

2005-06 BUDGET, CLAIMS BY THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

248. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Treasurer:

Can the Treasurer outline his response to claims made by the Leader of the Opposition about the state budget?

Mr E.S. RIPPER replied:

I do not know what fuels the Leader of the Opposition's imagination, but I think he lives in a fantasy world of deception and conspiracy. He made some extraordinary claims just before question time. First of all, he claimed that the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Labor Party conspired to conceal the true state of the books at the time of the election. That is laughable at one level, but extremely offensive at another, because his comments undermine the professionalism and the integrity of a terrific public sector department, the Department of Treasury and Finance. However, it seems that the Leader of the Opposition has a conspiracy theory about everything - a theory for every portfolio. The most extraordinary part of his claim was that, if the opposition had known of the extra revenue, it would have affected its promises. After \$10 billion worth of promises, what else could they have promised? Two canals?

The real outrage in the Leader of the Opposition's response is his dismissal of the real benefits that Western Australians will receive as a result of the government's changes to land tax. He says that the only winner is the state government. What about the 24 000 Western Australia who will be completely exempt from land tax? They would have paid land tax but for the changes. What about the thousands of other genuine winners from the government's tax cuts?

The opposition wants to pretend that these tax cuts do not exist and the more it claims that there is only \$7 million worth of tax cuts, the more the Leader of the Opposition dents his own credibility. After all, using his logic, Peter Costello never introduced a tax cut in his life.

The speeches also show how divided and incoherent the Liberal Party is on financial matters today. Yesterday, members of the Liberal Party in this place were applauding the infrastructure spending and today the Leader of the Opposition is attacking one of the sources of funding for this infrastructure.

Ms K. Hodson-Thomas: Which member?

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The member for South Perth is the particular member I had in mind.

Members opposite are applauding the infrastructure spending while their own leader attacks the sources of funding for that very same spending. If the Leader of the Opposition really cares about debt, what projects will he cut - spending on electricity, roads, new hospitals or new schools? Which projects does he want to cut? The problem is we have a new opposition leader, but the more things change the more they stay the same. They still cannot add up, let alone subtract.