Speech By

Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

MOTION

Business Program

Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (12.32 pm): In relation to the business program motion for this week, I am particularly concerned about the proposal to make cognate two important bills. The new long title of those bills should be the 'Contempt of Parliament Bills', because this government is treating this parliament as its plaything, to do with the business program whatever it wants. I will not talk about the bills specifically, but I can say that the committee of which I am deputy chair, the Economics and Governance Committee—

Mr Purdie: A great deputy chair.

Mr STEVENS: Thank you, member for Ninderry. We have spent hours drilling public servants on both the integrity issue and the public sector issue. Submitters have taken the trouble to make submissions and the time to come forward. Now we are going to cognate these two different bills. That can be done, I understand, without the lesson from the member for Sandgate.

The bottom line is that, as a member of that committee, I will now have five minutes to speak on each bill—that is the same time for a speech on a matter of public importance—because of the curtailing of the time the government is allowing for debate. We spent a lot of time considering these two important bills—as the chair would know, yet he supports this motion. I could be surprised; he might yet cross the floor. The bottom line is that we spent a lot of time considering two important bills. The government did not introduce one bill; it introduced two important bills for our committee to investigate. Now, for the sake of convenience, members of the committee such as the members for Ninderry and Coomera will have just five minutes to speak to each bill. What part of democracy and free speech does that represent? I understand that an MPI speech is limited to five minutes, but this is about the voice of the people, including the people of Mermaid Beach. I am entitled to put forward their views, as is every member in this House. I should have the opportunity to do that. We used to have 20 minutes to speak to bills—and I understand that some speeches were a little repetitive—but in terms of the standing orders—

Mr Purdie: Not yours!

Mr STEVENS: No, mine were 20 minutes full of interest! Now I have only 10 minutes of interest. Under the terms of this motion to debate these two bills cognately, unfortunately I will have only five minutes per bill to speak about the intricacies and the nuances of the bills and how they will affect people, particularly in the Public Service. I will not pre-empt the debate, but some major issues were raised through the committee process that will not be able to be fully explained in the time I will be allotted. That is unfair and undemocratic.

Earlier in the House a motion was moved with one minute's notice that dealt with material that most people on both sides of the House had not read. This government is treating parliament as its political plaything. It is all about trying to get themselves re-elected for a fourth term. They will do anything, say anything, move anything, cut debate and cut the free speech of parliament.

Let's talk about Westminster. We have the Queensland Westminster system. It is a different system from the one the member for Sandgate alluded to earlier. It has been made particularly for the members of Queensland parliament. Basically, by cutting down the opportunity for full and frank debate—it has continued to be done—we are ruining the business program. For government members to jump up and say, 'You have the opportunity to alter the business program' is a nonsense because the numbers are weighted in favour of the government. It continues to use parliament as its little plaything in terms of how it wants this to play out for its media benefit and political advantage. It does not matter whether it is compulsory or preferential voting—I think the member for Sandgate gave us 18 minutes notice of that change—or cognating debate. This is ridiculous.

(Time expired)