

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 91/2006
3 August 2006

The policy of the Government to embark on a blitz of electricity arrears continues to raise serious questions about the legality of the demands that are being made and the threats that are being issued to consumers.

It is clear to the Opposition that the reason why the Electricity Authority has embarked on this policy is because the Government expects them to collect £ 1 million in arrears this year. This can be clearly seen from the budget.

It is obvious that despite the assurances that consumers would be treated on a case by case basis, this is not what is happening in practice. The latest information supplied by a consumer to the Opposition is further evidence that what is actually happening is absolutely scandalous.

An electricity consumer has informed the Opposition that she has received her July bill showing that January, February and March have not been paid, even though they have been paid. The June bill received by the same person showed that there were no arrears outstanding and even May was paid at that time.

When the consumer approached the Electricity Authority and asked why she had received a threat of disconnection, she was told that there was an old bill dating back well over six years for different premises owed by the deceased father of the present tenant, or her own grandfather.

In other words, a client of the Electricity Authority who was up to date on her payments was threatened with disconnection because her grandfather who had passed away some years ago allegedly owed an outstanding sum for electricity supplied to different premises.

The Opposition considers that this state of affairs is absolutely deplorable. The legal basis for the threats made by the Electricity Authority are far from clear. It is beyond belief that the Government

seems to expect people to hold on to the electricity bills and receipts of their dead relatives after so many years have elapsed, for three generations, in order to be able to prove that the amount being demanded is not owed and has already been paid.

The Opposition considers that the political responsibility for this mess rests squarely with the GSD Government, who have given the political clearance for the Electricity Authority to behave in such an unreasonable manner.

ENDS