

Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Amendment Bill 2009 — Adjournment Debate

HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [11.04 pm]: Sometimes governments introduce legislation that is just so deeply flawed and so contrary to what the community expects from its government and wants from its government and can support from its government that it falls on the opposition parties to undertake the mammoth task of representing the range of views that have been expressed in opposition to a piece of legislation. I listened with great interest to the speech made by the Leader of the Opposition in support of his motion to not sit tomorrow.

Hon Helen Morton: The Leader of the House.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Sorry; the Leader of the House. Those were the days!

Hon Simon O'Brien: You haven't got over it, have you?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: We are just fine, thanks. Members opposite can worry about themselves. I thank Hon Helen Morton.

I listened with interest to the speech made by the Leader of the House in support of his motion. As the Leader of the Opposition so eloquently expressed, the opposition does not object to not sitting tomorrow and to coming back next week. However, the Leader of the House clearly made a big mistake in the way that he scheduled this extra sitting week. Nobody on this side could understand what he was doing, but we worked in a spirit of cooperation with a touch of optimism, and we all cancelled our plans and came back a week early. We now find that after five days of sitting, there is nothing to do tomorrow.

That is not actually what I want to talk about tonight. I was astonished by the fact that the Leader of the House said, by way of interjection, something along the lines that he would not make the same mistake again, which indicates to me that he has accepted the advice given to him—that if he wants an extra week of sitting, it would be much more sensible to put it at the end of a block of sitting weeks rather than at the beginning. I think he has conceded that he will not make that mistake again. The Leader of the House said that in his view there had been some filibustering in the other place, and this has clearly upset him very much.

I rise to repeat the question that I earlier attempted to ask as a point of order while the Leader of the House was speaking. How are we supposed to tell the difference between filibustering and the expression of very legitimate community concern about a truly disgraceful piece of legislation? I do not use words like that loosely, Mr President. The fact is, as I have pointed out in this place before, that the government in general and the Minister for Environment specifically have succeeded, through the legislation to amend the Waste Avoidance Resource Recovery Act, in putting every stakeholder in this state offside. I will remind honourable members of the government's plan. First of all, the government suggested that it would increase the waste levy by 300 per cent. That puts an impost of something in the region of \$24 onto every household in the metropolitan area.

Point of Order

Hon NORMAN MOORE: This refers to a bill that is currently being debated in another house. Mr President, you have already ruled that alluding to debate in another house is contrary to the standing orders. I thought that the member, having been told that once, would have understood.

The PRESIDENT: I was listening very carefully, and I think the member is starting to cross the boundary between a general discussion about an issue and a particular piece of legislation the existence of which, for all intents and purposes, we as a house of Parliament do not yet recognise because it is being debated in another house of Parliament. That is the way that the Westminster system works. Hon Sally Talbot will be familiar with standing order 94, which was referred to a minute ago. I am sure she will not again allude to the piece of legislation that apparently exists.

Debate Resumed

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Thank you for your counsel, Mr President. I am indeed aware that in taking on this subject tonight, I am sailing close to the wind. I am very much aware of the standing orders and I noticed a number of members opposite scrabbling for their copies of the standing orders when this came up earlier tonight. I will take care to not refer to that legislation. I wish it did not exist, and so does the community of Western Australia. However, I will take care to stay within the standing orders because in fact, Mr President, what I am referring to has nothing to do with what is going on in the other place. I am referring to the level of community concern that is being expressed about a measure proposed by the government.

I came into this place a couple of weeks ago, from memory, to debate an urgency motion, with a file of papers some 10 centimetres thick, comprising all the expressions of concern that I had collected from the newspapers. This evening I stand with only one piece of paper in my hand, and it is this that I want to refer to in the hope that

the Leader of the Government has gone back to his office to listen very carefully to the rest of my speech on his monitor. It is an article from the *Joondalup Times* dated 11 August 2009, and it was indeed on the front page. Despite the fact that above the article there is a lovely picture of families at a mother and baby class where somebody has turned up with four babies, which confused me a little as the headline said “Let’s lock the levy”, I do not think the picture has anything to do with the article. The article is about three major waste management bodies, all I believe in the northern suburbs. They are the Municipal Waste Advisory Council, the Mandarie Regional Council and the Forum of Regional Councils. They had asked for a meeting with the Premier and the Minister for Environment to raise their concerns about some proposed legislation that allows for levy funding to be used for other than waste management purposes. That is specifically what I want to talk about this evening.

The concern expressed by these three major stakeholders simply represents a variety of other concerns. There is not a conservation group in this state who support the proposition that we first heard about in the budget last May. There is not a waste processor who supports what the government is doing. There is not a recycler in this state who supports what the government is doing. My desk upstairs in Parliament is groaning under the weight of letters, emails and faxes from stakeholders explaining to me why they are desperately upset and unhappy about what the government is proposing to do. Indeed, I have some correspondence that was forwarded to me by a colleague in the other place, Tony O’Gorman, the member for Joondalup, which refers to the fact that there will be major job losses in the industry. There has been no consideration of this by the government. The way in which the government has gone about this issue will cause such serious disruption to people’s activities that they are desperately trying to make their point. However, Mr President, I tell you that I can hear what they are saying; the opposition can hear what they are saying; I dare say that the Greens (WA), who have all been called out of the house on urgent parliamentary business, can hear what they are saying; and I have no doubt that some of our National Party colleagues can also hear what they are saying. I hope that we will get an opportunity before too long to debate this matter properly in this place. I can assure you, Mr President, that there will be absolutely no filibustering at all in this place. Every single word uttered from this side of the house—I include my National Party colleagues as well as the Greens in that—will be absolutely relevant and pertinent to express our absolute disgust with what one of my other colleagues in the other place, David Templeman, calls this dead stinking cat of a bill. In the last few minutes that remain to me —

Hon Simon O’Brien: That is another Joondalup issue, isn’t it?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: No, Hon Simon O’Brien, it was the member for Mandurah, David Templeman, who referred to it as a dead stinking cat.

Hon Simon O’Brien: What? Did you say the member for Mandurah is a dead stinking cat?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The member for Mandurah used the expression “dead stinking cat of a bill”.

Point of Order

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: The point of order is to a reference to a debate in the other place.

The PRESIDENT: We are apparently referring to lines quoted by another member in another place. We really do have to wait until we receive a message from the other place about some matter that the other place asks us to deal with. That, in effect, does not exist until we receive that message. I think the member can freely talk about the merits or otherwise of the levy but in terms of alluding specifically to the debate and/or the vote in the other place, I am afraid she will have to be patient and wait until it is our turn.

Debate Resumed

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I am, indeed, prepared to be patient. I was certainly not quoting from the debate. It was an expression that my colleague David Templeman has used many times in public forums about this particular dead stinking cat of a bill.

In the few seconds remaining to me, I ask honourable members opposite that if they want to know what a filibuster is and if they want to know what sheer incompetence in handling a bill is, they should see whether there was an occasion in the past week when one of their ministers took 50 minutes to table a document because he was so embarrassed by its contents.