

MILITANT UNIONISM

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

I refer to Kevin Rudd's decision to expel Dean Mighell from the Australian Labor Party after his disgraceful actions were exposed on a taperecording. I refer also to the damning evidence presented to the Cole royal commission; the disgraceful actions and language exposed in the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission last year in the case against Mick Powell; and the repugnant comments from Joe McDonald as revealed in an affidavit relating to a videorecording currently at the centre of a court battle. I ask -

- (1) What specific actions have the Premier and his government taken to tackle the blight of militant unionism in Western Australia?
- (2) Will the Premier be taking any actions to weed these thugs out of the ALP; and, if not, why not?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:

(1)-(2) I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I think he has raised the issues of the Cole royal commission previously, and they have been addressed. I think he has raised some of these issues in general terms.

Mr P.D. Omodei: They have been addressed, you say?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have addressed the Leader of the Opposition's question. It is some time since the Cole royal commission brought down its findings. As I am aware, no charges were pursued or recommended by the Cole royal commission in relation to the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union in Western Australia. Is the Leader of the Opposition aware of something different from that?

Mr P.D. Omodei: There is a range of things in the Cole inquiry report.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Is the Leader of the Opposition aware of charges being -
Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members! I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to order and indicate that it is not appropriate to yell down the person answering the question.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Perhaps I should go straight to the nub of the matter. We are in a federal election period, so these issues have taken on a prominence. It is notable that they are the subject of discussion almost every day in both the national and local newspapers. That is an undeniable fact. What I have said previously is that I do not condone any illegal or thuggish behaviour by anyone, whether that person is a union official or member of Parliament. The Leader of the Opposition should take that little lesson on board and address some of the issues that arise on his side of politics and with his own members.

Several members interjected.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I think my actions have demonstrated that I do not condone any sort of behaviour that would be considered to be completely and utterly improper. I do not condone the sort of behaviour that the local and national media have reported has happened. I do not condone it; in fact, I condemn it.

The latest report in the newspaper today has Mr McDonald's role - I think the Leader of the Opposition just mentioned him, maybe he has not, and I am just imagining these days that everyone has mentioned his name - as singing "Lou, Lou, skip to my Lou" whilst other people were using abusive language towards a construction company employee. The use of abusive language is not only improper, but very unwise, especially in an era when almost everything people say or do can be recorded by one mechanism or another. Lo and behold, some three years after the event apparently took place in 2004, in the context of an election campaign these matters have become the subject of public discussion and used to embarrass that union and to attempt to embarrass the Australian Labor Party, with some success. I think that, for its own sake, the CFMEU would be advised to change its approach, and to not allow its officials to use that sort of language. It would be advisable for Joe McDonald to change his style in addressing his role as a union official. I think we should have well and truly left behind that sort of style in industrial relations. I want to point out one thing as I understand it: under the state government's industrial relations legislation, Joe McDonald's right of entry to union sites was withdrawn. Consequently and subsequently, he is facing some six charges of trespass because of this state government's own legislation. Therefore, not only do we not condone that sort of behaviour, but also we have put in place our own laws to deal with people who act inappropriately, and when they break the law, they should be the subject of the full enforcement of the law. That is it. In a political context people have to be strategic. We must ensure that we do not allow any easy hits. That is what has happened in these circumstances. At the political level, at the

industrial relations level and at every other level, I would urge a change of approach. In fact, I have done numerous times.

Dr S.C. Thomas: What did they say?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: We will see how it plays out. Opposition members may not have reached the second paragraph in their research this morning, but I think they will find that the incident referred to actually took place in 2004. It did not happen yesterday, it took place in 2004.

In general, apart from the singing of, “Lou, Lou, skip to my Lou”, I also say this: in the workplace, the use of foul language is probably inadvisable. Bad language is inadvisable in any workplace. I think what we are seeing through the media now is a demonstration of how ill-advised it can be. However, I remind the Leader of the Opposition of his own performance, not on a building site where people have traditionally used fairly rough language, but right here in this Parliament, the most public of all forums in the state, where people are expected to behave in a proper way and use moderate language. Does the Leader of the Opposition recall using improper language in this chamber - language that was not befitting of a member of Parliament, let alone a Leader of the Opposition and person who aspires to be the Premier of this state? I do. I recall him using that sort of language in this chamber, directed at the former Premier, Dr Gallop. May I say that no finer person stood in the Parliament than Dr Gallop. The Leader of the Opposition used completely and utterly inappropriate and, should I say, foul language in the chamber towards Dr Gallop directly - not in what should have been a private conversation in the corridor, but right here in this chamber. It is interesting to note that that conversation has now been translated here. I hope that the member for Murdoch was not so shocked and lily-livered that he ran whimpering to his leader when I responded to his rather overbearing approach in a fairly direct manner and told him that he should go away - in fact, that he should go away and do something a little more creative. Then I reflected upon his undoubted intelligence, and there is no doubt about it. Therefore, before the Leader of the Opposition gets to his feet in this place again and starts criticising people for using rough, everyday bad language on a building site, he should remember the sort of language he has used in the chamber of a house of Parliament of Western Australia.