

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys — Leader of the House) [12.23 pm]: I move —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable private members' business to have priority from 4.00 pm to 6.00 pm on Wednesday, 23 June 2010.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham) [12.23 pm]: I want to speak to this motion briefly so that members understand what is happening here. The Leader of the House has moved that private members' time tonight, which everyone knows is usually three hours, be reduced to two hours. One hour of what is ordinarily understood to be opposition time —

Dr K.D. Hames: That sounds like a familiar process.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I realise the Deputy Premier is an expert on standing orders and he is regularly quoted in Erskine May as an authority. I want members to understand that private members' time will be reduced to two hours from three hours, so an hour of opposition time will be lost. I do not intend to delay the house; I realise there is a lot of legislation to get through. The opposition is agreeable to most, if not all, of the legislation, subject to appropriate and proper scrutiny, which is the role of the Parliament.

We are agreeable to the reduction of an hour of our time. Historically, at the end of the year, of course, private members' business is often dispensed with. But I think in recent years it has been reduced by one hour in the middle of the year only once.

Mr R.F. Johnson: In 2008.

Mr M. McGOWAN: In earlier years, throughout the former government's term, it was not. There is one precedent, but considering the amount of legislation to be dealt with, I am agreeable to that.

However, I want to raise something in this context. Tomorrow the member for Armadale will read her valedictory speech in this place. The member for Armadale is a long-serving member of this house who has been a senior minister and who has performed a very valuable role for the people of Western Australia. She has been a very significant figure in Western Australian politics, the Western Australian government and the lives of many people throughout our state. She is also a very popular local member. I would like to see her valedictory come on at a reasonable hour so that all members can be here to listen and so that its subject can be appropriately absorbed by the general public of Western Australia. The hour I have requested for her valedictory is immediately after question time—as members will understand, that is at around 10 to three or so—tomorrow afternoon so that she can make her final speech to the Parliament after 17 years as a member of this house and, formerly, the upper house.

I indicate to the Leader of the House that we are agreeable to the reduction of an hour of our private members' business, but the only thing we would like in return is for the member for Armadale to make her valedictory at a reasonable hour immediately after question time tomorrow. I looked up when Hendy Cowan, a former Deputy Premier, retired from Parliament in September 2001, and he made his speech at 3.25 in the afternoon. I remember hearing part of his speech. He made his valedictory speech after 27 or so years in the house at a time that was suitable to him. I think the same courtesy should be offered to the member for Armadale tomorrow that we, as a government, extended to Hendy Cowan, a member of similar political stature, I suppose, to that of the member for Armadale. He is a person who, similarly, served for a long time as a minister and is a person of substance. I think we should extend that courtesy to the member for Armadale as fellow members of Parliament, not as members of the Liberal–National or Labor Party or as Independents. My plea to the government is to extend the same courtesy to the member for Armadale as we extended to Hendy Cowan, and allow her to make her valedictory speech on Thursday at a time of her choosing so that she can bring along her family members and friends with some certainty about the time it will take place. We will cooperate completely with the government on the reduction of an hour of private members' time this evening. I think that is a reasonable and fair request in the spirit of cooperation. I hope the Leader of the House will stand and respond to my speech and say that is a fair and reasonable request, and will agree to it.

The letter I have received from the Leader of the House indicates that the time for the member for Armadale's valedictory will be at the conclusion of all the legislation. We do not know what time that will be. Considering the government expects to deal with 12 bills this week, that could very well be at six, seven or eight o'clock tomorrow evening. If the member for Armadale wants to bring along family and friends and supporters of her over 17 years in this place, I think that simple courtesy should be extended.

I will tell the Leader of the House that, after the next election when he and the Premier and so forth come in to make their valedictory speeches, we will extend the same courtesy and provide him with a time of his choosing. I think that will be a fair return in 2013.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys — Leader of the House) [12.30 pm] — in reply: I cannot resist the opportunity to respond to the manager of opposition business. It will be a long time before I make my valedictory speech. Members opposite will have to put up with me for a long time, God willing! I do not know whether the manager of opposition business is trying to bribe me. He knows that that will not work. The manager of opposition business and I discussed the issue of the member for Armadale giving her valedictory speech. Of course, the government will make time for the member's valedictory speech. It is a convention of this house that the government makes time for valedictory speeches. Conventions are important. Last night the Leader of the Opposition accused me of possibly breaking a convention of this house because I realised what stunt the opposition was going to pull after midnight. The manager of opposition business knows exactly what I am talking about and so does the Whip. I ask the member for Mandurah to please not shake his head. The member should be honest when he is in the chamber. Do not play me for a fool. I know exactly why the member for Girrawheen was brought back into the chamber at 11.20 pm last night. The opposition was going to pull a stunt. I have seen that sort of stunt before because I have been in this place a long time.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Mandurah! The motion before the house is about the precedence of private members' business. The manager of opposition business has put a proposal to the Leader of the House, and the Leader of the House now has an opportunity to respond. This is not an opportunity for other members to engage in the process unless they stand and seek the call.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I had a conversation with the manager of opposition business about this matter yesterday. Last Monday or Friday I received a message from parliamentary services that the opposition would very much like for the member for Armadale to give her valedictory speech immediately after question time on Thursday. I told the manager of opposition business that, as Leader of the House, it is my duty to get as much legislation as possible through this house before the winter break. I told the manager of opposition business that, provided there was good passage of legislation, there would not be a problem with the member giving her valedictory speech at that time. However, I also said that if the opposition filibustered, the giving of that speech would have to be delayed. Let us see how we go today. I would like to be able to allow the member for Armadale —

Mr F.M. Logan: You shouldn't be using a bribe.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That is exactly what the manager of opposition business did.

Mr F.M. Logan: You're saying that if we pass your legislation, you'll abide by parliamentary custom.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am not saying that all. I am saying that it is my job to ensure that legislation gets through this house so that it can be transmitted to the Council.

Mr M. McGowan: We provided that opportunity to Hendy Cowan back in 2001. Are you saying that you're not going to agree to the same arrangement we provided him?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: As I understand it, the Labor government gave Hendy Cowan the opportunity to give his valedictory speech at 3.20 pm, which is well after question time.

Mr M. McGowan: That's 20 minutes after question time.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Question time finished a bit earlier in those days.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It may well be the same this time. I guarantee that tomorrow morning I will tell the manager of opposition business exactly what time the member for Armadale can give her valedictory speech so that her family can be in the public gallery to listen to that speech. I appreciate that she would want to have her family here. I would like to cooperate with the opposition; however, cooperation is a two-way street. I would like cooperation from members opposite so that I can do my job. All I ask is that members be reasonable. When I was doing the job that the member for Rockingham is now doing, I was extremely cooperative. The only time the Liberal Party filibustered debate when it was in opposition was when it totally opposed a bill. Most of the time we had only one or two speakers.

Mr P. Papalia: That's because you're incapable of carrying a debate.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: My friend the member for Warnbro is not capable of anything.

The SPEAKER: If the member for Warnbro wants to seek the call, he should seek the call. I formally call him for the first time.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 23 June 2010]

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Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Mark McGowan; Speaker; Mr David Templeman

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I will do everything I can to ensure that the member for Armadale is given a good opportunity to give her valedictory speech tomorrow afternoon.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [12.34 pm]: Mr Speaker —

Mr R.F. Johnson: He can't get up now because I've already responded.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, the Leader of the House has replied.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: You did indicate, Mr Speaker, that if I wanted to seek the call I would be given an opportunity to speak.

The SPEAKER: The member cannot give a speech now. He should have sought the call before the Leader of the House sought the call.

Question put and passed.