

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 84/2006
17 July 2006

The Opposition hold the Government politically responsible for the continuing problems being experienced by electricity consumers following the blitz in the collection of historic arrears. It is clear to the Opposition that the Electricity Authority would not have been able to proceed in this manner without the go-ahead from the Government at a political level, and therefore the Government must shoulder the burden for the unnecessary tension, stress and inconvenience that has been caused to many people.

The Opposition continue to be inundated with complaints from members of the public on this issue.

In one instance someone was sent a threatening letter to pay the grand sum of ten pence in historic arrears or have their supply disconnected. This means that it has probably cost the Government more to produce the letter, send it, and attend to the complainant than the sum which they aimed to recover.

In another case, an elderly pensioner with arrears received a threatening letter. The pensioner approached the Opposition and was advised to request to pay the arrears in monthly installments. It will be recalled that after the Opposition had come out publicly on the issue, the Electricity Authority announced that they would look into the circumstances of individual cases rather than adopt a blanket disconnection policy.

However, despite this assurance, the pensioner was told over the counter that payment in arrears was not possible, and unless the sum claimed was paid in full before the end of July the electricity supply would be cut off. The pensioner also went to see the Citizen's Advice Bureau and the Ombudsman to no avail. This has caused considerable distress.

In another case, a consumer was told that their existing supply would be cut off unless they paid a bill which was more than twenty years old and which related to different premises. On enquiring whether it was legal to claim arrears that were so old, the person was told that the legal advice of the Electricity Authority was that they could claim arrears which were up to fifty years old!

The Opposition reiterates that the huge amount of confusion, stress and inconvenience that has been created would never have happened had the Government not given the go ahead for an arrears blitz by the Electricity Authority in the first place.

ENDS