

COLLIE POWER STATION, PRIVATISATION

**1208. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Energy:**

I refer to the Leader of the Opposition's plans to privatise the Collie power station. Will the Government's electricity reforms bring about privatisation of government-owned power stations?

**Mr E.S. RIPPER replied:**

As members know, the Cabinet has endorsed a prudent plan for the reform of the electricity supply in Western Australia. The plan is about lower prices, more investment and more economic growth. It is not a radical or revolutionary plan. It is a plan that will place a premium on job security and job growth, and it will maintain public ownership of Western Power and its successor entities. Labor is the only party that has guaranteed public ownership of Western Power.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Tell us the whole story.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I remind the member for Darling Range of what his own leader said on 7 November last year, as reported in *Western Australian Business News* -

If we had been in power one of Western Power's generators would have been privatised by now . . .

The Leader of the Opposition confirmed today in *The West Australian* that he plans to sell off the Collie power station. It will not end there. Muja power station will be next on the hit list, as well as other parts of Western Power. The Leader of the Opposition has learnt nothing from his botched sale of the Dampier to Bunbury natural gas pipeline and nothing from the failure of the taxpayer-funded investment in the Windimurra gas pipeline - the taxpayer-funded gas pipeline to nowhere. The Leader of the Opposition is still wedded to the outdated Thatcherite ideology of privatisation, in which the State would lose control of its economic destiny. However, the real reason that he has a privatisation agenda and cannot get out of it is his lazy approach to financial management: sell off an asset, splurge the proceeds and look around for something else to sell in the next year or subsequent years. The Leader of the Opposition has never been good at living within his means. The Minister for Education and Training pointed that out with regard to the portfolio responsibility that the Leader of the Opposition had in the previous Government and he is repeating that sin over and over again as he and his fellow shadow ministers promise and promise and promise and do not provide any financial plan. The only way out for them is privatisation.

It is interesting to compare members opposite with the Victorian Opposition. In *The Australian Financial Review* on 11 September 2002, the Victorian Leader of the Opposition, Robert Doyle, said -

The Liberal Party has no privatisation agenda, . . .

We do not wish to privatise anything further, and that is the end of the story as far as the Liberal Party is concerned.

If the leader of the Liberal Party in Western Australia thinks that the Western Australian public will tolerate more privatisation, he is sadly mistaken; they still remember how they were misled prior to the 1996 election about the prospects of AlintaGas being sold off. Which minister was responsible for that deceit?