

Enron Tapes Anger Lawmakers

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During California's rolling blackouts, when streets were lit only by head lights and families were trapped in elevators, Enron Energy traders laughed, reports **CBS News Correspondent Vince Gonzales**.

One trader is heard on tapes obtained by **CBS News** saying, "Just cut 'em off. They're so f----d. They should just bring back f-----g horses and carriages, f-----g lamps, f-----g kerosene lamps."

And when describing his reaction when a business owner complained about high energy prices, another trader is heard on tape saying, "I just looked at him. I said, 'Move.' (laughter) The guy was like horrified. I go, 'Look, don't take it the wrong way. Move. It isn't getting fixed anytime soon.'"

California's attempt to deregulate energy markets became a disaster for consumers when companies like Enron manipulated the West Cost power market and even shut down plants so they could drive up prices.

There was quick reaction in Washington to the Enron audiotapes first aired by **CBS News** last night, and the tapes have become part of the debate over the President's massive energy bill.

"People were talking about market manipulation. People were talking about schemes, people were making jokes," said U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash.

"While the president would like to have an energy bill, I'd like to have an energy bill that protects consumers," said Cantwell.

Consumers like Grandma Millie, mentioned in one exchange recorded between two Enron employees.

Employee 1: "All the money you guys stole from those poor grandmothers in California?"

Employee 2: "Yeah, Grandma Millie man."

Employee 1: "Yeah, now she wants her f-----g money back for all the power you've charged right up, jammed right up her a—for f-----g \$250 a megawatt hour."

It's clear from the tapes that Enron employees knew what they were doing was wrong, and now lawmakers are responding.

"I will offer an amendment to compel the Bush administration to get off the dime and get back this money that has been stolen," said Rep. Jay Inslee, D-Wash.

Another taped exchange between different employees regarding a possible newspaper interview goes like this:

Employee 3: "This guy from the Wall Street Journal calls me up a little bit ago..."

Employee 4: "I wouldn't do it, because first of all you'd have to tell 'em a lot of lies because if you told the truth..."

Employee 3: "I'd get in trouble."

Employee 4: "You'd get in trouble."

Eventually, the lies unraveled and traders scrambled.

"I'm just -- f--k -- I'm just trying to be an honest camper so I only go to jail once," says one employee.

Two Enron traders, from the office where the tapes were made, have admitted manipulating energy prices and pled guilty in court. Another goes on trial in October. Former Enron chief Ken Lay is the only top company official who has never been charged with any crime.

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