

BASE-LOAD POWER STATION, POWER PROCUREMENT PROCESS

656. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the power procurement process for a base-load power station. Have there been any recent developments?

Mr E.S. RIPPER replied:

I am very pleased to get that question from the member for Collie. It is a public question, but I have certainly received my share of private questions and, indeed, private statements from the member for Collie over the period that we have been discussing the base-load power station. I regard the member for Collie as a very formidable member. I must take account of the member for Collie's position whenever I consider anything in energy.

Ms J.A. Radisich: Or else!

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Yes, or else. That is absolutely right.

Today Western Power has announced the short list for the State's next base-load power station. I am pleased to advise the House that the short-listed bidders are Griffin Energy Pty Ltd, Wesfarmers J-POWER and Wambo Power Ventures Pty Ltd. As the member for Collie is no doubt aware, two of the bidders are coal proponents and the third is a gas-based proposal. The power procurement process is independent, fair and rigorous. The Government has always said that it will not play favourites with one fuel source or another. We want the best commercial outcome for the interests of Western Australian taxpayers. The member for Collie is always keen to remind me that coal is well placed to deliver the best commercial outcome, but the best commercial outcome is what we seek. In accordance with our policy, we must tackle the high energy prices that have plagued Western Australia as it competes in the global economy. We want to do everything possible to enable our economy to grow. We are seeking more investment, more growth and more jobs. We expect a final decision in September 2005.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You won't be here, member for Collie, so it won't matter.

The SPEAKER: I call to order the Leader of the Opposition for the third time and the Leader of the National Party.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: By that time I expect we will have the result of the Cottesloe by-election as well! At this point in the electoral cycle, it is reasonable to ask what is the policy of the other side of politics. We need to know what its policy is, because although it promised to release a policy by early October, it has not actually released it. I can understand why members opposite are having trouble putting together a policy. There appear to be some irreconcilable differences between the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow minister, the deputy leader of the coalition - but not the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The opposition leader pretends that he is now antiprivatisation, but he consistently refuses to rule out the privatisation of individual power stations. Therefore, he is in favour of privatising Western Power from the bottom up while he tells people that he is against privatising it from the top down. What is the view of the shadow Minister for Energy? On the question of privatising individual power stations, he has the opposite view. He has emphatically denied that the coalition would privatise a power station. That comment was reported in the *Collie Mail* of 9 September 2004. We must always check in Perth when members opposite say something in Collie. We need to read the newspaper the next day to find out what they are saying in Perth. Secondly, the opposition leader is on record as saying that he would abandon the base-load power procurement process despite its being a requirement of the law that he introduced. That comment was reported in the *Collie Mail* of 12 February 2004. I will quote the Act.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Correct.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The Leader of the Opposition agrees with that. Clause 3 of schedule 7 of the Electricity Corporation Act 1994 states -

(1) The corporation -

That is, Western Power -

must, whenever it requires any substantial new generation, procure that substantial new generation through a non-discriminatory and open procurement process.

The Leader of the Opposition therefore wants the Government to break the law on power procurement that he introduced. What does the deputy leader of the coalition - but not the Deputy Leader of the Opposition - the

shadow Minister for Energy say? He says the opposite, of course. In the *Collie Mail* on 15 July, a great newspaper that is very revealing about the coalition, he said -

... if the Coalition were to win the next election, the power procurement procedure would continue.

The Leader of the Opposition therefore says that the coalition would abandon it and the deputy leader of the coalition says that it would continue. The deputy leader of the coalition said that the coalition would not stop the process of the base-load power station and that if the coalition started it again, it would end up with a very similar process.

No wonder Western Australians are bewildered by the Opposition; it has a promise for every person. It does not matter whether the promise is impractical, illegal, costed or affordable; what matters is that the Opposition must have a promise for every person it meets. The Opposition has no credible financial plan to underlie any of the promises. The member who makes those promises presided over five out of eight budget deficits and he dares to come into this House and ask questions on financial management issues. The member who presided over our economy getting smaller and who increased taxes in five out of eight budgets still delivered five deficits.