

PUBLIC ASSETS - PRIVATISATION

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

Can the Treasurer outline to the Parliament how much the economic success of the Carpenter government relies on funds raised from the privatisation of public assets?

Mr E.S. RIPPER replied:

The member is quite right to refer to the economic success of the Carpenter government and, before that, the Gallop government. It is remarkable economic success, and it has taken place without any privatisations. The government has delivered five budget surpluses with no privatisations. Compare that with our predecessors, who delivered five budget deficits out of eight budgets, and carried out major privatisations worth billions of dollars. The previous government sold Westrail and AlintaGas, but it still could not balance the books. The new opposition mentor, the member for Cottesloe, was a member of that government. He was a member of the previous government's budget committee. He knows all about selling off public assets. He had a plan to sell off Western Power. He knows all about unfunded promises. It is a pity the member for Vasse is not actually in the chamber -

Dr K.D. Hames: Can't you turn it down a bit? Don't talk so loudly.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: It is a pity the member for Vasse is not in the chamber. I was raising my voice because he is normally interjecting so frequently. Perhaps I can be a bit quieter, given his absence. For a few brief moments I thought the member for Vasse was ushering in a new era. I thought for a moment there might be a new opposition policy on finances. It turns out, however, that all he is doing is providing a new doctrine for the privatisations that would inevitably occur if the opposition ever came to power.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Is that the best you can do?

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The Leader of the Opposition's deputy advocates governments doing less with less and quotes William Weld, the former governor of Massachusetts. It is therefore appropriate for us to consider what William Weld was actually doing. He was implementing the Pioneer Institute's agenda; the less with less agenda came from the Pioneer Institute, and was adopted by William Weld. Now it has been adopted by the member for Vasse. Less with less means user pays for public transport. It would cost four dollars more for a train ticket from Perth to Joondalup.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: Imagine the *AvonLink*.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Imagine what the *AvonLink* would cost! The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has raised a good point. If I were in the National Party, I would be very concerned about what the less with less agenda means. It is very dangerous for regional Western Australia in particular, and for other areas. Less with less would mean a voucher system for funding education. We have already seen the opposition's mentor embark on something that could be described as the thin edge of the wedge for vouchers. He wants the government's pay-to-learn program to be funded by vouchers. That is the thin end of the wedge for using a voucher system for funding public education.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Good idea.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: A good idea, he says! He has provided more evidence that the Liberal Party would like to introduce a voucher system to fund public education. If Governor Weld is to be followed, less with less means closing down public mental health services, shifting patients into the private sector and selling off public assets. Members opposite cannot come into the house and quote less with less, refer favourably to William Weld and then pretend that they do not have that agenda in mind. They cannot pretend to not have an agenda to impose higher fees and charges, to provide fewer services, to impose a bigger burden for families or to privatise public assets. The opposition cannot have it both ways. If it believes in less with less, it must accept the implications of what less with less means for Western Australians - higher fees and charges, fewer services, less infrastructure and more privatisation. That is the agenda.