

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

Special

HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural - Leader of the House) [5.00 pm]: I move without notice -

That the House at its rising be adjourned for 30 minutes, at which time the bells are to be rung for five minutes and the House is then to proceed to sit in accordance with the routine of business prescribed by Standing Order No 125, but nothing in Standing Order No 61 as to the time of adjournment applies to that sitting.

HON N.F. MOORE (Mining and Pastoral - Leader of the Opposition) [5.01pm]: This motion is new to me; I have never seen it before.

Hon Kim Chance: You used it in 1997!

Hon N.F. MOORE: I would like a copy of it so that I can see exactly what it says.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I will tell the House why I oppose this motion. My objections to it are the same as my objections to the previous motion. Hon Bruce Donaldson has admitted that he is a gentle soul who does not often get angry. He has just said what I would like to say. I get angry more often than he does, and I am very angry about how the Government has handled this business.

The Leader of the House has conveniently avoided moving a gag motion -

Hon Kim Chance: I did not get a chance to move the gag.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Both the leader and I know that he could have moved it at any time. I indicated to him this morning what members on this side of the House would do in the event that he moved a gag motion today, particularly the second motion of which he gave notice.

Hon Kim Chance: I will move that later.

Hon N.F. MOORE: If he moves that motion, the situation I flagged this morning will prevail. Having avoided a gag motion on the original motion, the leader has avoided the situation I predicted. I will consult my colleagues about whether this motion is of the same magnitude and whether it will have the same effect.

Regrettably, we have been arguing all day to avoid sitting tonight, and for good reason. For some reason or another, the Government is intent on having the House sit tonight. We will now adjourn for 30 minutes, after which the bells will be rung and off we will go again.

Point of Order

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Standing Order No 61(b) provides -

Where the House is sitting at 10.00 pm or 5.00 pm, as the case may be, the President, unless the House has otherwise ordered, shall interrupt the business then proceeding and any debate then in progress shall be deemed to be adjourned. The business interrupted, and any debate so adjourned, shall be set down for resumption on the next day of sitting.

Mr President, I would like your interpretation.

The PRESIDENT: In accordance with Standing Order No 61, I interrupted proceedings at 5.00 pm. Standing Order No 61(d) provides that it is then in order for certain things to be considered. One is messages - in some cases second reading speeches are delivered - and the other is certainly specifically contemplated in Standing Order No 61(d)(ii); that is, either a motion for a special adjournment or an ordinary motion for adjournment. This is indeed a special adjournment motion rather than an ordinary adjournment motion. Standing Order No 61(d)(ii) does contemplate that after 5.00 pm the House may entertain motions on either of those matters.

Debate Resumed

Hon N.F. MOORE: I thank the member for that point of order. It helps to explain what the Government is now proposing. As I understand it, we will disappear for 30 minutes after this motion is passed. I presume the Greens will support it. We will then go on with normal business until the Government is satisfied it has had its way. The Opposition will not sit back and take this sort of nonsense. We will debate this properly. When in opposition, members opposite told us day after day, week after week and month after month that this is a House of Review and its job is to review and debate legislation properly and thoroughly and to sit here as long as it takes to do it. We will do that; I do not care how long it takes.

Hon Kim Chance; Hon Norman Moore; President; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Peter Foss; Hon George Cash

Any of the pleasantries that might have existed between the Opposition and the Government have disappeared. We have had enough on a number of fronts. Usually we get some notice of what the Government intends to do, but today we got none. Now the leader has moved a motion without any warning. We have had no indication from the Government about what it intends to do or what will happen with the House itself. Will there be a dinner adjournment? I can only assume that there will be one at 6.00 pm. The President might know. There is no provision in the standing orders for a dinner break on Thursday. Have the staff of the dining room been told that the House will be sitting?

Hon Kim Chance: Yes. I have not told them anything, but I understand the staff have been told to expect an evening sitting.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Have they been told to expect an evening meal?

Hon Kim Chance: That is the implication.

Hon Tom Stephens: Dinner will be served to members in the cabinet dining room.

Hon Peter Foss: How will we be able to get there?

Hon Tom Stephens: That is up to the President.

Hon Barry House: What happens if the debate on this motion continues until 9.30 pm? You couldn't give a damn!

Hon Kim Chance: If you interrupt and prevent the President from leaving the Chair until the ringing of the bells, we will sit here until 9.30 pm.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! When the minister and other members are quite finished, the Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The Government has devised this strategy - if I can call it that - because apparently there is some urgency about dealing with the Electoral Amendment Bill. The Government wants us to send this Bill to a committee urgently, but it has given us no reasons for the haste. There is no urgency about this Bill. I will tell the Leader of the House what is in the Electoral Act, because, from his interjections, it appears that he does not know what it contains. Section 2A(2) of the Electoral Distribution Act reads in part -

... as soon as practicable after the day that is one year after the polling day for the second of those general elections.

It does not say that it must be in February or on 10 February; it says "as soon as practicable" one year after the election. The Electoral Amendment Bill provides for a redistribution after two years. The Government is changing the law that says the redistribution is conducted one year after an election so that in the future it will be two years after an election. Today the Government is telling us that we cannot go beyond February next year, which is one year! That is absurd!

Hon Kim Chance: The current Act says it is one year; effectively it is the same thing.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The Leader of the House and I know - everybody knows! - that the electoral commissioners will not start the redistribution when they know that such a Bill is before the Parliament. Even if they did start the process, they can change it. It is as simple as that, and the Leader of the House knows it. This is all about rushing legislation through this Parliament, which is contrary to what he told us day after day, week after week, month after month and year after year when in opposition. Members of the Australian Labor Party in this place told us this was a House of Review, and it was supposed to review legislation properly by taking whatever time it needed. What is wrong with doing that on this occasion? What is wrong with passing the Electoral Amendment Bill through this House in the normal way? Why do we have to send it off to a committee halfway through the second reading debate? No government member has given us a reason for that. It makes no sense; it is illogical and plainly stupid.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

Hon N.F. MOORE: We will be sitting here for a long time. The parliamentary secretary said earlier today that the only reason I was on my feet was that the Liberal Party had a dinner tonight. That was not the reason; it was a consideration. There will come a time when Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich will have a function to attend, and she will wish that we had got out of this place tonight, so she can go to that function. The parliamentary secretary need have no worry about that! When it is three o'clock in the morning and we are sitting here because there are no pairs, and ministers cannot go to conferences because they cannot get pairs, the parliamentary secretary will know why we were angry today that the Government would not consider a simple request we made on a matter that relates to us personally.

Hon Kim Chance: We never called pairs off on you.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I know that Hon Kim Chance did not do that while I was Leader of the House. However, the Labor Party has called off pairs in the past. I sat here and watched Brian Burke come in the door. He called the Whip over, "Come here Whip!" - as was his wont - "Call pairs off now!" He was not giving notice that he would call pairs off next week, the week after, or that pairs would be honoured today; it was to call pairs off right now! The Whip said, "Over my dead body." Good on him!

Hon Kim Chance: I have given the Leader of the Opposition my assurance; and the Leader of the Opposition has given the House his assurance that he will not call off pairs, so we do not need to be fired up about that. We have given each other an assurance publicly.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I said that I would not call off pairs, just as the Leader of the House said he would not use the guillotine or the closure motion. Hon Kim Chance said that week after week and month after month in this House when he sat on the opposition benches, and so did the Minister for Housing and Works sitting next to the Leader of the House. I can quote a few instances; I am happy to do that. In fact I had better do that.

Hon Tom Stephens: You would be hard pressed to find a quote from Hon Kim Chance.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I read his speeches carefully. He always couches what he says in language that relates it to the circumstance at the time and not to general principle, which is a shame. Hon Tom Stephens stated -

They may have momentarily trusted the Government with the Treasury benches, but in this place the people want the Government to go through a review and checking process that would not give it the opportunity to pass motions to gag and guillotine debate in this House . . . The gags and guillotines shame this place.

That was a speech made by Hon Tom Stephens in 1997.

In debate on the industrial relations legislation Hon Jim Scott said -

The guillotine that we had yesterday, and this further motion by the Minister, takes away that fairness and justice in debate.

Then the editor of *The West Australian* had a go at the Court Government. The article reads -

The Court Government . . . is the only government in the history of the Upper House to use the guillotine.

The West Australian gave the Court Government a real serve. That editorial was read into *Hansard* by you, Mr President, when you were sitting on the opposition benches and talking about Robespierre and people of that nature.

Hon Kim Chance: They were gags on Bills - on legislation. We are gagging debate on the referral to a committee.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The Leader of the House can hang on. Hon Tom Stephens also said -

The Opposition is opposed to the gagging and guillotine processes that have been unleashed upon this House.

Is he saying that it is okay to say these things when one is in opposition, but it is okay to ignore them when in government?

Hon Kim Chance: I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that I will be happy to move the gag at the appropriate time.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Hon Kim Chance's party took the view - particularly Hon Tom Stephens, the former Leader of the Opposition - that gags and guillotines are grossly unacceptable. However, if Hon Kim Chance goes down the path of gagging this Chamber, I will go down that path on the question of pairs.

Hon Tom Stephens: You used the gag and the guillotine.

Hon N.F. MOORE: We are talking about the position of the Leader of the House on this. I am not moving a gag. The question is whether the Leader of the House is prepared to move the gag. If the Leader of the House is, I am prepared to talk about calling off pairs. It is as simple as that.

The Labor Party in opposition took the view that the gag and the guillotine were unacceptable. We used it on a couple of occasions; I acknowledge that. However, we used it after about four weeks of debate on one Bill. We put in place a guillotine motion that set down a time frame for the Bill to be debated. That is not what the Leader of the House is talking about now. He is talking about a motion that will stop debate so that there will be no further debate.

Hon Kim Chance: That was the agreement that we entered into. Standing Order No 110 exists as a result of an accord that was reached between the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the House at the time to eschew the use of the guillotine in favour of Standing Order 110 - the closure motion. That had the Labor Party's agreement.

Hon N.F. MOORE: To my knowledge it has not been used. It has not been used on a motion that was moved only one day earlier. So that we all understand where we are coming from, the Leader of the House told me yesterday that he would move a motion to refer the Electoral Amendment Bill to a committee. He told me that he would give notice of that yesterday, and put it through today.

Hon Kim Chance: Yes; that is what a notice of motion is for.

Hon N.F. MOORE: As it has transpired, without telling me, the first motion was to sit beyond five o'clock.

Hon Kim Chance: Yes, to ensure that we could do all of that, because I suspected you might filibuster - shame!

Hon N.F. MOORE: If the leader had wanted to deal with this business today, instead of a motion to debate whether we would sit beyond five o'clock, we could have gone on to the motion. The Leader of the House could then have used the gag that he promised me he would use. This matter could have been dealt with today. Instead, by going down the path the Leader of the House took, he ensured we sat here all day and debated the first motion. The Leader of the House has now contrived to sit tonight.

Hon Kim Chance: I can just see you willingly dealing with that motion, knowing it would be gagged, and not filibustering.

Hon N.F. MOORE: All the Leader of the House has to do to move the gag under Standing Order No 110, is to stand when there is a gap in proceedings and say, "I move that the motion be put."

Hon Kim Chance: When is there a gap?

Hon N.F. MOORE: When somebody stops.

Hon Kim Chance: Your side seems keen to talk about it.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I could have talked all day on the other motion, but I did not.

Hon Kim Chance: It has only been six hours and 20 minutes!

Hon N.F. MOORE: It has been a total and absolute waste of time.

Hon Kim Chance: I am glad that the Leader of the Opposition admits that.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The Leader of the House can take all of the responsibility for that. The Leader of the House did not have to do this. He could have talked to me about this beforehand; he did not.

Hon Kim Chance: We talked about the motion and about the gag.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The Leader of the House talked about using the gag on the second motion. He did not tell me before the House sat that he would be seeking to sit beyond five o'clock.

Hon Kim Chance: It is a normal thing to do. You did it dozens of times.

Hon N.F. MOORE: That is not true. If we did, I spoke to the Leader of the Opposition about it at the time.

Hon Tom Stephens: That is not the case.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The reason for it was always given. Hon Tom Stephen's memory is very selective.

Hon Tom Stephens: Not at all.

Hon N.F. MOORE: We are now debating a contrived special adjournment. Why did government members not vote against the adjournment of the House and keep going? They did not want to look too silly.

Hon Kim Chance: That would have meant we would be sitting next week.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The Leader of the House could have moved a special adjournment to adjourn for two weeks, then move that the House adjourn and vote against it. However, we are now debating this contrived adjournment. What will happen next week? Will the Leader of the House move another special adjournment? Are we sitting next week?

Hon Kim Chance: When tonight's sitting concludes, I will move the appropriate special adjournment.

Hon Peter Foss: You have now moved a special adjournment.

Hon Kim Chance: I can still move a more appropriate special adjournment.

Hon N.F. MOORE: How many special adjournments can the leader move?

Hon Tom Stephens: As many as necessary.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Until he gets his own way?

Hon Kim Chance: We will conclude the business we set out to conclude. I will then move the special adjournment and the House will resume at the appointed time. It is not complicated.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It did not need to be complicated. I keep repeating myself.

Hon Kim Chance: This could have been over at six o'clock this evening had you cooperated.

Hon Peter Foss: It could have been over at 12.00 pm if you had asked us to cooperate.

Hon Kim Chance: That is nonsense.

Hon Peter Foss: The first thing you said was that you would gag debate. That is subtle!

Hon N.F. MOORE: Yes, as subtle as a sledgehammer.

Hon Kim Chance: Would you rather that I lied? What is wrong with telling the truth up front?

Hon N.F. MOORE: The first time there is a difference between the opposition leader and the Leader of the House since Hon Kim Chance has been in that role, he says that he will gag the debate.

Hon Peter Foss: He did not try to find out whether he would get support.

Hon Kim Chance: I thought you would like the bad news up front.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I have some bad news.

Hon Barry House: Are the Greens listening to this? This is how the Government negotiates - with a sledgehammer.

Hon Kim Chance: Tell the truth.

Hon N.F. MOORE: There is no need for this special adjournment. The Government knows as well as I that this House has procedures, processes, traditions and standing orders that determine how Bills are passed through this place. Put together as a process, a Bill is introduced and it comes out the other end, a bit like a sausage machine; it works quite well. Sometimes it takes longer than Governments would like. I have seen that happen day after day. I will not say week after week and month after month because that is not the case.

Western Australia has two Houses for all the reasons that a bicameral system operates. That is why we have a Parliament and why it is members' role to scrutinise legislation and have their say about it.

When ministers and Leaders of the House try to ram through legislation they can expect the Opposition to take exception, as this Opposition is doing. That will happen every day for the next three and a half years. As Hon George Cash said so well today, the only way for the process to work is to have some agreement about the processes between the various parties in this House. If a sledgehammer approach is taken, someone will get a bloody nose. Unfortunately, we have reached a level of cooperation with the Government, which I am sad to say could not get much lower. It is sad because this place works well on the basis of cooperation.

Since this Government came to office, things have been accumulating in my mind about the way this House will operate. I do not like most of them. I am prepared to accept change as it occurs, but I am conservative to the extent of expecting a fair amount of time to implement changes because rules have been put in place after lots of consideration over many years. When the rules are changed, as this Government wants to do -

Hon Ken Travers: Where?

Hon N.F. Moore: Have members opposite not been paying attention to the amendments to the standing orders? The punitive powerbroker has his mind on other things. Does he have a one vote, one value system in his faction? A scenario is developing, which is rare to say the least. This special adjournment is rare and, regrettably, it will poison the relationship between the Government and the Opposition.

I am disappointed that the Greens (WA) are supporting the Government on this issue, although I can understand that they will benefit quite well from all this. In fact, according to what I have heard on the radio and read in the newspapers, the Greens will get a new upper House based on six regions, each with six members. Mr McGinty has been stared in the eye and had his arm twisted because he recognises that a vote of 17 beats 16 every time. Let us throw aside the whole parliamentary process and forget about committees examining Bills at certain times. We will go through the charade of a committee examining the Electoral Amendment Bill for the next month or so, because that committee's deliberations will have no effect on this House.

Hon Kim Chance: I do not understand why you are saying that.

Hon N.F. MOORE: If the Leader of the House can give me an absolute assurance that the second reading debate will not be taken until after the committee reports, I will contemplate going along with this.

Hon Kim Chance: That is possible. I will need to talk to people over dinner.

Hon Peter Foss: Why did you not see the Leader of the Opposition before and ask him about some of these things?

Hon Kim Chance: That is the first I have heard of it.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is not the first the Leader of the House has heard of it.

Hon Peter Foss: You did not even ask him; you just said that you would gag debate.

Hon George Cash: That is the best offer you have had all day and you have not worked it out.

Hon Kim Chance: It is not my Bill.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, Hon Peter Foss and the Leader of the Government. Assuming that we are still debating this at six o'clock, it is my intention to leave the Chair until the ringing of the bells at 7.00 pm. That may provide an opportunity for some members to have an evening meal in the cabinet dining room or to attend the function. Provision has been made for meals downstairs for members participating in Assembly committee deliberations. Perhaps it will also provide the opportunity for others to talk during that one-hour break.

Point of Order

Hon PETER FOSS: Mr President, you said that you would leave the Chair from 6.00 until 7.00 pm. We usually adjourn from 6.00 until 7.30 pm. I am not sure why you are abridging the period, Mr President, especially when the rest of us have guests here this evening.

The PRESIDENT: I am happy if it is the desire of the House to make the adjournment from 6.00 to 7.30 pm.

Debate Resumed

Hon N.F. MOORE: Thank you for your help on that, Mr President. The point I was trying to make a moment ago to the Greens is that the Bill has quite properly been debated through the second reading stage. Some Opposition members have spoken on it, but many members want to speak on it. We did not filibuster or delay it. It is an important Bill on which everybody wants to have a say. It does not make any sense for this House to debate the second reading speech of a Bill, which is the policy of the Bill, when a committee is examining the policy of the Bill. That leaves open the possibility that the House will vote on the second reading before the committee even reports. I mentioned that to Hon Christine Sharp last night. The Opposition's preferred position is that we go through the proper processes at the end of the second reading debate and that the Bill go to a committee. The Opposition wants this Bill to go to the public so that people can make submissions, talk to the committee and understand the Bill.

The Opposition's position is that we should continue the second reading debate, and let the House decide whether it supports the principle and policy of the Bill. If it does, we will go to the community to talk about the detail. That is how this House works and has always worked. If the Government intended to give the community some say on the policy of the Bill, the Bill should have gone to the committee and to the public after the second reading speech in August. That would have achieved all the things that the Leader of the Government is telling us today he wants to achieve. He said that he wants the Bill to go to the public for its input. What absolute tripe! If the Government thought the public should have any say on the policy of the Bill, it would have said so on 30 August after the second reading speech, and it would have let the public have its say. Why has the Government wasted the time of the House and members who have spoken on this legislation by letting us get halfway through the second reading debate and then saying, after all that, that it will now ask the public what it thinks? It does not matter when the report comes in or what it says, we will still plough on in the House and vote on the Bill. It makes an absolute mockery of the process. Worse than that, it makes an absolute mockery of what this committee will do.

I am told that the Standing Committee on Legislation is chock-a-block with work. Today we are told that the most important Bill that this Parliament will probably deal with in the four-year term of this Government will be shoved off to the Legislation Committee for a few weeks so that it can consider it. Many members have made plans for the next two weeks, because they are parliamentary recess weeks. The Leader of the Government is now saying that members must drop all their plans and get themselves mobile around the countryside. They

have two weeks when the House is not sitting to get to Port Hedland, Derby, Broome, Kununurra, Warburton and all those places where people might want to talk to the committee. No plans have been made, but the Government says that members must hightail it out to those places next week because it wants to save those two weeks. All that will be done to save two weeks, because those members must be here for the Estimates Committee hearings. They cannot be in the bush in the third week.

Hon Kim Chance: The committee is still able to meet, though, when the Estimates Committee is sitting.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Will the Leader of the House tell me how this committee will be able to organise a meeting in Derby in the next two weeks, or a meeting in Carnarvon next week?

Hon Kim Chance: The same way that it would organise it at any other time.

Hon Barry House: Members would not even be able to get a flight at the moment, let alone anything else.

Hon N.F. MOORE: That is right.

Hon Kim Chance: You are trying to put it back a further three weeks to make things even more difficult. Do you really understand what you are doing over there?

Hon N.F. MOORE: Does the Leader of the House think that a public meeting in any country town in Western Australia for next Tuesday can be called today? It cannot be done.

Hon Kim Chance: I imagine that the committee's first option would be to call for written submissions, upon which oral submissions might be dealt with. That takes time, and you are trying to put all that back three weeks.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I think the Leader of the House has lost the plot.

Hon Peter Foss: Why didn't you put it back four weeks and do it when it first came up? It would have been much simpler.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Quite right.

Hon Kim Chance: If we add three weeks to 26 November, we end up well into December, almost to Christmas. That would mean there would be no opportunity for us to deal with this Bill this year, which has been your objective all the time.

Hon Peter Foss: Why didn't you deal with it on 30 August?

Hon Kim Chance: I did not have a proposition then. I have a proposition now.

Hon Peter Foss: From whom?

Hon Kim Chance: From anybody.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is a dopey proposition, quite frankly. We were silly enough, if I can put it in those terms, to believe that this Bill would be dealt with in the normal process.

Hon Kim Chance: The second reading stage still will be. However, I am interested in your proposition that we should try to coordinate the date of the end of the second reading stage with the committee's report. I am interested in that. I think it is a good idea.

Hon Peter Foss: We can do that in the normal way if you just take -

Hon Kim Chance: No, the committee's inquiry would still have to start now; otherwise it would be too late in the year.

Hon Peter Foss: Too late for what?

Hon Kim Chance: Too late to deal with the Bill.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It does not have to be dealt with this year.

Hon Kim Chance: I am sorry, we think it does. That is our position.

Hon N.F. MOORE: There is no imperative that it be dealt with this year.

Hon Kim Chance: We think there is.

Hon N.F. MOORE: There is no imperative. The Leader of the House should read the Act if he has not done so already. It has words of more than four letters, so I suspect he would have a bit of trouble.

Hon G.T. Giffard: He is the punitive powerbroker.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Of course he is. He does not even know what punitive means yet, but he is working on it. He is learning from some of his colleagues. The Leader of the House is also proposing that we continue the

second reading debate. Therefore, members - I am one of them - will make their speech in the second reading debate, without access to the committee's report. What is the point of a committee reporting to Parliament when we must make a decision about the issue it is considering before we get its report?

Hon Kim Chance: We do that on every occasion. This is bizarre.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is not bizarre. After a committee reports to this House, we then debate the report. I will deal with another proposition. If the Government thinks the public should have some say, through the committee, on the policy of the Bill, the Government should have referred it to the committee after the second reading speech.

Hon Kim Chance: In hindsight, that may have been a more appropriate way.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Yes. Therefore, why does the Leader of the House not say to me now that the Government made a mistake then, but it still thinks the Bill should go to the public before the House makes a decision on the policy of the Bill, because it wants to hear what the public has to say about the policy of the Bill? The only reason the Bill will go to the public is to get the public's views. If the Government is going to ignore the public's views, why do it? Therefore, why not say to the House that the Government made a mistake in August, but today it has decided that it is important for the public of Western Australia to look at this Bill and for the committee to review and consider it? Why does the Government not stop the debate on the second reading of the Electoral Amendment Bill and send it to the committee? When the committee reports, we can carry on with the second reading debate. That is logical. We would then have the benefit of the committee's report before the rest of the debate was concluded, and those of us who have not yet spoken would be able to take into account the committee's opinions.

Hon Kim Chance: I could support that, as long as we had an agreed termination date for the second reading stage.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: As you did for the School Education Bill.

Hon N.F. MOORE: That was about three years in coming, was it not? How long does the Leader of the House think he needs?

Hon Kim Chance: I do not know. We clearly need to think about that.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I am now putting a proposal that will enable us all to go home and have a nice dinner with our friends.

Hon Kim Chance: Firstly, Hon Nick Griffiths is the minister dealing with the Bill.

Hon N.F. MOORE: He can comment.

Hon Kim Chance: The Minister for Electoral Affairs is responsible for the Bill. A decision like that should not be made without reference to the Minister for Electoral Affairs, as the Opposition would have done when it was in government.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I am happy to keep talking until he asks.

Hon Kim Chance: I am happy to speak to the Minister for Electoral Affairs during the dinner break.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The Leader of the House had in mind that the Bill be referred to the committee and come back to the House on 26 November.

Hon Kim Chance: That is a couple of months away.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Two months, yes. Is that plenty of time?

Hon Kim Chance: That is enough for a reasonable inquiry.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I am putting forward a suggestion. Maybe the minister handling this matter could get instructions from somewhere and find out whether the Government is prepared to agree to the proposal I am now putting; that is, if this House agrees to this motion, that the debate on the second reading be suspended until such time as the committee reports. However, another thing must be borne in mind in the context of that proposition. I cannot recall too many times when a committee has not sought an extension of time. I would not be able to give an assurance from this side of the House that we would expect the committee to report by 26 November, regardless of anything else. The reason for setting up the committee now is obviously a belated recognition by the Government that the public wants a say on this issue. If the Government is to constrain the amount of time available to the public in which to have a say on it, what is the point of doing it at all? If the committee is to do its job properly, it should get out among the people, and not just the people who can come to Perth. It is hard enough to get to the Pilbara and the Kimberley now, as Hon Tom Stephens can tell members. It is expensive.

Hon Kim Chance; Hon Norman Moore; President; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Peter Foss; Hon George Cash

People living in the bush would be absolutely over the moon if a parliamentary committee turned up in their town and asked them what they thought about this Bill. It would be a major achievement of this House.

Hon Peter Foss: Perhaps they could lend us the government jet.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Perhaps they could do that, as long as Hon Tom Stephens is not using it. That would be a terrific way for this House to go about its business. However, we cannot simply say that we need to do this and then put a very constraining time line on it. Maybe it can be done by 26 November; I do not know. If it takes a bit longer, it would be worth doing. The members of the Standing Committee on Legislation can do a very good job on this and would do a good job getting out among regional Western Australians to ask their opinions. We cannot simply organise a meeting in Derby for next week. The committee must tell people that it is on. It must book a venue and give people time to get there. People must be given notice of committee hearings. The next two weeks will be irrelevant in that context anyway.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! I indicate that when the Leader of the Opposition concludes his remarks, I will leave the Chair until the ringing of the bells. If he does not want to continue speaking until six o'clock, he does not have to.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I do not feel the need to continue until six o'clock. I am trying to put a proposal. This is the sort of proposal that might have come out of discussion between the Government and the Opposition well ahead of today.

Hon Peter Foss: We think the whole Bill should go to the committee and the Leader of the House says that he does not object to that. Why not send the repeal Bill as well?

Hon Kim Chance: That is not my decision. I do not have an objection, but it is not my role.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Why - because you are the Leader of the House?

Hon N.F. MOORE: I do not know how I will get an answer from the Government on this, but I have been trying to demonstrate to the House our fundamental position; that is, we should go through the Bill properly from start to finish, send it to the committee, come back here for the Committee of the Whole House, and then knock off the third reading. That is our preferred position. I am saying to the Government that if it is hell-bent on doing this - it has the numbers and we could sit here all night and argue about it - we will contemplate agreeing to this on the basis that the second reading debate on the Bill be held over until such time as the committee reports. The reason I am saying that is simple: that would then give members like me, who have yet to speak on this issue, an understanding of the committee's views, bearing in mind that those views will have been received from the whole community of Western Australia. Then we can make a better decision on the second reading.

Points of Order

Hon KIM CHANCE: This is not quite a point of order. Would the Leader of the Opposition consider seeking leave to continue his remarks at a later stage of this day's sitting, so that the President might consider leaving the Chair until the ringing of the bells?

The PRESIDENT: I would certainly do that if the Leader of the Opposition makes the request as well.

Hon GEORGE CASH: If that is to be the course of action to be taken by the House, Mr President, will you resume the Chair at 7.30 pm, as you said earlier?

The PRESIDENT: That is correct.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Other issues need to be raised, not necessarily in this point of order. It seems to me that there is an assumption that the Bill is being referred to the Legislation Committee, and that is not what this motion says at all. That should be taken into account in due course.

The PRESIDENT: I think that is why members were contemplating the recess in this debate, so that understandings could be made.

Debate Resumed

Hon N.F. MOORE: I will think about the suggestion of the Leader of the House. However, Mr President, it would be helpful if some resolution of this matter could be reached before six o'clock, which is when you propose to leave the Chair. Many of us have wives who are getting organised to come to a function. They need to be told whether or not to come. It would be helpful if we knew by six o'clock where we are headed tonight. That is why I am saying to the Leader of the House that it would be helpful if we could make a determination before six o'clock; otherwise, 7.30 pm would be very awkward for some members. Is that too soon?

Hon Kim Chance: It is, but we can give you a guarantee that we will not be sitting until 7.30 pm.

Hon N.F. MOORE: That is when the dinner starts.

The PRESIDENT: Given the opinions expressed from both sides of the House, I will leave the Chair until the ringing of the bells at 7.30 pm.

Sitting suspended from 5.46 to 7.34 pm

Statement by Leader of the House

HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural - Leader of the House) [7.34 pm] - by leave: I wish to explain to the House what has happened during the dinner suspension and the process that the House will now go through, because it is necessary for members to understand that process. I am happy to announce that agreement has been reached behind the Chair on a manner in which we can deal with this issue in an expeditious way; and I am grateful to the Leader of the Opposition and other members, in particular Hon Christine Sharp, for enabling that to occur. The process that we will follow may seem tortuous, but I will try to explain it as I understand it. I will firstly seek leave to withdraw the motion that is before the Chair; that is, the special adjournment motion. I will then move another special adjournment motion. I will then move the adjournment of the House, which I sincerely hope members will defeat. Once the House has defeated that motion, I will then move for the suspension of standing orders in order that the House can move immediately in the new sitting of the House to take order of the day No 87, which relates to the referral to the Legislation Committee. At that point I will introduce a new motion containing an instruction to the committee; and, following that, a new motion of referral. From that point I will move to order of the day No 99, which is the standing orders motions that will enable the Estimates Committee to proceed. I will then move the adjournment of the House. That has probably confused members, but at least they know how badly they will be confused in the process.

I seek leave to withdraw the motion that is before the House; that is, the special adjournment motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.