to create or join in any disturbance, which interrupts or is likely to interrupt the proceedings of the *House of Representatives or the Senate or any committee while the *House of Representatives or the Senate or such committee is sitting; or
 - (g) presents to the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee any false, untrue, fabricated or falsified document with intent to deceive the *House of Representatives or the Senate or such committee; or

Amended by Order 8th October, 1970.
Inserted by Order 8th October, 1970.

- (h) utters or publishes any false or scandalous slander or libel on *Parliament or upon any member in his capacity as such; or
- (i) attempts, directly or indirectly, by fraud, or by threats or intimidation of any kind, to influence a member in his vote, opinion, judgement or action, upon any question arising in the *House of Representatives or the Senate or in a committee, or to induce him to absent himself from the *House of Representatives or the Senate or any committee; or
- (j) threatens or assaults a member or an officer of *Parliament on account of his conduct as such member or officer; or
- (k) gives false evidence (in the case of witnesses not examined on oath), or is guilty of misconduct as a witness before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee; or
- (l) destroys any document which has been ordered to be produced before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee; or
- (m) abstracts any record or other document from the custody of the Clerk 't' to either House, or falsifies or improperly alters any records or documents presented to the *House of Representatives or the Senate or any committee; or
- (n) endeavours, directly or indirectly, to deter or hinder any person from appearing or giving evidence before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee; or
- (o) tampers with a witness in regard to evidence to be given by him before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee; or
- (p) threatens or in any way punishes, damnifies or injures, or attempts to punish, damnify or injure, any person for having given evidence before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee, or on account of the evidence which he has given before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee, or
- (q) publishes any evidence taken by, or document presented to, a committee where such evidence has been taken or such document presented within closed doors, and where its publication has been expressly prohibited by the *House of Representatives or the Senate or the committee,

shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding four hundred dollars or, in default of payment thereof, to imprisonment not exceeding two years or to such imprisonment without the option of a fine or to both such fine and imprisonment.

Acceptance of bribes by members

21. Any member who accepts or agrees to accept, or obtains or attempts to obtain for himself or for any other person, any bribe, fee, compensation, reward or benefit of any kind for speaking, voting or acting as such member or for refraining from so speaking, voting or acting or on account of his having so spoken, voted or acted or having so refrained, shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding four hundred dollars or, in default of payment thereof, to imprisonment not exceeding two years or to such imprisonment without the option of a fine or to both such fine and imprisonment.

" Amended by Order 8th October, 1970.

Penalty for false answers

22. A person who, whether he has or has not taken an oath or made an affirmation, wilfully makes a false answer before the *House of Representatives or the Senate or a committee to a question material to the subject of inquiry which may be put to him during the course of examination after he has been cautioned of his liability to punishment under this section, shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding six hundred dollars or, in default of payment thereof, to imprisonment not exceeding three years or to such imprisonment without the option of a fine or to both such fine and imprisonment.

PART V-MISCELLANEOUS

Commons Journals to be prima facie evidence in inquiries touching privilege

23. Subject to the provisions of this Act, a copy of the Journals of the Commons House of Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland printed or purporting to be printed by the order or by the Printer of the Commons House aforesaid shall be received as prima facie evidence without proof of its being such copy upon any inquiry touching the privileges, immunities and powers of *Parliament or of any member thereof,

Journals printed by the Government Printer to be admitted as evidence

24. Upon any inquiry touching the privileges, immunities and powers of *Parliament or of any member, any copy of the journals printed or purporting to be printed by the Government Printer shall be admitted as prima facie evidence of such journals in all courts and places without any proof being given that such copy was so printed.

Penalty for printing false copy of law, journal, etc.

25. Any person who shall print or cause to be printed a copy of any Act, or a copy of any report, paper, minutes or votes and proceedings of the *House of Representatives or the Senate as purporting to have been printed by the Government Printer or by order or under the authority of the *House of Representatives or the Senate or by order or under the authority of the Speaker for President, and the same is not so printed, or shall tender in evidence any such copy as purporting to be so printed knowing that the same was not so printed, shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding four hundred dollars or, in default of payment thereof, to imprisonment not exceeding two years or to such imprisonment without the option of a fine or to both such fine and imprisonment.

*Protection of persons responsible for publications authorized by the *House of Representatives or the Senate*

26. Any person, being a defendant in any civil or criminal proceedings instituted for or on account or in respect of the publication by such person or by his servant or agent, by order or under the authority of the *House of Representatives

* Amended by Order 8th October, 1970.
Inserted by Order 8th October, 1970.

or the Senate of any reports, papers, minutes, votes and proceedings may, on giving to the plaintiff or prosecutor, as the case may be, twenty-four hours' written notice of his intention, bring before the court in which such civil or criminal proceedings are being held a certificate under the hand of the Speaker for President, stating that the reports, papers, minutes, votes and proceedings in respect whereof such civil or criminal proceedings have been instituted were published by such person or by his servant or agent by order or under the authority of the *House of Representatives or the Senate, together with an affidavit verifying such certificate, and such court shall thereupon immediately stay such civil or criminal proceedings and the same and every process issued therein shall be deemed to be finally determined.

Publication of proceedings without malice

27. In any civil proceedings instituted for publishing any report or summary of or any extract from or abstract of any report, paper, minutes, votes and proceedings of the *House of Representatives or the Senate, if the court is satisfied that such report, summary, extract or abstract was published in good faith and without malice, judgment shall be entered for the defendant.

Exclusion of jurisdiction of courts

28. Neither the Speaker, (Deputy Speaker, President or Vice President nor any other officer of *Parliament shall be subject to the jurisdiction of any court in respect of the exercise of any power conferred on or vested in such officer by or under this Act.

Powers of officers

29. Every officer of *Parliament shall, for the purposes of this Act and for the application within the precincts of *Parliament of the provisions of the criminal law, have all the powers and enjoy all the privileges of a *police officer.

Power of arrest

30. An officer of *Parliament may arrest without warrant-
- (a) any person who commits in his presence any offence contrary to the provisions of sections 19 or 20; or
 - (b) any person within the precincts of *Parliament whom he reasonably suspects of having committed, or being about to commit, an offence contrary to the provisions of either of the said sections.

Speaker %or President may order words out of order not to be published

31.-(1) Where the Speaker for President under the provisions of the Standing Orders rules any words used by a member to be out of order the Speaker for President may, in his absolute discretion, order that such words, or any words out of which they arose or arising out of them, shall not be published in any manner.

Amended by Order 8th October, 1970.
Inserted by Order 8th October, 1970.

(2) Any person who publishes any words which are the subject of an order made under the provisions of subsection (1) shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding four hundred dollars or, in default of payment thereof, to imprisonment not exceeding two years or to such imprisonment without the option of a fine or to both such fine and imprisonment.

Authority for prosecutions

32. No prosecution for an offence under this Act shall be instituted without the written authority of the Attorney-General and the consent of the Speaker for President.

Rules

33. *Parliament may by notice in the Gazette make rules prescribing anything which, under the provisions of this Act, may be or is to be prescribed.

CHAPTER 5

PARLIAMENTARY POWERS AND PRIVILEGES (EVIDENCE) RULES

SECTION 33-PARLIAMENTARY POWERS AND PRIVILEGES
(EVIDENCE) RULES

TABLE OF PROVISIONS

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Schedule-Form 1-Summons

Form 2-Warrant where a witness has not obeyed the
Summons

Rules 11 September 1984*

Short title

1. These Rules may be cited as the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges (Evidence) Rules, 1984.

Interpretation

2. A reference in these rules to a form by number shall be read as a reference to the form so numbered in the Schedule.

Orders to attend

3. An order to attend to give evidence or to produce documents before either House of Parliament or a committee thereof shall be in accordance with Form 1.

Warrants

4. A warrant to apprehend a witness and bring him before either House of Parliament or a committee thereof shall be in accordance with Form 2.

* See Legal Notice 84 of 1984

Expenses

5. The sum for expenses which shall be paid or tendered in accordance with subsection (2) of section 11 of the Act to a person summoned in accordance with that section shall be as follows-

(1) *Travelling Expenses:*

When official transport is not provided the amount of the fares by public service bus but, in respect of expert witnesses, professional men, merchants, bankers, persons in business on their own account, company directors and managers, and in respect of other persons where public service buses are not available, the actual or reasonable cost of transport incurred.

(2) *Subsistence Expenses:*

(a) If, necessarily absent overnight from place of residence the actual cost of board and lodging reasonably incurred.

(b) If not necessarily absent overnight but the attendance exceeds four hours or includes a luncheon adjournment, \$1.50 in respect of each meal.

Other powers

6. Either House of Parliament or a committee may-

(a) order any witness present to give evidence notwithstanding that a payment to which he may be entitled has not been paid or tendered to him.

(b) disallow any payment of expenses, for good cause which shall be noted on the record;

(c) allow an additional payment not exceeding a total increase of \$10.00 in respect of any one person for any one day where it is satisfied that such person has suffered other expenses or additional pecuniary loss in excess of the expenses granted under Rule 5.

SCHEDULE

SUMMONS

Form 1
(Section 11)

THE PARLIAMENTARY POWERS AND PRIVILEGES ACT
IN THE MATTER OF [description of matter]

by The House of Representatives*
The Senate*
a Committee of*

To: Name:
Address:
.....

Issued by the direction of the Speaker*
President*
Chairman of the Committee*

These are to command you to apprehend and bring the said.....
before the House of Representatives*/the Senate*/the Committee of*
.....on the..... day of..... 19..... at
.....o'clock in the fore*/after* noon at [place to which witness is to be
brought].

*The person named in this warrant may be released after arrest on his entering into
a recognizance before a court for his appearance before the House of
Representatives*/the Senate*/the Committee* in the sums of \$.....
subject to the condition that he shall attend personally at the time and place herein
mentioned.

(Signed)

Clerk.

*Delete as required.