

URANIUM SUPPLIES - DEVELOPING AFRICAN NATIONS

**124. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for the Environment:**

Does the minister have any concerns in relation to proposals to provide uranium to developing African nations such as Ethiopia?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

Indeed I do. I thank the member for Joondalup for the question. As a government and as a party, we have ongoing concerns about nuclear waste and the safeguards involved in the nuclear industry. As part of my recent reading on this issue, I have learnt that Britain had a \$150 billion cleanup bill on 20 nuclear sites, and that is going up all the time. There are other issues related to safeguards. We are all aware of the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl issues. These events occurred in First World nations. On the other hand, the ALP and I have always been very concerned about developing nations and we have consistently supported freer trade to assist those nations. We have consistently supported education initiatives and debt relief for developing nations, especially Africa, which has some of the poorest nations on earth. However, members opposite have suggested that we should provide uranium to developing African countries. In a country such as Ethiopia, for example, that would be nothing short of grossly irresponsible. The member who said that a number of times in this Parliament is none other than the member for Cottesloe. It is dangerous and it is whacky. I will quote what he said and we will see how many Liberals put up their hands to say they agree with him -

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** What are you quoting from?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I was here; I heard it. He asked why we, in the developed world, should deny developing African nations such as Ethiopia access to nuclear energy. He said that nothing else would raise their living standards.

Does anyone else on the opposition side agree with that?

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** I do.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** One person agrees with that. Since the member for Cottesloe said that yesterday, I have had the opportunity to look at the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade web site in relation to Ethiopia. The department states that Ethiopia is under high threat of terrorist attack, and that violent demonstrations occurred in November 2005 in the capital Addis Ababa. The web site says that there is an extremely dangerous security situation in the country, with ongoing political tensions and a high threat of terrorist attack. What is more, armed groups and banditry are rife, as well as kidnapping. Between 1998 and 2000 Ethiopia was at war with its neighbour Eritrea. The Ethiopian Prime Minister said that the biggest danger to the country is Islamic fundamentalism. That is the country to which the Liberal Party is advocating sending Western Australian uranium. The government's position is pretty defensible in the light of the level of zealotry and ideological obsession exhibited by the Liberal Party.

**Mr T.R. Buswell** interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Does the member for Vasse agree with the member for Cottesloe? Should we also export uranium to Zimbabwe, Somalia and Sudan? The opposition has gone to ground, but we heard what its members had to say last night, and we will not let them forget it.

*Point of Order*

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** I refer to standing order 92 on personal reflections and motives. In doing so, I ask that you, Mr Speaker, request the minister, the member for Rockingham, to produce evidence that I advocated sending uranium to Ethiopia.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not think the use of a point of order in relation to a debate is correct, as the member for Cottesloe no doubt knows. He wishes to make a point rather than to raise a point of order.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I call to order the members for Cottesloe and Nedlands and the Minister for the Environment. I am sure that the member for Moore has a question we would like to hear.