

ELECTRICITY REFORM

384. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for Energy:

Are the Government's electricity reform plans consistent with its election policy?

Mr E.S. RIPPER replied:

The Government's election platform was clear. It went to the election in 2001 with a specific electricity reform policy which proposed, amongst other things, the disaggregation of Western Power, so that more competition could be put into the market, thus placing downward pressure on prices. The policy was specifically against the privatisation of Western Power and its successor entities, and that remains the Government's position. The Government has been consistent all along in its policy approach. I hope that will be applauded by the Leader of the Opposition, because I note that he said that the lesson from the Victorian Liberal Party's defeat in last Saturday's election was that instability, changes of leadership, lack of consistent policy focus and a born-to-rule mentality were fatal. What a selfless analysis!

I will consider the question of consistency. In the interests of clarity and consistency, I hope we will soon get a single Liberal Party position on electricity reform, because at the moment we do not know what it is. Is the policy of the Leader of the Opposition, that of Hon George Cash, or that of the member for Kalgoorlie the official Liberal Party policy on electricity reform? There are consistency problems in other issues as well, such as that of compensation for land clearing. The shadow Minister for the Environment and Heritage said on ABC radio that the Opposition intends to offer farmers compensation payments totalling \$100 million. We still do not know whether that is an official opposition policy, endorsed by the shadow Treasurer and the Leader of the Opposition, or an off-the-cuff remark by the shadow minister.

What about some consistency between the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition on one day and his remarks later on? In government he spent years trying to attract industry to the Burrup Peninsula, and now, in opposition, he accuses the Government of setting out to despoil a natural wonder of the world. What about policy consistency on the death penalty? The Deputy Leader of the Opposition called for a referendum on the question, while the Leader of the Opposition opposed it. It was very interesting to look at the positions of the members of the Parliamentary Liberal Party on a death penalty referendum. Their answers to the question, posed in an article in *The West Australian* on 27 July 2002 were: no, yes, no, yes, no, no, yes, yes, no, yes, no, no, yes, no, yes, no, no, and no. A great policy consistency there! I think I can see one of the problems for the Liberal Opposition in reaching policy consistency, because in another article in *The West Australian* of 27 July the Leader of the Opposition said -

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Warren-Blackwood!

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The member should listen. Obviously he does not want me to attack the Leader of the Opposition.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The injections have reached an unacceptable level.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I think I can see one of the problems for the Opposition in reaching policy consistency, because in that article the Leader of the Opposition said -

“When there is an issue, I often see the way out quicker than others do.

“Maybe that intimidates people.

“A few people have said to me ‘you don’t suffer fools Colin’.

I see the problem! How can the Leader of the Opposition get policy consistency when in his view he is surrounded by idiots? However, we do hear one thing from the Leader of the Opposition that is consistent - consistent self-admiration!