

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE — PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Leader of the House) [12.08 pm]: I move —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable private members' business to have priority on Wednesday, 12 October 2016, between 4.00 pm and 6.00 pm.

Putting in place changes to the standing orders at this time of the year is common practice. On the one hand, it allows reasonable time for opposition business to be raised and debated while, on the other hand, it allows government legislation to be progressed.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [12.08 pm]: It is very clear how badly this government has managed the state of the house. This motion to suspend standing orders is another example of that. Although it has been common practice in the past for private members' business to be curtailed towards the end of the year, we need to remind ourselves that much of the confusion about sitting times and the late sittings that have been cancelled or changed at the last minute lay purely at the feet of the Leader of the House and the government's management of this place. It is important to note that although the opposition agreed to curtail private members' business in the last sitting week of September, there was a very good reason for that; namely, the government had introduced yet another loan bill that, of course, was an urgent bill. It needed to be dealt with in a timely manner because of the government's, Treasurer's and Premier's haphazard and appalling handling of the state's economy, yet another loan bill was introduced seeking more than \$1 billion. That debate required some precedence, because if the Loan Bill does not pass both chambers, public servants, including teachers, nurses and others, will not be able to be paid. The opposition agreed to curtail private members' time in the last week of the September sitting, but we are not overly happy about the intention to curtail it today, because important matters of private members' business are listed that the opposition would like to see debated. The opposition does not support this motion to curtail private members' time for this week, because it is an example of the appalling stewardship of this house by the Leader of the House and the government.

Mr J.H.D. Day interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: What is wrong with you?

Mr J.H.D. Day: I said of course you would say that. It is not true; it's not based on the evidence.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We cooperated with the Leader of the House in the last week of the September sitting because of the urgency of the Loan Bill, but this motion requires this week's private members' time to be curtailed, and no doubt the government will move a similar motion next week, and possibly also in the November sittings.

Mr J.H.D. Day: We'll see what progress we make this week.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: We did two bills yesterday.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We finished two bills last night in a timely way, and not long past the 10.00 pm normal scheduled finish time. This is another example of the appalling stewardship of this place by the Leader of the House, and we will not support it.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [12.13 pm]: I, too, oppose this motion moved by the Leader of the House. Our Whip is quite correct in saying that it points to mismanagement by the government. I personally do not single out and blame solely the Leader of the House. This is a government-wide issue. I know that the Leader of the House obviously has some struggles because of the way the Premier runs the government and the cabinet. I sometimes wonder whether the Leader of the House knows, or whether the Premier has told him, what we are doing from one week to the next.

Ms M.M. Quirk: He's nodding!

Mr J.H.D. Day: I am nodding that I do know, and there is very strong communication between my office and that of the Premier.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The Leader of the House is not solely responsible, but his office needs to share some of the blame as well.

I thought that the Heritage Bill 2016 would be listed for debate this week. That was the priority in the last week that the house sat. We debated the Loan Bill, which I will get back to, but the Heritage Bill was also brought on for debate. Our spokesman on heritage had to attend the funeral of a family member on Thursday, so other members made their second reading contributions, and I was led to believe that we would hear our heritage spokesperson's speech and the response from the minister, and then we would get on with the consideration in detail stage of the Heritage Bill. However, the Heritage Bill is nowhere to be seen this week. The government has listed seven

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Mr John Day; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Rob Johnson; Deputy Speaker

priorities and the Heritage Bill is not among them, even though good progress had been made on it, and we could have moved from the second reading stage into the consideration in detail stage in quick time. I do not know why that has dropped off the government's agenda this week and why it has developed some new priorities.

The Leader of the House likes to pretend that what he has moved today is a common thing that happens every year. No, it is not. In fact, his curtailment of private members' time in September was unprecedented. At no stage, in any of the records that I have been able to look up or have had found for me, has a government taken opposition time in September. It has just never happened before. If the Leader of the House can find a record of that, he should let me know. I have looked back through recent years and I cannot find any example of private members' time being cancelled in September. However, we are living in extraordinary times because, as we know, this government has brought more loan bills before the house than any other government. In the last week that we sat in September—the week that destroyed the legislative program of the Leader of the House—we had to deal with yet another Barnett government loan bill to provide another \$1.7 billion so that public servants in this state could get paid. This is about government mismanagement.

The Leader of the House likes to blame the opposition because he did not make progress, but probably five bills could have gone through in that week if the government had not had to bring in yet another loan bill. We sat late on the Tuesday night and the Wednesday night, and despite that we finished the Loan Bill in time to make progress on the Heritage Bill. The government says that this is usual, but it is not; it has never happened before in September, and I doubt that the government can cite very many examples of it happening in October. If the Leader of the House has an example of an October curtailment of private members' business, I would like to know the year, because I have not found an October reference either. This is something that usually happens in November and December, in the last two weeks of Parliament, not four weeks out or, as we found when we last sat, some six weeks before the end of the year. It is unprecedented in September.

The standing orders have been in place for a very long time. The Parliament is the people's place. This is the democratic process. Our standing orders reflect the standing orders in many other democracies. Although the government may not like it, all Westminster Parliaments provide opposition time or private members' time. Those key times during the week include the one-hour matter of public interest debate, the three hours of private members' time, and the grievance time. Of the hour set aside for grievances, the opposition gets half an hour. As most members of the general public are aware, the other essentially opposition time is question time. Again, we get only half of that time. Half of the time is consumed by ministers answering dorothea dix questions that they have drafted. Half of them could possibly be dealt with by way of brief ministerial statements. For half of them, we have already read the press release the week before, two weeks before, the day before or on that morning. The minister comes into the house and, rather than making a brief ministerial statement, they read out a press statement. I can hear the member for Girrawheen laughing, because sometimes the Premier and the ministers ask what she is interjecting about. She is interjecting because they have not even changed the words of the press statements. Whole sentences and paragraphs have just been lifted from press statements. The press statements have been given to the media and made available to us, and they are out there on the internet, and then the ministers read them into Parliament. The government is talking about time being wasted, but ministers come in here at the start of the day and read out their press statements from the day before. When we have had a two-week break, as we have just had, a range of press statements will be sitting in the queue, and they will get rolled out this week. Ministers will waste five or 10 minutes at the start of each day reading out their press releases from the week before.

It is a bit rich for the government to come in here and blame the opposition for mismanagement of the legislative program. The legislative program is in a mess because of the government's mismanagement. If the government had not taken state debt from \$3.6 billion to well north of \$30 billion, heading north of \$40 billion, and if the government had any fiscal responsibility and restraint, this would not have happened. During the short period I was shadow Treasurer, I remember asking the Premier, "Will you put a cap in place? What will the cap be?" At that stage we were about \$14 billion to \$16 billion in debt. I asked, "What is the cap? Will it be \$20 billion?" Twenty billion dollars is a lot of money, and the Premier said, in his usual arrogant way, "Settle down, settle down, it's not going to be anything like that." I suppose he was right in a sense; it is not anything like that, it is heading towards double that! It is incomprehensible that this could happen in such a short time.

We are now seeing loan bill after loan bill, and a loan bill debate in this house is a general debate, for a very, very good reason. It is a general debate in which, under our standing orders, every member in this house has an opportunity to speak up on behalf of their constituents, and I believe that every member in this house should have done so. Certainly the majority of members on this side of the house spoke to the Loan Bill 2016, and for a very good reason, because what this government has done to the state's finances is simply extraordinary. It is without precedent.

I have looked at some of the comments the Premier has made over the years about the management of the house and the state's finances. If members care to look at some of the old *Hansards*, the member for Cottesloe was

absolutely indignant when Carmen Lawrence took state debt to \$1 billion—it was approaching \$1 billion. He said, “You’re going to take the state into more than \$1 billion of debt”. Twenty years ago the member for Cottesloe, the current Premier, was absolutely scathing about the so-called mismanagement of the former Labor government under Carmen Lawrence and her predecessors, when debt was approaching \$1 billion.

Fast-forward to June 2008, and under the stewardship of Eric Ripper the previous Labor government contained state debt to just \$3.6 billion. Imagine if the state’s finances could be anything like that now. In fact, imagine how much of a better position we would be in if the Premier had agreed only five short years ago to contain debt at \$20 billion—we would be laughing; we would be in a fantastic position. The Premier likes to blame everyone but himself for the situation the government finds itself in with regard to debt; the government likes to blame everyone but itself for the fact that its legislative program is in a shambles. If the government wants to know who has been wasting time in this Parliament, it should look at itself. It should have a look at the whole week of parliamentary sitting that has been wasted because the government had to bring in a loan bill to borrow more money—\$1.7 billion. The government would have preferred it if the opposition, the Independent member and others, had not spoken on that bill. It would have preferred us to just roll over and say, “Oh well, public servants have to get paid; it is what it is, let’s move on”. That was never going to happen, and nor should it happen. People should be rightly outraged, and members on this side of the house are rightly outraged about the total mismanagement of our state’s finances.

This Parliament has made good progress in recent times. Yesterday we got through two bills, and I do not see why we could not steam through a couple more government bills this week. That is, if anything, above the average number of bills the government has put through in recent times. The government should not blame us for slowing down the program, because it had to bring in the Loan Bill 2016, and under the standing orders a loan bill debate is a general debate.

While we are on the topic of making progress through the Parliament, the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges came up with a report more than a year ago that suggested some changes to modernise this Parliament—small steps. I thought they were very good suggestions. Yes, I am a member of that committee, as are you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Along with you, the Speaker, the member for Swan Hills, the member for Butler and me, we came up with a report that we all agreed on. That report went to the government. We recommended an update of the standing orders that, I think, would have greatly assisted in the management of this house; it had some give and take in it. That was the nature of our discussions and the nature of our report. There were some benefits for government—that is, some slightly shortened speaking times—and some opportunities for the opposition also, so there was a bit of give and take in that. If the government wants to cut our speaking times, what is it giving in response?

Members may have forgotten because the Premier has gone off this mantra now, but do members remember when the opposition would move to suspend standing orders on an issue? We would debate our matter of public interest on a Tuesday and then we would find out on the Wednesday or the Thursday about some new government scandal that had broken—some new dodgy deal, some further problem in the health system, some further problem with the road toll or police, or something new on the transport front—and we would bring that issue before the Parliament. Elizabeth Quay is another issue on which we have moved a number of times to suspend standing orders, and quite rightly. That is what the standing orders provide for. If an urgent or important issue of government accountability arises, the opposition can move to suspend standing orders and normally we have an MPI-style debate. It is quite contained; it is done within the hour. This is how Westminster parliaments work. It is an opportunity to bring the government to account and to get an explanation from the government so that the Premier and his ministers cannot hide. They have to go on the record, rather than just fob off some journalists with a few lines here and there. They cannot just issue a statement; they actually have to stand and deliver in the Parliament. They have to stand in here and explain themselves; explain what the situation is and what they have done.

The Leader of the House has had to explain all the issues that have occurred down at Elizabeth Quay, and he has done that, under the standing orders. However, over a period of two or three years we have heard the Premier say, “Oh, this is just a stunt. You guys have private members’ time. You should bring it up in private members’ time.” As members know, apart from when the Leader of the House moves a motion, as he has today, private members’ business is generally between 4.00 pm and 8.00 pm on a Wednesday, and there is a dinner break in between, so it is a total of about three hours. The way the current media works, that is not a particularly media-friendly time. Over time, we have seen a diminution in the number of journalists actually physically present to report Parliament. Quite clearly, they can now view Parliament on the internet or listen to it on their mobile phones or other devices, so to follow Parliament, they do not essentially need to physically be here, so we see fewer journalists from *The West Australian* or the ABC or other outlets sitting in the press gallery. It has never really been the practice for TV media to be present in the gallery as we get to late afternoon, let alone in the evening, so that is not a very media-friendly time and it is not the time to bring on those very important debates.

The Premier would tell us to use that time. Why should we use that time? Under the standing orders that is what a suspension is for. This is what happens in Westminster parliaments around the world. The Premier said, “Give up one of your private members’ hours and you can have a second MPI debate during the week. That might be better.” I said, “That would be better, because it means we could actually finish the debate.” If we look at what happened last time during private members’ business, I do not think the government was being fair on this. Having squished our three hours down to two hours, what did it do? To waste our time, it got its own backbenchers up to speak. I wanted to speak to a motion about the government’s failures in education and schools, because that is what our motion was about, and I was waiting for the call, but the member for Southern River would not give me the call. The member for Southern River gave the call to the member for Perth, and we listened to the biggest load of drivel. The member for Perth was saying, “And I’ve got all these schools in my electorate. First there’s Highgate primary, then there’s North Perth”! She got her facts confused and muddled, and she went on, “And there’s a very nice principal”—Mr Whoever—“and there’s a P&C at this school”! It was hardly a revelation, was it? It was just, “I’m going to go through every school in my electorate and say something about each of them.” The member for Perth sucked up 20 minutes or so of our time.

Mr J.H.D. Day: You have a short memory from your time in government!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: But we did not curtail the time. We did not say, “We’re going to use our numbers in September to cut private members’ time down by an hour, and then we’re going to have our own backbenchers suck up an hour of the time.” Is the government going to do that again this week? Is that the plan this week? When we move our motions this week, and 30 minutes comes up on the clock, are you guys going to see how many of your members can suck up our two hours? I hope not, because that was not good practice and I was angry about it then. The member for Perth copped a few interjections from me, because there was no way I was going to put up with that and not complain about it. There was no way I was going to let her read a little set piece out that she could then send out to her schools. I thought: If you send it out to your schools, you can send it out with all my highly critical interjections. That is what happens without cooperation in this place. That is what happens when the government says, “We’re going to cut the opposition’s time to raise legitimate issues and concerns, and we’re going to pump up a few of our backbenchers to fill the time.” I really think it is dirty pool for the government to come into this place at an unprecedented time—in September—and say, “We’re going to cut back your time, and then we’re going to use up what little time you have left of private members’ time.” That is against the principle of what private members’ time is intended for.

I know the Premier would like to rule autocratically—some people call him the emperor. He would like to be able to say, “We’re the government, we’ve got the numbers, we know what’s best for you. This is what’s happening; suck it up, it’s good for everybody.”

Mr J.H.D. Day: That’s complete rubbish. That’s not his attitude at all.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That might be all right for him in government and for his cabinet. We know what happens with his cabinet. Maybe his cabinet just says, “Yes, sir”, because we know what happens if members do not say, “Yes, sir.” How many ministers have been relegated to the back bench?

Mr J.H.D. Day: Are you there in the room in cabinet meetings?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I do not need to be in the room, because I think it is about 11, is it not, member for Hillarys?

Mr R.F. Johnson: Something like that, yes; 12.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is it 12? That is, again, unprecedented. Twelve former ministers are all now on the back bench. Why? Because they would not just suck it up when the Premier told them to; they just would not do as they were told. The Premier wants only yes-men around him. The Premier wants only good people like his friend the member for Kalamunda who will say, “I’m your friend, Colin; I’m sticking with you”; no doubt the member for Kalamunda will be with him to the end. His former Deputy Premier, the member for Dawesville, was with the Premier for a very long while, and was pretty dutiful. But I think there came a point for the member for Dawesville and—again in the autocratic way the Premier works—the Premier decided, “We’ve got a new plan; we’re going to have a new Deputy Premier.” That really was not news to anyone, because there was about a six-month lead-up to it. The Premier’s plan was to install the member for Scarborough, and elbow out the member for Dawesville. I think the only negotiation that likely took place there was on the timing that it should occur.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, can you complete your lunch outside the chamber, please?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: But what we have now —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can you please go outside and take your food with you? Thank you.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: — is an extraordinary number of ministers who have been sacked by the Premier.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I have asked you to go outside to finish eating, please, and take your food with you.

Mr J.H.D. Day: That is extremely disrespectful.

Mr P. Papalia: I wasn't going to eat anymore.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do not argue with me! I am in the chair, and I have asked you to do that. Will you please do that? Thank you.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: An extraordinary and unprecedented number of ministers have been tapped on the shoulder for not really doing anything wrong. The member for Murray–Wellington was told it is a bit like—these comments were in the media—being on a footy team; sometimes players play league and sometimes they play in the reserves. There was the suggestion that members can just go back to the reserves and they might get called up to the league again. I probably said to the member for Murray–Wellington—if I saw him I certainly would have said it—“If you believe that, you're a mug. The Premier's dropped you; you're not coming back.” But the Premier says members might be able to come back because it is about the Premier exerting control. I think that is a very unhealthy way to run government. Individual ministers have individual responsibilities under the various acts of Parliament. They should be able to execute those duties without fear or favour. I do not think any of the dumped ministers committed any criminal offence. I do not think they abused government finances or did anything extraordinarily bad; in fact, the Premier could or would not say why some of them were dropped. I do not know why Hon Robyn McSweeney, Hon Simon O'Brien or the assorted other ministers were dropped —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Midland, can you just return to the subject of the motion, please.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Sure. Thanks.

I suppose the link here—if you want me to join the dots, Madam Deputy Speaker—is the way the government treats this Parliament with contempt by moving this motion today, which it will get up based on the numbers. Unlike the member for Mandurah, who said earlier in the debate that he blamed the Leader of the House for the mismanagement, I do not so much blame the Leader of the House. I think he is also partly a victim in this, because it starts at the top. It starts with the Premier and the way he treats the Parliament with contempt, and the way he runs the government. His treatment of his ministers and the way he runs cabinet is symptomatic of that. We are now seeing that flowing over into the Parliament. We are seeing these kinds of autocratic, bolschie decisions he makes, when he moves the chess pieces around and says, “No, you didn't show the right attitude—you didn't suck up enough—you're on the back bench for a while. You're in the reserves; I'll let you know when it is your time to come back in.” I do not think the Premier has actually brought anyone back in. I do not think that Hon Simon O'Brien or —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Midland, can you please concentrate on the motion.

Mr R.F. Johnson: With Troy Buswell, he did.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Sorry; good point, member for Hillarys!

Point of Order

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The Deputy Speaker alluded to what I have been thinking about raising for about the past 10 minutes. The member for Midland is raising a whole range of extraneous issues about which we can have a debate if the opposition really wants to. But the motion I have moved is very limited in its effect and purpose—it is simply about the amount of time for private members' business. It will enable us to sit after 7.00 pm tonight to continue with government business so that we can actually operate this Parliament in an efficient manner. That way, the opposition will have ample time to raise issues effectively, but also Parliament will have some semblance of operating efficiently. For those watching on the internet or in other ways, I am sure they understand that this is not what the member for Midland is doing.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: How long can a point of order be? He is giving a speech! The Leader of the House will get a chance to respond.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Further to the point of order, the Leader of the House is absolutely wrong. This motion is to reduce private members' time from three hours to two hours. A lot of the comments made so far have been very salient to that. It has nothing to do with the fact that we are going to sit late or whatever else; it is the reduction of private members' time.

Mr D.T. Redman interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That is the point of order! That is what the motion is, and the Leader of the House is saying it is something about sitting late.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! The debate is required to be relevant to the motion. I think that the member for Midland endeavoured to do that after she was asked, so I will go back to her, but please address the motion. Thank you.

Debate Resumed

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Thank you; yes, I am very happy to address the motion. Perhaps I can remind members of the house of the motion before us. The Leader of the House moved the following motion —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable private members' business to have priority on Wednesday, 12 October 2016, between 4.00 pm and 6.00 pm.

The motion does not say anything about sitting late, as the member for Hillarys rightly pointed out. This motion is about constraining private members' time to between 4.00 pm and 6.00 pm. If anyone reads this later or is listening now and wonders what the regular private members' time is, it usually extends to 7.00 pm; we normally have three hours. If the government decrees that we sit late on a Wednesday evening and a dinner break is thereby called because it is necessary for Parliament staff, then a dinner break is held between 6.00 pm and 7.00 pm. The Leader of the House said that we should have some commonsense because we have to sit late nights. My point is that we are sitting late nights because of government mismanagement. The rot starts at the top. It is noble and probably necessary to stay in the Premier's cabinet to defend the government's move and defend the outcome that the Premier wants. Perhaps the Leader of the House would get a lot more cooperation if the government took a more sensible approach and did not curtail our private members' time at such an early stage of the year. I still call on the Leader of the House to cite examples and dates of when this has occurred in the past. I do not think there are any examples of it happening in September, as the government did to us a couple of weeks ago when it arrogantly moved the motion, thinking "We need government time; let's cut an hour of private members' time because we don't want to hear that griping opposition complaining about problems in the education system in this state." Maybe tonight the government does not want to hear our motions at length.

In normal circumstances, private members' time would be three hours. That is the standard requirement for debate under the standing orders. Tonight, we will move a motion about Macro Realty and Veronica Macpherson. This issue has been raised in the media and there are a lot of questions about it. The member for Cockburn wants to raise this issue thoroughly with the member for Pilbara. We expect to hear an answer from the member for Pilbara about the concerns raised by the member for Cockburn. In our private members' time, we will then deal with a motion about the City of Perth, which will be moved by the member for Mandurah. Again, I think it is a very important issue and a very good motion. I have no doubt that the government will be inclined to vote against both those motions—that is its right—however, under the standing orders we have the right to have an opportunity to raise motions and air our concerns. Regarding the City of Perth motion, there has been an enormous and ongoing saga. We want the full three hours of private members' time to be able to raise those issues.

This motion is bad management. The Leader of the House could have got a lot more cooperation. He should have looked at the very sensible suggestions that were put forward by the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges and not just said, "We're going to grab all the good things for government out of the package and the opposition can have a few crumbs."

Mr J.H.D. Day: I wrote back to that committee two years ago, or thereabouts, and I haven't heard anything back since.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I do not want to disclose other confidences of the Leader of the House, but I understand that he has had discussions with other parties. If the Leader of the House wants to deal with that, we can.

Mr J.H.D. Day: It was a good couple of years ago now.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, that is right.

Several members interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: If the Leader of the House has changed his mind or he has a problem with the Speaker and his response to his correspondence, perhaps he could raise that with the Speaker, but I do not think that is a path he will want to go down on this occasion.

That is one issue. The other issue is that if the Leader of the House wants some cooperation here, cooperation is about give and take. The government will just get our backs up as it did when it moved the motion in September, at an unprecedented time. We chose not to quibble about the motion then. We chose not to quibble about this same motion a couple of weeks ago because the government was in the position of having a loan bill to debate. It gave every member on this side of the house the opportunity to speak and raise issues in a general debate. We copped it sweet and understood that we would get only two hours. However, the government did not play fair; it played some dirty pool and put its backbenchers up to consume the two hours that the opposition's time had been cut down to. That was not fair and not right, yet the government wonders why there is no spirit of cooperation.

Yes, I have spoken for 30 minutes. That just shows government members what happens without a spirit of cooperation—when it wants to ride roughshod over the opposition and use its numbers to squish our private members' time. The government has gained very little. It has gained less than half an hour and I do not think it is worth antagonising people. I hope, this afternoon, that the government will not antagonise us further by having its backbenchers drivel on about matters that we raise in private members' business. If backbenchers want to raise issues, they have the opportunity to get a good hearing and speak directly to a number of ministers. On Thursday mornings, they also have the opportunity to raise grievances. Indeed, they also have the opportunity to ask questions in question time to raise issues, but they do not seem to raise their own issues. They merely read out questions provided to them by ministers about their own press releases. Despite the fact that I still have 28 minutes left to speak on this motion, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will not use my full speaking time today. However, I want to caution the Leader of the House about his approach of "I'll use the numbers on you" and curtail private members' time. I want him to quote any examples he has from September or October in any previous years where this guillotine has been used to cut short private members' time.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys) [12.48 pm]: The motion before the house is —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable private members' business to have priority on Wednesday, 12 October 2016, between 4.00 pm and 6.00 pm.

I have heard nothing from the Leader of the House to justify why we should support this motion. I do not support it. I agree with many of the member for Midland's comments, who is the manager of opposition business. I have also been in that position. Quite frankly, I cannot remember the house rising in the middle of November, which is what we will do this year. If the Leader of the House, and particularly the Premier, feel that more time is needed to debate government bills, then I have suggested many times in this house in the last two or three months that we should sit extra weeks. However, unfortunately, the Premier does not want to do that. There is an old saying in this place, Madam Deputy Speaker: all the while that the lights are on in Parliament House, the government is being beaten around the head. That is true. By closing Parliament, the government is not being held accountable by this Parliament.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Exactly.

In all the years that I have been here, the upper house will normally sit one week longer than the lower house. Nobody has been here longer than me, other than the Premier. I think he got here about 18 months before I came in, which was at the same time as the Leader of the House and the member for Dawesville, although the member for Dawesville had a holiday in between for about four years! The Leader of the House and I are the only other members who have been here for 24 years; in February, we will have been here for 24 years. I have never seen the house rise in the middle of November, other than of course when Alan Carpenter was Premier and he called an early election in 2008, which the Liberal Party won.

I have to tell members this. It is a bit of history but it is very salient to the motion. When the Liberal Party was in opposition, the then Leader of the Opposition, who is now the Premier, sacked the present Leader of the House because he was doing a dreadful job as manager of opposition business and he pleaded with me to take on the job. It is an absolute fact. He pleaded with me to take on the job because, unfortunately, the member for Kalamunda—not the member for Darling Range—who was the manager of opposition business could not seem to get his act together.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: He was the member for Darling Range back then.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Yes, back then he was, but now it has changed. I have seen many electorates change. That is what the Premier wanted me to do. The moment I took over the job, I did it fairly successfully. In the first four years of this government, I was Leader of the House and we never had a situation quite like this.

Mr J.H.D. Day: You moved similar motions.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: We did not at this time of the year. We did for the last couple of weeks of the year, but not at this time, and we did not get up in the middle of November. The Leader of the House knows that as well as I do. It is a question of not being accountable.

Mr J.H.D. Day interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Leader of the House!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The problem is that the moment the upper house rises, which will be one week after this house rises, I guarantee the Premier will prorogue Parliament. That means he will shut down not only Parliament, but also every committee in place at the moment. There will be no accountability, no interrogations, no investigations and no inquiries—nothing—until after the election. That is the way this Premier wants it. He does not want to be questioned or interrogated on anything—and there are many things. That is what is wrong.

This Parliament is supreme. It is supreme to the government. The government comes under Parliament. Parliament is the first place. It is the people's house. This is where we should have the time to debate very important issues.

The other point I want to make is that when we first sat and the Premier's Statement was about to be made and certain bills and other matters were to be reinstated to the notice paper, the Treasurer's advance bills that had built up for about two or three years were dropped off. Members were promised that those bills would be reintroduced so that we could question the Treasurer about the billions of dollars that had been spent through Treasurer's advance bills. That has not happened and it will not happen. We cannot question the Treasurer because those bills have not been reintroduced. That is another broken promise. The Treasurer promised that in this house, and if people go back through *Hansard*, they will see that that was a promise he made. I wanted to make sure that he did that, because that is an open debate. The only chance that opposition or Independent members really have to speak is during private members' time; that is the only time we have. The Leader of the House even tried to gag me from making a comment on the suspension of standing orders to bring forward a motion. That would have denied me the right to speak not only for myself, but also on behalf of my constituents. Every member in this house has not only a right, but also an obligation to speak on behalf of their constituents. That is why we are here. We are not here because we are good looking or sexy—even if we have a nice haircut! We are here to represent our electorates and we speak up for those people. I am sure that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and every other member in the house want to do the same thing.

It is a disgrace to cut Parliament short in this term, and it is compounded by the Leader of the House moving a motion so early on in the piece. During the last two-week sitting, I said to some opposition members that I had never seen this happen six weeks out from the end of the year. We have nine more sitting days and then the government can go on holiday. It does not have to be answerable to Parliament. We have nine more sitting days, and one week after that, the upper house will go on holiday and then Parliament will be prorogued.

I will not speak for much longer, but I feel very strongly about the running of this house. As one of the longest serving members in this house, I think I have a right to say what I want to say. It is disgraceful. I have always quite liked the member for Kalamunda. I was going to nominate him to be the leader when I was still in the Liberal Party. I was going to nominate him, because, quite frankly, he is not dynamic. He does not wear his underpants over his trousers or have a cape at the back. He has a safe pair of hands and I reckon he would have done a good job as Premier until the next election, because he would have been safe. He would not have squandered money like the Premier has done.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I have known the member for a long time and I do not have any ill feelings towards him.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: His biggest problem is that, like a good soldier, he simply takes instructions from the emperor, even to the extent that he was prepared to sit on the back bench as Leader of the House. I have never seen a Leader of the House in a Westminster system of Parliament sit anywhere other than on the front bench. The member for Dawesville did not want to be the Leader of the House. He likes going home early; he always did, even when he was a minister. The poor old member for Kalamunda did not want this job, but the Premier said, "I want you to do it, John", so of course he did it. He will do whatever the Premier tells him to do. I am afraid that my dear friend does a terrible job as Leader of the House; he did so in opposition and he is doing so now. I am very sorry to say that, but it is true.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The Leader of the House might need to buy a pair of underpants and wear them over his trousers and get a cape and he might do a better job.

I am really sorry, but I do not support the motion. It is too early for Parliament to rise and it is too early in the year to move this motion. It should be moved in the last two sitting weeks, and that is how it has been for years and years. Show some courage, Leader of the House. The Leader of the House should show the emperor that he is not just going to be his lackey and do whatever he wants him to do. He should show the Premier that he is the Leader of the House.

Mr J.H.D. Day: You're wrong in your assumption.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It is the Leader of the House's job; it is his responsibility. It is not the Premier's. He used to try to bully me all the time, but he did not get away with it and that is why he wanted to get rid of me. Good people have been moved to the back bench, and one is sitting in front of me. He is a decent, honest person, a true

Christian and a great man. He was a great minister too; he was very committed and capable. He is also a very good friend. I cannot say enough about my very good friend the member for Eyre. The Leader of the House should show some courage, stand up to the emperor, tell him to get stuffed —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member! Watch your language!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: — and tell him that he is going to do the job that he is supposed to do, and that is the job of Leader of the House. I ask him to carry out his duties to Parliament diligently and honestly and with courage.

MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Leader of the House) [12.57 pm] — in reply: I am very happy to provide a response if the opposition would like it. Firstly, I point out to members, and they might have observed, that the government has been very sparing in the presentation of brief ministerial statements in recent weeks.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The purpose of that has been to allow more time for debate, to allow legislation to be dealt with and, therefore by definition, to allow more time for the opposition to debate legislation. Secondly, during question time in recent times, the answers have been generally relatively short. That has allowed more time for questions to be asked. The third point I make in response is about the concerns raised by the member for Midland about government members using up much of opposition time or, effectively, private members' time. That is not my intention today. However, it is expected that the ministers to whom the motions are directed at the very least would be given time to respond, and that would not be a surprise to the opposition. Certainly, we are very supportive of the opposition having adequate time to effectively and efficiently raise issues in this place but without filibustering, as we have just seen to some extent.

The final point I make is that members opposite asked for examples of when private members' time has been suspended. This is a one-off this week. It does not apply for the rest of the year, although I expect that we probably will put in place similar arrangements for the last couple of weeks of the year depending on the progress that we make on legislation. I am conscious that there will probably be quite a number of speakers on the Genetically Modified Crops Free Areas Repeal Bill 2015. The purpose of this motion is to allow adequate time for opposition members in particular to debate that bill if they wish to.

In relation to precedents, certainly going back to the days of Labor governments in the 1980s, in 1989, private members' business time was reduced and grievances were suspended for the last four weeks of the sitting; in 1988, for the last six weeks; in 1986, for the last four weeks; and in 1984, for the last seven weeks.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): Order! Thank you, minister.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, you are called.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: More recently, in the days of the then coalition government, in 1993, private members' business time was reduced and grievances were suspended for the last five weeks of the sitting; in 1994, for the last four weeks; and in 1995, for the last four weeks. Generally, since that time, the number of weeks has been fewer; I accept that. However, commonly in the days of the Labor government, of which the member for Midland and others were members, there was also a suspension —

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I have not finished my sentence, if the member for Midland does not mind!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, let us not have too much debate across the chamber. Let the minister continue. He has the floor.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I was about to say that —

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, you are called. Thank you.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I was about to say that there was also a suspension of grievances in the last couple of weeks. That is not something that I recall our government has done in the last year or two, and that is certainly not what we are doing this week. As I said, this is a one-off for this week, in particular to allow more time for the GM crops free areas repeal bill to be debated if the opposition wishes. We need to make progress on legislation. There are two repeal bills to be dealt with hopefully today. It was indicated to me last night by the member for West Swan that those bills would be dealt with efficiently today. They are not bills that need to take a long time.

Mr John Day; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Rob Johnson; Deputy Speaker

Indeed, it could well be argued that the two repeal bills that we dealt with yesterday did not need the amount of time that they did take. However, in the end, last night we were able to move through those bills more quickly.

That is the background to why the government has moved this motion. This motion will have limited effect. It is not the intention of the government, and it is certainly not my intention, that the two hours will be commandeered by government members in an excessive way. However, it is reasonable to expect that at least the ministers will be able to respond if time allows. I support the motion.

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Ms J.M. Freeman) casting her vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (34)

Mr P. Abetz	Ms W.M. Duncan	Dr G.G. Jacobs	Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr F.A. Alban	Ms E. Evangel	Mr S.K. L'Estrange	Mr J. Norberger
Mr C.J. Barnett	Mr J.M. Francis	Mr R.S. Love	Mr D.T. Redman
Mr I.M. Britza	Mrs G.J. Godfrey	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr G.M. Castrilli	Mr B.J. Grylls	Mr J.E. McGrath	Mr M.H. Taylor
Mr V.A. Catania	Dr K.D. Hames	Mr P.T. Miles	Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr M.J. Cowper	Mrs L.M. Harvey	Ms A.R. Mitchell	Ms L. Mettam (<i>Teller</i>)
Ms M.J. Davies	Mr C.D. Hatton	Mr N.W. Morton	
Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr A.P. Jacob	Dr M.D. Nahan	

Noes (20)

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr P. Papalia	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Dr A.D. Buti	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr M. McGowan	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr P.B. Watson
Ms J.M. Freeman	Ms S.F. McGurk	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr R.F. Johnson	Mr M.P. Murray	Ms R. Saffioti	Mr D.A. Templeman (<i>Teller</i>)

Pairs

Mr A. Krsticevic	Mr D.J. Kelly
Mr I.C. Blayney	Ms J. Farrer

Question thus passed.