

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

903. Mr R.C. KUCERA to the Treasurer:

The West Australian newspaper this week has reported allegations of favouritism in the awarding of government contracts. Is the Treasurer aware of any examples of this type of favouritism?

Mr E.S. RIPPER replied:

I thank the member very much for the question. The Carpenter government - and the Gallop government before it - has strict guidelines in place for the awarding of government contracts. I am not aware of any examples of those guidelines being breached by any member of the government. Earlier this week that ethical giant, that champion of integrity, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, made some comments. He apparently emerged from his car park office to say that he had concerns about the awarding of contracts to Huntly Consulting Group. He, of all people, said that it was highly irregular. Imagine that; the Deputy Leader of the Opposition thinks that something is highly irregular. If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition thinks that that is highly irregular, what does he think about a minister of the Crown awarding a contract to a party and factional colleague in breach of government tendering guidelines? What would he think of that? He does not want to answer because that is what happened when the now Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Local Government. Printing contracts were awarded to Scott Four Colour Print in what could be described only as a very questionable process.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Why?

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Why? Because only one quote was sought, that is why; and because Scott Four Colour Print was part-owned by Hon Barbara Scott, MLC, and her husband. If I understand Liberal Party politics correctly, she is both a party and factional colleague of the Leader of the Opposition, unless he too - like the Deputy Leader of the Opposition - is a double agent for the Noel Crichton-Browne camp. As I understand it, Scott Four Colour Print was awarded lucrative government printing contracts.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Treasurer is impugning the reputation of Hon Barbara Scott, who is a person of the utmost integrity and who is a member of the other house. He has also impugned the reputation of her husband, Mr Michael Scott, who is a highly respected Western Australian businessperson. I ask that the Treasurer immediately withdraw his remark and apologise to Hon Barbara Scott. She is a person of the utmost integrity in the community.

The SPEAKER: I thought that I might have missed something, but the Clerk tells me that my recollection is the same as his. I do not think that the Deputy Premier has breached the rules. Standing order 92 protects members of this house and of the upper house equally. Any debate on the reflection upon the Hon Barbara Scott's character should be done by way of a substantive motion. The Deputy Premier has not breached that standing order.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr E.S. RIPPER: If the soon-to-be-departing mentor of the opposition thinks that what I have said is a problem, what does he say about an article in *The Australian* that stated that the then Premier of Western Australia, Mr Court, carpeted a minister for giving work to a company connected to a Liberal MP without first calling for quotes, and conceded it was not his government's first such oversight. The article also stated that the cabinet minister responsible, the Minister for Local Government, Mr Omodei, told Parliament he regretted the mistake and said it would not happen again. It was also reported at the time that the contract was one of three awarded to Liberal MPs by the then Liberal government - one of three. Let us go back. Scott Four Colour Print was awarded contracts worth \$1.2 million. The Leader of the Opposition admitted that he had failed to adhere to government tendering guidelines. The contract was to print a glossy brochure promoting the carve-up of the City of Perth. Do members remember that issue? The contract was to the value of \$20 000 and only one quote was sought. "Go to my mate Barbara Scott and get a quote" is what Mr Omodei told his department.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Point of order!

A government member: He does not like it.

Mr C.J. Barnett: No, I do not, but not for the reason that the member thinks.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Point of Order

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Further to my earlier point of order, the Treasurer referred to the awarding of a contract to Barbara Scott. Her husband happens to run a printing business. It is not Barbara Scott's business, and it clearly implies some impropriety on her part.

Mr A.J. Carpenter: There is some sensitivity on the other side.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, I am not sensitive. I stand up for decent people and for decent Western Australians, and they are decent people.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The mere fact that the member for Cottesloe is becoming tired of Parliament does not make his objection to the proceedings a valid point of order.

The SPEAKER: The point of order that is being made is more like an interjection or a mini-debate within question time. Similarly, the contribution of the Deputy Premier on that point of order is a debate rather than a point of order.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Mr Speaker -

Mr M.W. Trenorden: You can hardly get any lower.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The champion of accountability thinks it is low to point out that the previous government awarded a contract to a Liberal MP! I am almost left speechless by that interjection from the member for Avon, but I appreciate it, because throughout his career he has provided me with timely interjections just like that to assist me to advance my argument. Many of the government printing contracts awarded to Scott Four Colour Print were not even advertised. Just think about that: many of the contracts were not advertised. The company received \$400 000 more in printing contracts than its nearest competitor - \$400 000 more. The then Premier conceded that it was not his government's first such oversight. The Leader of the Opposition has come into this place preaching standards and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is daring, in view of his grossly improper conduct, to raise this issue. There is only one word that can describe that type of behaviour, and that word is "hypocrisy". The Leader of the Opposition preaches standards but he has no standards of his own.