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Question : AustralAsia Railway - Progress of Negotiations

Question Date : 20/02/2001
Member : Mr STIRLING
To : CHIEF MINISTER

Status : Questions

Information :
Territorians were treated with contempt by the Chief Minister over the past 2 months since he first became aware that there were difficulties concerning the railway. The Chief Minister knew of these difficulties in December but he didn't tell Territorians until near the end of January. The member for Braitling said that the Chief Minister had not been open and honest in his communication about the railway.

I ask the Chief Minister will he now undertake to keep Territorians accurately and honestly informed as to the progress of negotiations in the lead up to financial close, and I ask him how he intends to do that?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I intend to keep Territorians absolutely and adequately informed on all issues with regard to the railway saving, of course, those issues that it's not appropriate to be run in the media and there are some things that all Territorians understand is inappropriate to run in the media. If one looks at the comments that I’ve made consistently about this project, particularly since the shortfall of funding and the withdrawal of one potential investor has been known, can I say on this day that all of my predictions and concerns have been borne out. Now, if we're talking about keeping Territorians informed, let's get this straight. This is Clare Martin in October 1999 saying in a press release: 'A Beazley Labor government would have committed up $300m for the project and Territorians would have not have been forced to dig so deep'. Martin of 27 October 1999: 'Kim Beazley has stood by his commitment of up to $300m for the project; John Howard should at least match that'. 18 October 1999 Clare Martin: 'Federal Labor Leader Kim Beazley has committed up to $300m for the project, John Howard should at least match Kim Beazley's commitment'. On ABC Drive Time 13 February this year, this is Martin to the reporter: 'Its just a very important project. $70m John Howard that's what we want from you. Kim Beazley has made the Labor commitment of up to $300m. John Howard should be matching that and matching it now. Kim Beazley is the biggest supporter of the railway and that is an absolute rock bottom commitment', so says Clare Martin. And she goes on and on undertaking that this is Beazley's opinion, this is what Beazley will do. 'Have you spoken to Beazley', says the reporter. 'No, not lately'. As the interview finishes the reporter says, 'Just after I finished that interview with Clare Martin I had a return phone call from Labor Leader Kim Beazley's office. We rang him to find out whether that commitment of $300m was still there. As far as Kim Beazley is concerned his office said that they will no longer put a precise figure on their railway funding'.

The reporter said, 'Pretty interesting statement that came out of Kim Beazley's office'. So of it comes to keeping Territorians informed, if it comes to telling the truth to Territorians about the project, the truth is coming from this Chief Minister and this side of the House. The truth is to keep Territorians informed as to where the project is going and what difficulties the project may have had. As I stand here today I can say to Territorians I anticipate no problems. I anticipate no further problems with this project as it moves through rapidly down to financial close and construction to get underway.

The great lie is to somehow suggest to Territorians, as the Labor Party has done, that the Territory government or the Commonwealth government or the South Australian government were somehow responsible for the consortium finding its own private finances, and that has always been a lie. But that has been what the Labor Party have consistently run in order to undermine this project.