

POLICE — MEMBER FOR MINDARIE'S COMMENTS

31. Mr J.M. FRANCIS to the Minister for Police:

Earlier today the member for Mindarie accused some of our most senior police officers of outrageous actions and stated that the Western Australian police force has the worst reputation in Australia. Will the minister please inform the house of this government's continued support for Western Australia's hardworking police service?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON replied:

I have to say that today I witnessed probably the most outrageous speech that I have ever heard made by any member of this Parliament—a speech slanging and defaming police officers in WA. That is what the member for Mindarie did today. I want to know whether the Leader of the Opposition agrees with the member for Mindarie's comments.

Mr E.S. Ripper: I have made my comments. Watch television tonight. You will see my public comments.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Does the Leader of the Opposition agree with the comments he made in Parliament today?

Mr E.S. Ripper: You will see my public comments. If you pay attention, you will see them.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Okay. Does the member for Girrawheen agree with the comments about police officers made by the member for Mindarie today?

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member for Mindarie is not here. He is probably putting on his make-up at the moment because he is waiting to go on *Australian Story* and another SBS program. That is why he came in here today and accused our police officers, senior police officers, of lying.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That is what he did.

Mr E.S. Ripper: What have you done about it?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I will come to you.

Mr E.S. Ripper: You're the police minister. You're supposed to hold him accountable. What have you done?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Mr Speaker, I would appreciate the opportunity to answer the question without the constant babble from members opposite.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: He will not answer my question. I want to know whether the Leader of the Opposition supports the comments of the member for Mindarie.

Mr E.S. Ripper: I have made my comments.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: You have not! Not ever!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Minister, you have been in this place a long time and you know what asking questions across the floor does. Besides that particular matter, I suggest to all members of this place that some serious issues were raised earlier today, and a question has been asked in this place and I expect a response from the person who has been asked that question. Every other member in this place should expect that response as well.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Mr Speaker, sometimes this place is called "cowards castle" because some members use this place to make comments or statements that are defamatory and that are very often untrue.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Don't you support parliamentary privilege?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Yes, I do. However, as I have said, if a member has the guts to say it in here, he should go outside the house and repeat the comments word for word. I am told that the member for Mindarie is now not giving interviews today. He did one earlier with Paul Murray but will not do anymore since he made those comments in this place. I do not blame him. However, the silence from the member for Girrawheen is interesting. I know that she does not agree with the member for Mindarie's comments.

Ms M.M. Quirk: You are answering the question.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I know that she does not agree.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am concerned, Mr Speaker, because the member for Mindarie assured you that the matter he was raising today was not before the courts at the moment. I do not think that that is quite correct. A case relating to the very person the member for Mindarie was talking about is before the appeal court and a decision will be made next week.

Mr E.S. Ripper: So you think a judge might be influenced by parliamentary debate do you? What sort of respect do you have for the judiciary?

The SPEAKER: Order, Leader of the Opposition!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: My respect is whether or not a member in this house misleads the Speaker and misleads this Parliament. It is something that I am looking into. If that is what the member for Mindarie has done, some actions need to be taken.

Mr E.S. Ripper: You are not looking into whether the police told the wrong story to the public. You are not looking into the issues surrounding the tasing of Mr Spratt. You are only looking into the opposition!

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, you will have an opportunity later in this place today to ask a question about this matter if you so wish to. At this point, all I prefer to hear is the response from the minister.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I will conclude my answer to the question because I know that we need to get on. However, I think it important to put on the record that members on this side of the house are disgusted, absolutely disgusted, with the outrageous and defamatory comments made by the member for Mindarie in relation to our 5 800 police officers, who I know will take offence at and whose families I know will take offence at and may well reflect that in the member's electorate. If the view that the member for Mindarie has put forward today is the view of the Labor Party, we will make sure that people in Labor electorates know that. I think they will be infuriated.