

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS, PRIORITY**

*Standing Orders Suspension*

**MR KOBELKE** (Nollamara - Leader of the House) [12.20 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 8.00 pm on Wednesdays, 13 and 20 March 2002.

I do not want to raise the Opposition's hopes: this motion will not provide an extra hour for private members' business. Rather, it will allow the Speaker, with whom I have discussed the matter, to provide for a dinner break when we sit tonight and next Wednesday evening. Members are aware that the Labour Relations Reform Bill is a very important piece of legislation. It is complex and extensive, and we understand that members may wish to debate it in considerable detail. In fact, I would be disappointed if they did not. However, we also want the legislation to pass through this place expeditiously without the need to resort to a guillotine or gag. The alternative is to provide additional time, and we are doing that by, as we did last night, sitting a little later on Tuesday evenings and on Wednesday evenings, which is not the normal process.

This motion means that we will sit this evening. It is not my intention to go past midnight, as we are scheduled to resume again at 9.00 am tomorrow. The motion applies to only this and next week. It may be that the Labour Relations Reform Bill will be debated for a third week - the new sitting week of 26 to 28 March. It is not currently my intention to sit on the Wednesday evening of that week, but we will assess at the end of next week how much time is required to ensure the passage of the Bill. I trust that this motion will ensure that all members can contribute in a positive way and have ample opportunity to put their views, many of which may differ from those expressed in the Government's Bill. We will make time for that and also allow the legislation to pass through this House in a three-week period, which, considering the importance and complexity of what is a large Bill, is a reasonable amount of time.

**MR JOHNSON** (Hillarys) [12.22 pm]: The Opposition will not oppose this motion. The Leader of the House said that he wants all members of the House to be able to contribute to the debate on what the Government thinks is a very important Bill. Members on this side of the House have a completely different attitude to the importance of the Labour Relations Reform Bill and its effect on the workers, businesses and the State of Western Australia.

Ms MacTiernan: Don't you think it will have any effect?

Mr JOHNSON: It will have an effect on the Labor Party and the unions, because the unions will pocket money that in turn will fill the Labor Party's coffers.

Ms MacTiernan: Your opposition to the Bill is that business will get less money.

Mr JOHNSON: I love it when my good friend the member for Armadale interjects; however, I notice the Leader of the House is looking at her earnestly, trying to shut her up. He wants her to keep quiet.

Ms MacTiernan: We want you to talk.

Mr JOHNSON: I love to hear her speak also.

Ms MacTiernan: You are such a powerful orator and your contributions enhance the reputation of this Parliament.

Mr JOHNSON: The member for Armadale says so many lovely things about me that I sometimes get worried. My wife is getting worried. I would prefer it if the member were a bit nastier to me.

Ms MacTiernan: I could become your most ardent supporter.

Mr JOHNSON: Please do not do that; I am a married man, and I want to keep it that way.

Mr Logan interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: My good friend from Croydon is now interjecting.

I want to return to the motion. Distractions from the member for Armadale always affect me emotionally.

Ms MacTiernan: You are a delicate flower.

Mr JOHNSON: She thinks I am delicate flower. I am getting very worried.

Mrs Edwardes: We will only become worried when you call her a petal.

Mr Kucera: You know what will happen if you call her a dandelion.

Mr JOHNSON: Trust the Minister for Health to be nasty. I much prefer the comments of the member for Armadale. Let us know if some sort of jealousy is creeping in. We would all love to hear about it - as long as it is not about jealousy of me and the member for Armadale.

Mr Kucera: You have discussed your previous experiences with us.

Mr JOHNSON: I do not have a problem.

I return to the motion. It is a serious motion about a serious issue; that is, the Labour Relations Reform Bill. We are staying late tonight and next Wednesday because the Government is desperate to get this Bill through Parliament. I understand the politics of it.

The Leader of the House said that every member of this House should have the opportunity to contribute to this debate. So far, the only contributions, apart from the minister's second reading speech, have been from this side of the House. We have a slight problem in that the Leader of the Opposition will not be here until later. I want a guarantee that the Leader of the House will not conclude the second reading debate until the Leader of the Opposition has had an opportunity to make his contribution.

Mr Kobelke: If he is here by question time, he can speak between question time and private members' business.

Mr JOHNSON: He might not be back by then. I am not opposing this motion. We are being reasonable. I want a guarantee from the Leader of the House. The Leader of the Opposition has a right and a responsibility to contribute to this debate. We have heard nothing from the government side of the House.

Mr Ripper: He is the Leader of the Opposition; he should lead the debate.

Mr Johnson: Not necessarily. Government members did not do that in opposition. What is the Treasurer talking about? We are following his example. Our spokesperson on this Bill very eloquently led this debate. We would love to hear some of the government members speak in this debate. So far, they have been silent. Will any government members speak during this debate?

Ms Quirk: Yes.

Mr JOHNSON: If I knew how many, it would give me an indication of whether the debate will conclude before the Leader of the Opposition returns to the House. The interjection from the Government Whip was that members on her side will speak during this debate. Will there be enough to keep the debate going until the Leader of the Opposition is back? He will be back as soon as possible.

Mr Ripper: Where is he?

Mrs Edwardes: He is opening a pulp mill. He is assisting the Premier.

Mr JOHNSON: He is trying to help the Government and workers in the south west. I am trying to solicit from the Leader of the House a guarantee that he will not close the second reading debate until the Leader of the Opposition has had his opportunity to speak.

Mr Kobelke: We will seek to accommodate the Leader of the Opposition. Sixteen members have spoken on the Bill. I anticipate that another six to 10 will speak. If the Leader of the Opposition returns before the conclusion of those speeches, he will have the opportunity to speak.

Mr JOHNSON: We have an hour and a half before question time. Those 10 members must be from the Government's side of the House.

Mr Kobelke: There are also Independents.

Mr JOHNSON: Could the government members speak first so that some of our members can lengthen their speeches if necessary and use the maximum time? Many of the speakers from our side did not use their maximum time. They did not ask for the 10-minute extension. Some did not even use the full 20 minutes. We have been reasonable.

I am asking for a guarantee that the Leader of the House will not cut off the second reading debate until the Leader of the Opposition has had an opportunity to contribute. We expect him back by three o'clock, but we cannot guarantee it. It is a sincere request.

Mr Kobelke: I have indicated that we will seek to accommodate him. We cannot do that if he does not return until tomorrow.

Mr JOHNSON: I assure the Leader of the House that the Leader of the Opposition will be back today. I am a little concerned that he may not be back by three o'clock. It would be a problem if he did not return until a

quarter to four because a member might be midway through his speech, and would want to continue that speech. In that case, the Leader of the Opposition would not be able to speak until eight o'clock.

Mr Kobelke: That would not be a problem, because someone could speak until four o'clock, when private members' business will begin, and the Leader of the Opposition can speak this evening.

Mrs Edwardes: That is all we are after. Thank you.

Mr JOHNSON: The Leader of the House is giving that assurance. That is fine. The Opposition does not oppose the motion to suspend standing orders.

The SPEAKER: That conversation should have taken place outside the Chamber. The matter should have been sorted out earlier. I do not know how relevant it was to the motion before the House.

Question put and passed.