

RAILWAY (JANDAKOT TO PERTH) BILL 2002, URGENT

**73. Mr R.F. JOHNSON to the Leader of the House:**

I refer to the Leader of the House's ultimatum today that the Opposition must support the Railway (Jandakot to Perth) Bill 2002 as an urgent Bill or else his Government will ram it through this House in the first sitting week after recess, and the fact that, as he knows, the Opposition's lead speaker will not be available then as she is representing this Parliament at a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association convention.

- (1) When in the history of this Parliament has such important legislation concerning a project worth at least \$1.42 billion been rammed through in this way?

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I hope the media pick this up, because it is very important.

The SPEAKER: Members! Although the members on my right may not like the question, they should listen to it. I am sure the minister will correct anything that is wrong in the question.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I promise you that nothing in the question is wrong.

- (2) Why is the Government deliberately manoeuvring to deal with this Bill while the shadow minister is away representing the Western Australian Parliament?

Mr J.N. Hyde: He wants to go in her place.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I know that this is a very touchy subject for members opposite.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: To continue -

- (3) Will the Leader of the House guarantee that this legislation will not be progressed until the second week after the recess, when the shadow minister will have returned from her parliamentary duty?

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:**

- (1)-(3) The member, as manager for opposition business, has made a statement. I will answer the statement. I do not think there was a question at all. There has been a lot of emphasis on the Democrats, politics and fairies at the bottom of the garden. It seems that the member opposite has been chewing on mushrooms at the bottom of the garden, because what he had to say bore no relation to the truth of the matter. I have members asking me all the time what the manager of opposition business has been talking about. He goes on and on. His nose gets bigger and bigger. What is the member talking about? He is very hard to fathom and his comments bear no relation to the truth. When people talk and talk and say things that are not true, then, as I always used to say to my kids, their nose will grow. My kids never believed me. I must bring them along to question time one day. I am sure they will see evidence that a person's nose will grow when he says things that are not true.

I wrote to the Opposition, as is the practice, and to the Independents, who got a copy of the letter last Thursday or Friday. I indicated that I had had discussions with the Opposition on the business of this week.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: You certainly did not discuss it with me.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The Leader of the National Party was sent a copy.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for South Perth! The level of interjection is intolerable. If it continues, we will not have any further question time.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It looks as though other members have been chewing on mushrooms as well. The fact is that, under this Government, all Independent members are notified of the business program by fax on Friday. I started that process; it did not exist under the last Government.

Mr P.G. Pandal: Standing Order No 168 says debate should be adjourned for three weeks.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The member for South Perth is clearly more interested in chewing mushrooms than in getting matters through this Chamber. If I wanted to adopt his attitude, I could be as pompous as he is and say that I will stop sending him a letter.

The letter indicated that we would be dealing with Bills that had been introduced into this Parliament in June, with one exception. That exception was the Railway (Jandakot to Perth) Bill, which would have to be declared an urgent Bill. I indicated in the letter that all members should be aware that it could be brought on as an urgent Bill this week with the support of the Opposition. The reason for that is that the opposition spokesperson will be away on parliamentary business during the first week that we come back. I was seeking to make sure that she was not denied her right to speak to the Bill. I will still try to protect her right to speak to the Bill. There was no backing away at all. However, we found an Opposition that cannot keep its word. Time after time after time it gives undertakings and then reneges on them. The Opposition's word is worth absolutely nothing. I had an undertaking that we would deal with the Railway (Jandakot to Perth) Bill as a matter of urgency to fit in with the needs of the opposition spokesperson. Even today, I have left it open to the Opposition through a range of flexible opportunities to deal with parts of the Bill in a way that would mean we could deal with some of the Bill this week and some in three weeks time when the opposition spokesperson returns. However, we have opposition members whose word means nothing and we have grandstanding from someone who would be better off chewing on his mushrooms than purporting to speak the truth in this place.