

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

MR J.C. KOBELKE (Nollamara - Leader of the House) [7.21 pm]: I move -

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 12 August 2003 at 2.00 pm.

I thank all members, Clerks and parliamentary staff for their hard work in the first half of this calendar year. I particularly thank the Opposition, which has been most cooperative in helping us very efficiently deal with a large legislative agenda. The Parliament has on the whole worked very well, although today provided examples of areas in which we could improve. Generally, the Parliament has worked well and I thank all members for their contributions. I am sure they will return after the six-week winter recess with many more issues.

MR T.K. WALDRON (Wagin) [7.22 pm]: On behalf of the National Party I thank all members of the House for their thoughts during the member for Avon's bereavement. It is most appreciated by him and the National Party. Thanks to everyone in the Parliament.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys) [7.22 pm]: I genuinely will be brief. I appreciate the comments of the Leader of the House about the cooperation of opposition members in dealing with a tremendous number of Bills. Over the past few months the House has dealt with what could be a record number of Bills. We have genuinely cooperated to try to ensure the expedient passage of about 90 per cent of the Bills the Government has introduced. We spent some time on a couple of Bills that were of particular concern to us; namely, the Prostitution Control Bill and the Cannabis Control Bill. It is our right to have our say. We were disappointed that the debate on the Prostitution Control Bill was guillotined. We would have liked to spend more time on it; however, we accept that ultimately the Leader of the House decides how long the House will spend on a Bill and that it is his prerogative to decide to gag or guillotine a Bill. We on this side of the House do not agree with it, but we accept that it happens.

I also take this opportunity to thank all the staff in Parliament House for the tremendous way they have looked after members since I last thanked them just before Christmas. On behalf of the Liberal Party, I wish all colleagues in this place a very happy winter break.

It is not good for the Parliament to sit four weeks in a row. Three weeks in a row is probably the maximum it should sit. When we sit for a fourth week, people are tired and get a bit tetchy, and it is not conducive to good parliamentary behaviour. I hope that we will not sit for four weeks on the trot in the future. Perhaps we can sit for two weeks as a norm and three weeks when necessary.

I also mention - because it is important - that I think this is the first time in nearly 100 years that there will not be a prorogation of this Parliament. That is a unique step to take. My view is that if this sort of decision is to be made, it should be made after the opening of Parliament, and should apply for the following three years of the Parliament's sitting until the next election. I find it strange that the Government is doing this now at this stage of the electoral cycle. Some issues must be addressed. I know that the Procedure and Privileges Committee has looked at this issue, as has the Government, which, at the end of the day, has the prerogative and the right to decide when or if Parliament will be prorogued.

My concerns about the standing orders affect you very much, Mr Speaker. If a member happens to fall foul of the chair and is excluded for a day, and is then excluded for a further period, normally the member's record would be expunged. I suggest that under the standing orders the intention was that it would be expunged, and the member would have a clean slate at the opening of the next session of Parliament. Obviously, that was the intention of our forebears, who were very wise people.

Mr R.C. Kucera: They could be given demerit points.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: My friend will be on this side of the House at some stage. Make no mistake about it: a member will never be on that side of the House forever.

Mr R.C. Kucera: I was referring to all members.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I can tell the minister that what is good when a member is in government is not always good when a member is in opposition, and vice versa. That is why we have the standing orders and the expunction of the naming of a member or the exclusion of a member. If that were not the case, it would be extremely unfair to a member who had transgressed, perhaps for very good emotional reasons that he firmly believed in, in speaking up for his electorate. I suggest that is the norm, and I do not believe it is necessarily done deliberately to abuse the Speaker or whoever might be in the Chair. Ultimately, the Speaker has responsibility in this area. I hope that over the winter break he will take the time to examine the standing orders to see what can be done to ensure that members' interests - all members' interests must be taken into account - are carefully considered. The standing orders should be altered for a temporary period until the next election if the Parliament is not prorogued this year or next year. I suggest that the Parliament will probably not be

prorogued next year. I cannot see why the Parliament would be prorogued next year when it will not be prorogued this year. Of course, if the Government wanted to, it could prorogue Parliament at any time it wished.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: It means that all my questions will be answered and not dropped off.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That is true; and everything on the Notice Paper will stay there, apart from private members' business. I think we must notify the Clerk after three months if we wish to keep matters on the Notice Paper. These areas must be considered. It is important that I put these matters on the record, because they are serious issues.

I wanted to briefly cover another area. For the life of me I cannot remember what it was. I get sidetracked when somebody says something. It was quite important, and I will kick myself when I walk out of this place if I have not remembered what it was.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: Put it in writing.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I will put it in writing. I am almost finished. Please be patient. I have been very patient all day with a lot of members. I ask members to give me a second or two to collect my thoughts so that I can put forward the other matter.

The SPEAKER: If the member remembers and speaks in August, it will still be in the same session.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That is true, Mr Speaker, but I do not want to keep you here until August.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: You could seek leave to continue your remarks.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No. Like most members, I am very tired after this four-week cycle. It is a shame that I cannot remember what I wanted to mention as it was quite important. I hope you, Mr Speaker, have a very pleasant winter break.

The SPEAKER: That is probably what it was.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That is very important, Mr Speaker, but probably not what I was thinking of.

Mr R.C. Kucera: It wasn't to wish our Whip a happy birthday by any chance?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: If it is the member for Girrawheen's birthday, on behalf of the Opposition I wish her a very happy birthday. She can blame the Leader of the House for keeping her here so long, not the Opposition. I reluctantly resume my seat. If I can remember what it was I wanted to say, I will send the Speaker a note!

THE SPEAKER (Mr F. Riebeling): On behalf of both sides of the Chamber, I thank staff for their work during the session. It gets testy at times in this place and the amount of work we got through this session was extraordinary.

I take up the comments of the member for Hillarys. He can rest assured that all the issues he raised that need to be addressed will be addressed. Many of them have been looked at, and a report is being prepared on changes to standing orders. I am reluctant to allow a member's record to be expunged annually. If a person is bad, that person is bad and the record should stay with them!

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 7.32 pm
