

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE, GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO PROVIDE ANSWERS

1083. Mr J.N. HYDE to the Leader of the House:

Students in my electorate, such as those from the Aranmore Catholic College Intensive Language Centre who are in the gallery today, like to get their facts right before they ask questions. Yesterday the member for Kingsley used Standing Order No 80. There were interjections from opposition members, as there continue to be today.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! It is disorderly to interject when an answer is being given. It is exceptionally disruptive and disorderly to interject when someone is asking a question.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Those interjections suggested a failure by the Government to answer questions. Do the facts support these allegations?

Point of Order

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: This question suggests that the questioner is asking for an opinion from the Leader of the House. A factual answer is not being sought; it is a matter of opinion. I suggest the question should be ruled out of order.

The SPEAKER: The question does ask for an opinion, and I do not see any great problem with that. I am sure that the Leader of the House will have difficulty with where his ministerial responsibility begins and ends. However, he can answer the question as far as he can.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:

I thank the member for the question. One of the matters raised under Standing Order No 80 related to my portfolio, so I believe I am certainly suited to answer the question according to the standing orders. In using Standing Order No 80 yesterday, the member for Kingsley alleged that there were unanswered questions. Many interjections suggested that the Government was somehow delaying or refusing to answer those questions. However, as the Speaker made clear, there was an administrative error, and those question numbers had been re-entered on the Notice Paper. The fact is that the questions were all answered over a month ago, and the member had the answers to the questions a month before she asked the question. Does that reflect that the member did not read the answers?

Ms K. Hodson-Thomas: You are being smart.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: It doesn't do you any justice, minister - really.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Is the member saying that she did not read the answers?

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: I checked the official record, so don't be smart. This is a serious Government!

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The question is, was the member simply asking those questions to waste government time and money, or did she want answers that she would take seriously? If the member did not even take the trouble to read the answers, that would explain why she asked that question when she had the answers a month before; or it may be that the Opposition is so imbued with this negative attack attitude that the opportunity existed, because the numbers were on the Notice Paper, so the question had to be asked, even though the member had the answers.

This is not out of the ordinary. A question on the Notice Paper from the member for Mitchell dated 12 March was answered. He asked me, as the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection -

- (1) Do any departments or agencies within your portfolios have responsibility, sole or part, for the management, maintenance, conservation, rehabilitation, safety, funding or administration of any facility, policy, program or any other aspect whatsoever regarding -

Ten projects around Bunbury are then listed, mainly relating to environmental matters. The question then has two other parts, which in part ask the minister to provide full details of studies, including a copy of any relevant written reports. I advised the member at the time that the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection has nothing to do with those environmental matters. We had to go to the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, and it has nothing whatsoever to do with any of those matters. We went to WorkCover WA, and it has absolutely nothing to do with any of those environmental matters. We then went to the Construction Industry Long Service Leave Board, and it has nothing to do with any of those matters. All those departments were put through a proper process to answer a lengthy question in great detail, when it had no relevance to the

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Mr John Hyde; Speaker; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Kobelke

portfolio. There is more than one example of the Opposition being intent on wasting government time and money, and when we give it detailed answers, it does not even read them.