

SCHOOLS, ROBSON REPORT, POLICE INQUIRY

**735. Mr DAY to the Minister for Education:**

I refer the minister to the investigation carried out by former Assistant Commissioner for Crime Operations in the Western Australia Police Service, Bill Mott, into some aspects of the Robson report on government schooling, particularly the actions of former Acting Deputy Director-General of Education, Mr Ed Harken.

- (1) Did the report make any adverse findings against Mr Harken; and, if so, what action will be taken on those findings?
- (2) Will the minister make this report public; and, if not, why not?

**Mr CARPENTER replied:**

- (1)-(2) This is an inquiry into a complaint to which I have referred previously in this Chamber. The inquiry stems from a complaint made by the member for Kingsley.

Mrs Edwardes: I referred a letter to the Commissioner for Public Sector Standards.

Mr CARPENTER: Given the experience that the member often complains about, I thought she would have known better than get down into the unfortunate muckraking that has gone on during this episode.

Mrs Edwardes: I never made it public.

Mr CARPENTER: I was privileged, as it were, to see a copy of the complaint. I have referred to it before. It alleged that a man spent a night at my house. I have been through this before. That person has never spent the night at my house when I have been there. I even made the joke that I asked my wife whether he turns up when I am not there.

Several members interjected.

Mr CARPENTER: It is the same question. This issue was pitched at whether or not I had personal relationships with certain people -

Mr Day: No; that is not the question.

Mr CARPENTER: That is the question. I cannot recall Ed Harken, Kevin O'Keefe or anybody else ever turning up at my house, but I can tell members that I would remember pretty clearly if I were stuffing handfuls of money into people's hands at soccer matches just before a local government election. I would remember that, member for Kingsley, and I would know exactly why I was doing it. I would know if I were handing bundles of money to a leader of the Vietnamese community in the northern suburbs immediately before an election campaign. That is the sort of thing I would know about.

*Point of Order*

Mr JOHNSON: My point of order relates to the disgraceful comments of the Minister for Education.

Mrs Roberts: That is an opinion, not a point of order.

Mr JOHNSON: The member has not heard it yet. I might be looking at the member, but I am talking to the Speaker. The point of order is that the Minister for Education was making some outrageous allegations about corruption and the alleged handing over of money in an envelope. He was pointing at my colleague the member for Kingsley, and he acknowledges that. Mr Speaker, I ask you to draw his attention to the standards of this House - we have seen them drop enormously over the past few days - bring him to order and ask him to withdraw that implication about one of my colleagues.

Mr KOBELKE: I will be brief. Anyone who has any understanding of the standing orders will realise that the member has simply wasted the time of this Chamber. There is no point of order.

The SPEAKER: Members of this Chamber must endeavour at all times to not cast aspersions on the character of members. I did not hear the minister mention any member by name. If he intended to impugn the character of any member of this House, I ask him to withdraw those comments. If he did not and it was a general comment, I ask him to continue his comments.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

Mr CARPENTER: Far be it from me to impugn the character of any member in this House! The nature of the complaint that I saw, and which the member for Kingsley confirms she made, is a disgraceful slur on the character of people upon whom she should not been casting that slur, including my family. It is an absolute disgrace. It is two-faced and hypocritical of the opposition member to raise an objection when this question is based on that kind of scurrilous rubbish.

I am aware that there was an investigation. I was never asked questions in relation to it, and I do not know whether there was any intention to ask me questions. People responding to the inquiry mentioned some rumours and made accusations about me. They are the most ludicrous suggestions I have ever heard, and they include a suggestion that I be put under surveillance to determine my relationship with people in the department. That is nonsensical! What sort of state are we reaching? This is the level at which members opposite are pitching. This is the ludicrous rubbish that they are generating. Was it the member's suggestion to put the Minister for Education under surveillance to see what contact he is making with people in the department?

Mrs Edwardes: No, not at all.

Mr CARPENTER: I meet them publicly if I want to.

Mr Day: Are you going to make it public?

Mr CARPENTER: As far as I am aware, the report has not been finalised. I certainly have not seen it.

Mr Birney: Why didn't you say that at the beginning?

Mr CARPENTER: Because I had a little more to say. I am not aware whether I can make it public under the Public Sector Management Act, because I do not know under what circumstances the responses were given or whether they were given in confidence. However, the background of some of the people making these complaints suggests that they are making a very big mistake. They are dragging down the standards of the Parliament. They are attacking people who, as far as I know, have committed only one crime in their eyes: they were members of the State School Teachers Union of WA. I remind members that the previous Director General of the Department of Education was a member of the teachers union; and they never made complaints about him.

Mr Day: That is totally irrelevant.

Mr CARPENTER: Exactly; it is irrelevant. In her complaint, she constructed a diagram to show the alleged relationships between the minister and people in the department, some of whom I had never heard of. This is the most ridiculous level of scurrilous attack that we are likely to see. I believe I have responded sufficiently to the member's question.