

ABSENCE OF MINISTERS

203. Mr R.F. JOHNSON to the Acting Premier:

I refer the Acting Premier to the absence from Parliament today of not only the Premier, but also the Ministers for Police, Health, Education and Planning and Infrastructure.

- (1) Will the Acting Premier please inform the House why these ministers are absent today and the reasons for their absence?
- (2) Does the Acting Premier believe it appropriate for so many senior ministers to be absent from Parliament, or is this another example of Labor's disregard for proper parliamentary processes? Perhaps the Minister for Education is playing truant just prior to the school holidays and the Minister for Health is taking a sickie.

Mr E.S. RIPPER replied:

- (1)-(2) I do not know about the Opposition, but I have enjoyed question time. I have welcomed the opportunity to answer questions. I am disappointed on behalf of my colleague the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, who has been the only minister who has not had a question today. I would like the Opposition to look after that minister and give her some questions please, because I always enjoy her answers.

The Opposition knows very well where the Premier is, because in his after-dinner speech earlier this week the Leader of the Opposition took it upon himself to insult the Premier for going to China to further the economic relationship between this State and that country and for meeting with Li Peng, the second most powerful man in China. I can inform the Leader of the Opposition that the Premier is returning home tomorrow.

The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure is in Adelaide and then Alice Springs on private business until the weekend. The Minister for Police is in Brisbane for meetings on fire and emergency service matters. She will be home on Saturday morning. The Minister for Health is in Melbourne for a meeting of the Ministerial Council of Health Ministers, for part of which he will act as chair. I am advised, in case members opposite might have cynical comments to make - I know what the Opposition is like, so I have obtained this advice - he will not leave the airport precinct, as the conference will be held at an airport hotel. He returns home on Friday evening. Finally, the Minister for Education is travelling to Sydney for a conference of indigenous affairs ministers.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Is he going to be in Melbourne?

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The Minister for Education is also the Minister for Sport and Recreation, and the Australian Football League has invited the Minister for Sport and Recreation to the grand final and he has accepted the invitation. I think I have the wrong portfolio!