

COMMISSION ON GOVERNMENT - ESTABLISHMENT

635. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Premier:

Yesterday, in light of the recent Corruption and Crime Commission hearings and the combined voices of the Greens (WA), the Liberal Party and the National Party, the Legislative Council voted to support the establishment of a second commission on government. Given that the antics of the Premier's government, both past and present, have undeniably done immense damage to the integrity of our political system, I ask the following -

- (1) How does the Premier justify his refusal to support a new commission on government to investigate whether further reforms are required to prevent corrupt, illegal or improper conduct by public officials?
- (2) Why would the inquiry not be in the public interest?
- (3) Although it is obvious to the opposition, for the record, can the Premier explain why he and his government are so afraid of scrutiny?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

- (1)-(3) I heard the report on the radio this morning that the Greens and the Liberals and the National Party member in the upper house had sought a new commission on government.

Mr R.F. Johnson: The majority.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: In the other house, yes, of the Western Australian state Parliament. My general response is this: we have had a couple of royal commissions, and we have had the Commission on Government. As a result of that, when we got into government we established the Corruption and Crime Commission. During the time of the previous government every endeavour was made to avoid accountability and every endeavour was made to avoid scrutiny. The Official Corruption Commission was recognised by everybody as being completely toothless, and I think that is the way the previous government wanted it; it did not want any scrutiny. I agree that there are some issues that are worthy of investigation, and they stem from the opposition's time in government. For example, the sale of Westrail freight probably demands a full and thorough inquiry.

Mr R.F. Johnson: None of our ministers was sacked.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Do it! Call one! You've got the numbers.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Okay, I might take that advice. I have just heard a comment by way of interjection from the opposition benches about how many of the opposition's ministers in government were sacked. In a sense, I rest my case. Does anybody recall - for example, and just to pick one of them - the previous Minister for Fair Trading and the way he dealt with the finance brokers' scandal?

Mr R.F. Johnson: He was not sacked from his office, unlike some of yours.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Why was he not sacked from his office? Because the Premier of the day refused to do it. He did not want any scrutiny or accountability when everybody in Western Australia, and may I just say, including a very big majority of the member of Parliament's own electorate, believed he should be sacked. When they had the opportunity, they did sack him -

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yes, but not because he was corrupt.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: - just as they did the former member for Albany, who was a senior minister, and just as they did the former member for Riverton, who was a senior minister. In the absence of the government of the day taking the action required, the people of Western Australia took their own action. We had a toothless tiger called the Official Corruption Commission. When we got into government we replaced it with the most powerful anticorruption body in Australia. We have had a series of investigations and when those investigations have produced evidence that I believed required the attention and action of the Premier involving ministers, I have acted. It is something that the Premier of the previous government, Richard Court, did not do. He could not do it. Staff members have been forced to resign and leave their offices. The Corruption and Crime Commission is doing its job.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Can the Leader of the Opposition, from his chair, point to one finding of corruption against a member of this government?

Mr P.D. Omodei: Current members? Well, I would like to have a corruption commission -

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The Leader of the Opposition has one. Can he point to one finding -

Mr P.D. Omodei: I would like to have a commission on government to have a look, yes.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: There is already the Corruption and Crime Commission. Can the Leader of the Opposition point to a finding of corruption against any member on this side of the Parliament?

Mr R.F. Johnson: It depends how you define "corruption".

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: For the sake of *Hansard* I have given the Leader of the Opposition 15 seconds to provide an answer in the affirmative and he cannot.

Mr P.D. Omodei: We haven't got the final reports yet and you know it! We have had only the one to do with Smiths Beach. There is still a heap to come. We have seen only one chapter in the book of corruption by Alan Carpenter!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The Leader of the Opposition made the assertion that there were findings of corruption. Would the Leader of the Opposition like to get to his feet and apologise to everybody on this side because there has not been one?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Let me ask the Leader of the Opposition this question -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members! I am sure members would like to continually talk but that disrupts this place. I call the member for Murray and the Leader of the Opposition to order.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I think I have demonstrated that I am prepared to take action if I believe it is necessary. I have done and, if I have to do it again, I will.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Misconduct; serious misconduct.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: If I have to do it again, I will. We do not need another commission on government. What we need is the sort of accountability mechanisms and a government and a Premier that are prepared to act when issues come to their attention, which is not what we had -

Mr C.J. Barnett: I thought you led a government with integrity.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: How would the member for Cottesloe describe the integrity of the former member for Riverton?

Mr C.J. Barnett: He behaved with integrity.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Does the member think so?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yes, he did. You may not have liked his policies, but his conduct in this Parliament was fine.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That is good because the member has been prepared to make comment. How would the member describe the integrity levels - when he was a minister - of the former member for Alfred Cove?

Mr C.J. Barnett: I am not going to go through a list of all the ministers.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Come on! Be prepared to defend the former member for Riverton, who the member said acted with integrity. I asked about the former member for Alfred Cove, Doug Shave, but the member refused to answer that one. I will ask the member for Cottesloe a question: does he believe that Richard Court should have sacked him?

Mr C.J. Barnett: I am not going to answer those questions.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I rest my case.