

Sir, that I have it on rather good authority that no-one is kept alive unnecessarily for this reason.

In the event of a major accident in which a person is injured, he is kept alive for a time to see whether he is capable of surviving and in some cases he is. However, there is no danger of people being lined up waiting for various organs to be removed for people who need transplants.

The legislation concerning this matter in the United States is quite different from our legislation, but heaven forbid that we should ever embrace their laws.

The final point I should like to mention has something to do with responsibility both in society and in Government, but it is along different lines. Members may be aware that in one small area of my province a new police station has been constructed. I refer to Dumbleyung where, on 29 November last year a fire irreparably destroyed some of the school buildings. There was no doubt that the school suffered fire damage and replacement or repairs were required, and the insurance cover was valid. However, the insurance payment was not cleared until March of this year. I wonder why it took so long.

The information regarding replacement supplied to the headmaster and me—no doubt it was supplied to my colleague also—was incorrect. It was supplied by members of Government departments and it was most unfortunate that it was not accurate. We were told that, prior to the commencement of the school year, four transportables would arrive at the school and they would be ready for opening day.

The week the school opened, the headmaster and I were informed that two demountables would be there on opening day. In fact they arrived five weeks later, so there was a good deal of confusion and unnecessary bother. The demountables are being used at this school at the present time, but they have not been connected to the power supply. This may not sound a very serious matter, but I was at the school recently on a cloudy day and the light in those rooms was poor. The children have to study under these conditions as best they can without adequate light. I should point out we will have many more cloudy days as the year proceeds.

The teacher is unable to use the projector or any of the other electrical teaching aids, because the demountables are not connected to a power supply.

Nobody minds coping in an emergency and, indeed, the staff, pupils, and the P & C at Dumbleyung have coped magnificently. In fact they have a wonderful P & C down there and it

has done a great deal for the school. It has never refused a request which has been made by the staff and it has supported the department magnificently. However, somewhere along the line there has been a complete bungle on this matter. I do not know whether it occurred in the Education Department, the PWD, or somewhere else.

As a result, the local population has tended to blame the Government for the problem. They feel they have been let down badly. This is most unfortunate; I do not believe anybody will get the sack as a result of the situation, but surely some form of redress should be available and an investigation should be carried out to ascertain why such a long delay has occurred.

My most recent information is that tenders have been called for the work to be done some time in the near future, but the prognosis is that the work will certainly not be finished before 30 August this year, which is nine months after the fire took place. It seems this is a rather unnecessary delay and I hope the matter will be investigated and that in future we will have better communication between all concerned.

I support the motion.

THE HON. J. M. BERINSON (North-East Metropolitan) [8.52 p.m.]: I did not participate in last year's Address-in-Reply debate, nor for the same reason in last year's Budget debate. In fact, my only reason for speaking in the Address-in-Reply debate tonight is to explain why I abstained previously and why, in the absence of special circumstances, I will abstain from these particular debates in the future.

The concept of parliamentary debate, indeed the very word "debate" itself, connotes a certain convergence of minds on a common subject. That is precisely what the Address-in-Reply and the Budget debates do not do. Because, by tradition, we are individually allowed on these occasions to discuss anything in general we end up collectively discussing nothing in particular. Not only that, but we also discuss nothing in particular at inordinate length, that being the inevitable result of the quaint relic of a rule which permits us to speak in this Chamber without limitation of time.

Grant a politician the right to speak on anything indefinitely and one issues an invitation to tedium. That, with very few distinguished exceptions, is what we get and we get what we deserve.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: Why do you feel the adjournment debate is any different?

The Hon. J. M. BERINSON: It is different because we do not spend a month or six weeks on

the adjournment debate. We spend up to half an hour on it. In fact, if the Standing Orders Committee was inclined to accept a proposal I put to it, we would limit speeches in the adjournment debate to no more than 10 minutes and the whole debate to no more than a maximum stated period of time.

Another difference between the adjournment debate and the Address-in-Reply is that it is added to the debate on a particular day and we do not put aside all other business for weeks and, in some cases, months on end.

In my opinion, the main advantage of the availability of the adjournment debate is that it allows members to speak on matters which arise during the immediate time before it. Such matters have an element of urgency and they cannot be left to an opportunity which may not occur until weeks later. That is why I believe a certain amount of self-discipline ought to be applied to the adjournment debate and you, Sir, will appreciate from your own experience in your high office that, that of course, is the attitude I, together with my colleague, the Hon. Bob Hetherington, and other members on this side who find the adjournment debate very useful always adopt on such occasions. I have said that, in the course of the Address-in-Reply and Budget debates, we get what we deserve. However, the more important question is this: Is that what the public deserves?

After all, the operations of this House must cost our taxpayers at least \$3 million a year and surely, at that price or for that matter at any price, they are entitled to better value than they are getting out of our performance. I certainly believe they are entitled to better value and that a bit less attention to form and a much greater effort at substance is the least we could offer.

To do that, for a start, we should not only reduce the time permitted for each Address-in-Reply, but we should also reduce the number of such debates by two-thirds. We would achieve the latter by simply adjourning from each December to March in the course of a parliamentary term, rather than proroguing each year with a formal reopening and Address-in-Reply immediately thereafter.

You, Sir, will recall that at our recent opening I asked the Leader of the House why the Government insisted on the pomp and cost of our annual prorogations and openings. His answer was that there were a number of good reasons, but he could not think of any.

The Hon. I. G. Medcalf: I didn't say that.

The Hon. J. M. BERINSON: I paraphrased what the leader said in suggesting that his reply was to the effect that there were a lot of good reasons, but he could not think of any. Certainly whether or not that is what he said, he did not produce any reasons.

In fairness to the broad-minded and reasonable nature of the leader in this place, I must say he did volunteer to ask others and to let us know when he found out. That put me immediately in mind of the insurance salesman's lament that when a customer says "I will let you know", one knows! In any event I have not heard from the Leader of the House.

The Hon. I. G. Medcalf: You are too impatient.

The Hon. J. M. BERINSON: I hasten to assure the Leader of the House that, in the event he feels I might be overcome with anxiety at the delay, I am not holding my breath.

The Hon. I. G. Medcalf: You are straying off the subject.

The Hon. J. M. BERINSON: I will return to it then.

The Hon. I. G. Medcalf: You had better return to it quickly.

The Hon. J. M. BERINSON: I appreciate the invitation of the Leader of the House to return to the subject and to return to it quickly. I would appreciate it even more if he would similarly urge some of his own members who, unlike my intention to and practice of speaking for no more than 20 minutes on any occasion, tend to take much longer than that and wander through a much more rambling series of propositions than I intend to do.

To accept the leader's invitation and, indeed, to show respect to his requirement, given the authority of his office—

The Hon. I. G. Medcalf: I am anxious to hear your reasons.

The Hon. J. M. BERINSON:—I ask this further question and that is: Assuming we free the substantial time wasted now in these so-called debates and other anachronistic forms, how can we put that freed time to good use?

One thing we should not do is to artificially extend our debates on legislation. That would be as pointless as the exercise I am proposing to avoid. Nor should we engage in activities which are more appropriate to the Legislative Assembly.

In most cases, urgency motions and the like should clearly be left to the Assembly because that is where most of the Ministers are. As to what that leaves for us, on the experience of other upper Houses with similar concerns, it leaves, in

particular, the more effective use of House committees.

The Senate for example, has been active and reasonably effective in this respect; though, I am again forced to explain myself in the negative by making it clear that nothing remotely as comprehensive as the Senate committees could reasonably be considered by us. Our small numbers mitigate against that, as does the gross imbalance between the parties in this Chamber, that being one further damaging result of the rotten electoral system in this State.

The Hon. I. G. Medcalf: You are straying again.

The Hon. J. M. BERINSON: Allowing that, and the limitations in the way of a comprehensive system of Standing Committees—I am pleased to know my comment on the electoral system was not regarded by the Leader of the House as straying from the subject.

The Hon. I. G. Medcalf: I did.

The Hon. J. M. BERINSON: Allowing for all the conditions and limitations in the way of the comprehensive system of Standing Committees here, it appears to me that there is still a very important potential for Select Committee references on specific topics, on a much more frequent and deliberate basis than at present apply.

There is no point in my suggesting a comprehensive list of subjects which would be amenable to organised inquiries in this Chamber. Our resources would be exhausted long before the list. However, to give just some examples of the sort of question which would justify our concentrated attention rather than the periodic spasms which we now apply may I suggest the following—

the proliferation of shopping centres and the novel burdens which lessors are now imposing on lessees—many of them inexperienced small businessmen;

Public Service superannuation and its interaction with other conditions applying to the Public Service;

education, with particular reference to aspects such as the conflicting claims on staff-student ratios in this State and the ramifications of the teachers' campaign for time off from classroom teaching;

preference to unionists provisions in industrial law; and

energy conservation programmes in Government departments and instrumentalities, and so on.

It will be immediately apparent that a number of the possibilities I have suggested are in areas which are often dealt with by way of inquiries conducted by persons who are outside the Parliament.

Many such topics, however, raise essentially political questions on which the members of the House would certainly be no less qualified than others to offer advice, and in important respects, better qualified.

In many cases the Select Committee process could assist in the development of consensus recommendations. Even where they do not do that, even where our party differences were reflected in recommendations, the different approach would still have served the invaluable purpose of equipping its members with a certain level of expertise. That would be in highly desirable contrast to the well-intentioned amateurism which we are so often forced to apply under present circumstances.

The effectiveness of the work engaged in by the members of this Chamber is essentially in the hands of the members on the other side. They are the majority. It must be they who are prepared to refer appropriate items for committee consideration and to provide such committees with their essential supporting facilities.

Only they can test whether the public interest would be better served in this way than by the ritual forms which now consume so much of our time and energy. Speaking for myself, I have no reason to doubt that it would.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. R. J. L. Williams.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE: SPECIAL

THE HON. I. G. MEDCALF (Metropolitan—Leader of the House) [9.05 p.m.]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 7 April at 4.30 p.m.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE: ORDINARY

THE HON. I. G. MEDCALF (Metropolitan—Leader of the House) [9.06 p.m.]: I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Community Welfare: Children's Institution at Forrestfield

THE HON. R. HETHERINGTON (East Metropolitan) [9.07 p.m.]: I do not want to make