

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

DAILY HANSARD

THIRD MEETING – EIGHTH SESSION

THURSDAY 8TH FEBRUARY 2007

The Speaker, Sir Peter Kenilorea took the chair at 9.33 am.

Prayers.

ATTENDANCE

At prayers all were present with the exception of the Minister for Home Affairs, Justice & Legal Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Mines & Energy, Provincial Government & Constitution Development and the Members for West New Georgia/Vona Vona, West Guadalcanal, East Honiara, Small Malaita, East Are Are, Central Honiara, South Vella La Vella, West Kwaio, Ulawa/Ugi and North Vella La Vella.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS – SIX PROVINCES

17. Mr KENGAVA to the Minister for Provincial Government and Constituency Development: Can the Minister explain to this Parliament why the recent Assembly Elections in six provinces, namely Temotu, Renbel, Malaita, Guadalcanal, Central and Isabel failed to be held according to the regulated schedules?

Hon SANGA: Mr Speaker, I would like to first of all clarify that the question itself is not entirely accurate and I will explain.

In accordance with section 9(1) of the Provincial Governments Act 1997, ‘an ordinary election of members of a provincial assembly

shall be held on the fourth anniversary of the date of the previous election of members.

In the case of Guadalcanal, Central and Temotu Provinces their Assembly elections were held in accordance with schedule dates. Malaita and Rennell & Bellona, however, are the only exceptions. Rennell & Bellona held their elections two days later than the scheduled date due to logistical difficulties.

Malaita Province – Wards 1 – 5 and Wards 31 – 33 were held on the schedule dates. Wards 6 – 30 however, were held early this year and again this was due to logistical difficulties.

Mr KWANAIRARA: Is the Minister aware that shipping arrangements caused the delay in other provinces?

Hon Sanga: That is the very reason for the lateness of elections especially for Malaita. It was due to mechanical problems with the ship that was hired and so another ship was engaged after this was discovered.

Mr FONONO: Is it legally right to have two different Returning Officers like in the case of Malaita for this recent provincial election? There were two different Returning Officers conducted to hold the elections for Wards 1 – 5 and 31 – 33 and a separate Returning Officer conducted the elections for Wards 6 – 30. Is this legally right or not?

Hon Sanga: Mr Speaker, in so far as previous practices are concerned, I think it is legally right. That is an issue of law which I think we would be advised on by the honorable Attorney General.

Mr Speaker: As someone who has some knowledge with elections being the Chairman of the Electoral Commission, elections can have

separate Returning Officers as long as those Returning Officers are appointed as such, especially when they are held at different times. Of course, for the same election been held at the same time, there can only be one Returning Officer.

Mr Kengava: Can the Minister confirm whether the officials who carried out the elections were not fully supported by the Ministry's administration?

Hon Sanga: Mr Speaker, the elections were actually provincial affairs – the provinces themselves are responsible and the Central Government only provides funds for the elections.

Mr Kwanairara: Can the Minister confirm whether the ship that was engaged developed mechanical problems before the arrangement was made or after the arrangement?

Hon Sanga: The ship that was engaged developed mechanical difficulties prior to its departure, and that is why another ship was engaged.

Mr Kengava: What is the Government's response to calls for re-election in Malaita Province because of what appears to be discrepancies in those elections?

Hon Sanga: Actually elections for wards 6 to 30 in Malaita were held already on 15th January.

Mr Kengava: Before I thank the Supervising Minister, I would like to raise in this House that holding elections in the provinces is very important for the political development of this country, and I think the government should be obliged to rectify any elections that are not held accordingly. For that matter I would like to encourage the government to bring, may be a retrospective bill to correct areas that do not follow the laws.

Secondly, it is very important that Parliament must have a full report on elections held in the six provinces raised in this question because it is a nation wide concern because a lot of people in the provinces and the Parliament

must know why there are problems concerning the holding of elections in the six provinces mentioned.

With those comments, I thank the Supervising for the answers given.

DEPLOYMENT – COOPERATIVE OFFICERS

18. Mr KENGAVA to the Minister for Commerce, Industries and Employment: The Government is embarking on its rural development policy. Can the Minister inform this House on plans to re-deploy business and cooperative development officers back to the provinces to support the 'Bottom Up Approach'?

Hon AGOVAKA: Mr Speaker, as the Government embarks on its rural development policy, the Ministry of Commerce, Industries & Employment plans also to re-deploy business and cooperate development officers back to the provinces to support the bottom up approach.

I would like to read here that we have five new posts advertised and filled late last year and these officers will be posted as follows:

- 1 Principal Business/Cooperative Officer, Taro, Choiseul
- 1 Principal Business/Cooperative Officer, Lata, Temotu
- 1 Senior Business/Cooperate Officer, Honiara City Council
- 1 Principal Business/Cooperative Officer, Tulagi, Central
- 1 Principal Business/Cooperative Officer, Auki, Malaita

Sir, I would like also to mention here as well that the Ministry is also embarking on putting officers from our Industrial Development Division to the provinces as well. For the information of the House may I also read out this to you as well as follows:

- 1 Chief Industrial Officer, Gizo
- 1 Chief Industrial Officer, Auki
- 1 Principal Industrial Officer, Kirakira

- 1 Principal Industrial Officer, Guadalcanal
- 1 Principal Industrial Officer, Buala
- 1 Principal Industrial Officer, Taro
- Honiara City Council & Headquarters - 1 Chief Industrial Officer, 1 Principal Industrial Officer and a Food Technologist, and a Chief Industrial Officer (Industrial Estates & Infrastructure), and a Bina Project Manager, Auki.

Mr Kengava: Does the Ministry have any timeframe for these deployments?

Hon Agovaka: Our officers are now ready to be deployed. However, there is a slight problem and I would like to inform the House that our tied houses, for example the tied houses in Taro have now been taken over by the Choiseul Province, and so we would need to look for new houses to accommodate officers who are going down to the provinces. But we are working on it and we would be deploying them very shortly.

Mr KOLI: Can the Minister inform Parliament as to how many officers are within the Cooperative Development Office? So far as I know there is only the Registrar of Cooperatives there. I would like to know how many officers are in the Cooperative Division.

Hon Agovaka: Does the honorable Member want to know the number of officers we have? Yes, there are a total of eight officers in the Business and Cooperative Division of the Ministry.

Mr Koli: I would like to know the number of officers in the Cooperative Division. How many officers are in that Division?

Hon Agovaka: As I said eight. Five are new ones and three are old ones.

Mr SITAI: Unless I did not quite hear what the Minister said, but can he inform Parliament as to why there is no posting of one Business/Cooperative Officer to the Makira/Ulawa Province?

Hon Agovaka: At this stage in 2007, there is none but in 2008 there are plans to have one Cooperative Business Officer in Makira.

Mr ZAMA: On the question of business and cooperative development officers, whose role is it to advise Business Operators in the Provinces and may be in Honiara? From what I can gather many of the officers sitting in the Department are either coming out from secondary schools or may have come out from tertiary colleges and the experience they may have is basically theory from text books and from tertiary institutions.

These officers are going out to advise people in the real world on real issues that would affect businesses and cooperatives, and in most cases they may not have had the real experience to actually advise people who are running businesses.

The question is, what is the Department's plan in view of the lack of experience that these officers may have in trying to strengthen the capability of these officers?

Hon Agovaka: When the positions are advertised, there were a lot of applications and the Ministry of Public Service made the selection based on our recommendation and assistance, hence the officers were selected based on their qualification, knowledge and experience.

The Department of Commerce, Industries and Employment is embarking on strengthening its capacity by not only doing internal training but also assisting officers to do external training.

Sir KEMAKEZA: Mr Speaker, the speech by the Minister of Finance is full of words like business, development in rural areas, participation of people in rural areas, utilizing untouched resources in the rural areas and the list goes on. Such phrases are in the speech.

In view of the answer given by the Minister, it is critical and urgent for these officers to be posted to the rural areas so that address the government's plan on this bottom up approach.

What are the critical plans of the government to address this issue, let alone one

for each constituency may be is not a qualified businessman like many of us.

What is the serious plan of the government? That is what they are preaching and telling this nation otherwise it will be another empty promise again.

Hon Agovaka: The government is trying to address this and so we have to start somewhere, and the bottom up approach is the way that we are going. The government is embarking on getting businesses and development down to the rural areas by providing these officers to assist in helping people to set up businesses and get the economy going in this country.

Mr FONO: In the light of emphasis on cooperative, I understand the Cooperative Act was reviewed last time. When are we expecting that Act to come to Parliament as a new act or any amendment to the existing Act so that it is in line with the current cooperative development or farmers cooperatives that are now being encouraged to be established in the rural areas.

When are we expecting that piece of legislation to come to this floor of Parliament?

Hon Agovaka: Mr Speaker, the cooperative law is part of a reform review that we are doing with the business law that is currently undertaken by the Ministry with the help of consultants from the Asian Development Bank. Mr Speaker, I think by the end of the year we should be able to know how far we are into the reform review of the business law, which includes the cooperative law.

Mr Zama: Mr Speaker, when the MP for Savo/Russells was Prime Minister wanted to review the Cooperative Act.

Mr Speaker, in my view the cooperative societies is something of the past, it is something behind us especially when individual families would like to run their own businesses, even inside our own villages or within our tribal set ups people would like to do something for themselves.

I do not want to discourage the government but otherwise this is like bringing in some foreign concepts for instance may be like the rice growers in Australia that form up their

cooperative societies to strengthen the efforts of individual farmers. But what does this cooperative society would like to see in Solomon Islands? What is it targeting? What kind of families, what kind of farmers or what kind of sector in our population is this cooperative society trying to target against the background that people of this country are trying to set up their own individual businesses?

Hon Agovaka: Mr Speaker, I think that is exactly what the Cooperative Division is trying to do. It is trying to assist our rural people into business or to form up their own business set ups.

We are not focusing on any particular division, but we are merely trying to encourage investment and business cooperatives in the rural areas.

Mr TOZAKA: Mr Speaker, the introduction of cooperatives in the rural areas is not a new thing as it was done in the past. Can the Honorable Minister advise the House as to what is the new concept or new approach taken now with the re-introduction of this function back in the province in order for it to be successful?

Hon Agovaka: Mr Speaker, I think the cooperative society failed in the 1960's and 70's because of the lack of capacity. There are no people to take on this function. Now we are trying to recentralize everything - every development is centred here in Honiara. Now we are trying to go back to the rural areas and our aim is to take development back to the rural areas through this bottom up approach that we so much talked about.

There will now be more coordination with stakeholders and the NGOs. There will be more coordinated programs with the various ministries, hence we would like to start somewhere and start this year and see how we go.

Now with this support from the government and with the support from business houses, stakeholders, NGOs, we will be able to assist people in the rural areas with their business. I think that is really the thing we are aiming to do.

Mr Sitai: Mr Speaker, in relation to the Minister's answer to my previous question to put not only my mind to rest but also my people of Makira/Ulawa Province as well, and also in relation to the point raised by my good friend and colleague, the MP for Savo/Russells.

Can the Minister inform the Parliament of the actual situation in relation to your previous question in which you confirm that you do not have any staff in the cooperative and business division to be posted to the Makira/Ulawa Province in 2007? Or are there no business activities happening in Makira/Ulawa Province that does not warrant posting of an officer.

I would like to remind the Minister that we have a tied house in Kirakira for officers like these. I would like to suggest that if you are having problems with tied houses to accommodate your officers in other provinces then post one to Makira Ulawa Province because we need that service.

Hon Agovaka: Mr Speaker, there are three tied houses in Kirakira. We have three tied houses and two of these houses have been occupied by the Makira/Ulawa Province and so there is only one house left. We will be sending a Principal Industrial Officer who will be looking after the small to medium enterprise sector there. Hopefully next year we will be able to recruit business and cooperative officers for Kira Kira under our budget.

Mr Kwanairara: Mr Speaker, officers are one thing and back up logistics is another thing. Can the Minister assure officers and the country that they are going to support these officers who are going to live in difficult areas in the provinces?

Hon Agovaka: Mr Speaker, I think support is in the budget. You will see that we have enough budget support for logistics for these officers in the provinces.

Mr GUKUNA: Mr Speaker, I did not hear the Minister mentioned Rennell and Bellona. Do you have any plans to send any officer to Rennell/Bellona? We are supposed to be included because it is also part of your development policy. Are we left out?

Hon Agovaka: Mr Speaker, Rennell/Bellona activities will be coordinated from Honiara from our headquarters by the business cooperative officer in our department.

Mr Kengava Mr Speaker, before I thank the Minister, I want to mention five points for the government to take note on this issue of deployment of seconded officers to the provinces.

I think the most important one is to carry out strengthening and capacity building because not only will you find difficulties in moving new officers to the provinces. The forestry needs support and assistance.

The second point is housing, which is always a problem and you must look into that very carefully. As for Taro there are two houses there which were once used by the business and cooperative division but now generally used by the province.

I think the Ministry must reclaim those buildings so that you quickly deploy these officers to the province.

Thirdly is an area of concern that when officers go to the provinces they start to involve in private business. This is an area the government must look into very seriously.

Fourthly, we are shortly going to engage the constituency development officers. I just want to advise the government to draw the line of difference in duties and responsibilities otherwise seconded officers would be in conflict with the constituency development officers in their line of duties, therefore causing confusion which would lead to politicians stepping in and everything breaks down.

Lastly, I do not agree with the MP for Rendova/Tetepare in saying that cooperative is a thing of the past. Everything we are doing now is a thing of the past. It is this Parliament that amends, revises and updates things according to modern times. If some people do not want the cooperative and business division then let it be so, but send the cooperative and business division officers to Choiseul Province.

With those few remarks, I would like to thank the Minister for his answers.

BILLS

Bills – Second Reading

The 2007 Appropriation Bill 2007 (*debate continues*)

Sir KEMAKEZA: Mr Speaker, I too would like to contribute to this 2007 Appropriation Bill 2007 and in doing so first of all I thank and congratulate the Minister of Finance and Treasury and his Permanent Secretary, his staff especially the Budget Unit.

On same token, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Prime Minister and his Cabinet Ministers for putting this budget together which then find its way to this floor of Parliament.

I also do not forget to thank, Mr Speaker, all government departments and their permanent secretaries as well as their staff. The Government Caucus is also important for its support of this very import bill and so I would like to thank them for that. The Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee as well as members of the Public Accounts Committee made a good examination of the estimates and have made very good recommendations on its scrutiny of the budget. There are also some people who too part in formulating this important budget but are behind the scene, I would like to thank them as well.

Mr Speaker, I would like to start with my debate on this budget by asking us to look at the world. I am asking this because what is happening in Solomon Islands is also happening in many other parts of the world. We see this in the television, we read about it on newspapers, we hear it on the radio and we read about it in history books.

What is Solomon Island's position today compared to happenings throughout the world. For example, Mr Speaker, Aceh in Indonesia, Afghanistan in the Middle East, some parts of the African Continent, as well as in the small Caribbean states, in the Pacific as well like in East Timor, Fiji, Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, Tonga and also Solomon Islands.

That is the picture I want us to start looking at and later on I will drive us to this 2007 budget. These countries have all gone through the same experiences that Solomon Islands has gone through. A lot of precious lives were lost, very valuable properties destroyed,

people displaced and all these go against the feeling and testing of our humanity.

The same experiences that Solomon Islands has gone through in the last six years from 1999 to 2003 was quite difficult. We lost our dear ones, we lost all our properties and everybody in panic situations went against their feelings.

Just imagine, Mr Speaker, what all of us on this floor of Parliament would have felt in such a time like this when our country went through difficult situations.

I am one of the many, Mr Speaker, including yourself who has been trying to find the solution to this problem. We are trying to find answers to the problems affecting our country. It was quite a difficult situation. It was a sad story. It was a sad history. And here we are, Mr Speaker, easily forget what has happened yesterday. The people were full of tears with sorrowful hearts for losing their loved ones. They have not been sleeping well, no proper rest but just wondering when their lives will be taken away, the very precious lives that every one of us is trying to protect.

Mr Speaker, there was no law and order. The country was facing a sad situation. That is the picture I want us to see first and then look at our friends in other parts of the world and then we come back to Solomon Islands to see what has happened in the past and the situation we are in today so that we can plan for the future. That is what we need to sit down, meditate upon and pray about before we start to talk about peace.

Have we identified the problems affecting this country? Have we recognized the sickness of this human being? And the name of the human being is Solomon Islands. Have we identified it? If it is yes, then what is the medicine for it? Is it running away? Is it when something happens you run away?

I am not arguing with the Minister for Finance so that he starts to jump up and down in his seat. I am trying to put to us a picture. But wait for me I will come to your budget, and that is when you will start to panic. Stop interjecting because your time will come.

But that is the picture the Solomon Islands was in so that we can start planning for what we are going to look at. From 2001 – 2006, the quinine we gave at that time was law

and order. That is an example. It was law and order. Without that law and order you cannot see where Solomon Islands is now in today.

But here we are when we cannot even address the problems that are at hand and so we went out and ask for assistance from our friends and they come in. Sir, without them do you think all the guns will come back?

There are things happening in the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal, in East Guadalcanal, in Central Guadalcanal, in East Malaita, in Central Malaita, in Savo, in Russells, in Choiseul and even in Gizo/Kolombangara. There was fighting. It was in Gizo that somebody went and shot dead some people in the hotel. Do you easily forget this? It was in Choiseul that every company there was closed. Bougainville came in and assisted Western Province at that time. You can remember these incidents, Mr Speaker, as a security officer and in return the government met a lot of bills at that time. But we cannot help it. That is the situation in the country.

What I am trying to put to us here is the feeling of people in Solomon Islands at that very time - the real people who voted us onto this floor of Parliament. But here we are today driving around in flashy cars, living in luxurious houses, wearing coats, eat and drink very well, but what about our people out there. What about our people out there? There are half a million people but only 1% of the people are those we are trying to talk about here but what about the 99.9%?

This is a sad story, a very big one. That problem is not yet settled properly, and so we are trying to look for the medicine to be given to this particular man so that he returns to full normalcy. So it is a very sad story, a very sad story.

Mr Speaker, that is the picture so that we plan from here and then we go ahead. So the medicine for 2001-2007 was law and order, disarmament, peace to be sustained and maintained because of the queuing up that is taking place at our education and health services, and the last thing we would ever thought about was the economy because it is not priority to us then. Economy is not the priority of the government at that time.

After the election in 2007 this government came into power and what is its priority? I am going to ask again the question, 'have we recognized the disease that is still there'. What is the priority? Is it state government? Is that the priority? Is peace the priority or security, the economy, health and medical services? Where do we put our priorities here?

According to the policy of the government, its number one policy is state government. State government! Why did the Minister of Finance now when chairing the Western Leaders' Summit last time asked me to delay introducing the state government so that we could look at forming provincial congresses. It was accepted at that time, and I thank the MP for Gizo/Kolombangara, the Minister of Finance now for your wisdom. Because of that it was delayed although the report was already tabled in Parliament.

State government is now the priority of this government, but the priority of the Opposition now is infrastructure. In the Minister of Finance's Speech on the Budget, infrastructure is really at the bottom. Only the 'bottom up approach, rural development' is in the speech.

Mr Speaker, this word 'rural' was there before independence when you were the Chief Minister and subsequently became the first Prime Minister of our country. This word 'rural' has been there up until now. It is people who twisted this word and paint different colors to it, like black and sometimes white but the same thing. It is like Abarai's pig that was painted black and when he goes back he paints it white.

That is what we are doing. Don't jump up and down and tell this nation that you are going to perform a miracle tomorrow. You and I were born here, live here and we will die in this country. So who are you giving this false picture and false expectations to? Who does not know about Solomon Islands? You must be living in a different planet. Of course, you are and that is why you did not identify the problems that exist in the country today. I am surprised. You are not surprised because of your mixed colors. You want to rearm the police force again. Is that a priority? That is an example.

I am not saying it is wrong but we must question it. Is it the right decision so that the Minister of Finance included it in his speech? We did extensive consultations and deliberations with the people of this country in order for us to make the right decision. Is that the right decision?

Is what the Minister of Finance saying in his speech true? Is he true? What time did he go to Savo? What time did the Minister of Finance go to Savo to consult with my people there?

There should be extensive consultation and deliberation to help you make good decisions. I have not seen him in my constituency.

Hon Lilo: The seas are rough.

Sir Kemakeza: Do not tell me that. You are giving false information again. This is a slap on the face of the people of this country who own this Parliament. This is their parliament.

You also come here and say that the framework of the budget now is totally different from what it was like during the colonial times. No wonder the Member for Aoke Langa Langa yesterday said that the bottom up approach is going to be top down and is colonization and bottom up is decolonization. Is that true? I am starting to question the Member for Aoke/Langa Langa on this one.

Before colonization came and Christianity introduced to this country, my people have been living as they are today. So do not come and tell me that you are going to change their color like Abarai's pig. No, Mr Speaker. Who are you?

This drives me to the next point I am going to discuss and that is the resources that Solomon Islanders have. It is very limited. The Member for Aoke/Langa Langa said yesterday that resource is not a problem, but to me resource is a problem. Of course, it is.

The little money that we have and for us to come on this floor of Parliament to discuss and talk about less than half a billion dollars in the supplementary, is a problem. If all the 50 constituencies put together everything they want it will come to about \$200 to \$300 billion. But here we are talking about less than half a billion

dollars. That is why I said that the little resources we have must be planned properly so that we put the money where our mouth is.

I say this because the more we abuse and misuse the meager resources that we have like the purchase of new vehicles, which we are questioning why my very hard working colleague and backbenchers are driving G-vehicles and your ruling said it is illegal. As well as that the great manpower in the Prime Minister's Office of \$2.6 million. I would like to ask the Prime Minister to give that amount to the rural people. I am not saying it is bad but it is just a suggestion. These are just suggestions. We have to be very careful how we spend and use the very small resource that we have.

We tend to paint a different picture, Mr Speaker, by saying that we do not want the aid donors now because we have money now and so we can do it ourselves. That is the picture you are trying to put. Beggars have no choice, Mr Speaker, and we are not beggars either.

That is on resources. We have very little money. And I am happy that the Minister of Finance and the government are now concentrating on rural development. I agree with that and I have no comments on that.

But this drives me to my next point. What the speech is saying is that there is going to be need for may be 20 to 30 amendments on existing acts or enacting of new legislations all together. What time? This is the time to bring in all those changes to acts that you talk so much about in the speech. Without any legislation to guide you in disbursing of this small resource to our rural people, then just forget about it. You will never go far on that. It will be just like the SICOPSA grant of 1989-1993. I am talking on experience. Do you remember 1989-1993, Mr Speaker, when the SICOPSA grant scheme was introduced for the area councils. The Member for Aoke/Langa Langa at that time referred to the Auki Point in his speech as SICOPSA point because it was used for drinking beer bought from SICOPSA funds. This is true. That is the danger I am trying to point out to the government to be very careful about so that we do not repeat what happened to the SICOPSA grant. During the later part of that time the Minister for Finance now was Permanent Secretary of Finance. Is that true, Mr Speaker?

He was the Permanent Secretary at that time, and he did not have any regulations or rules to follow in the disbursement of this fund, and so you can just imagine our area councils of before, Mr Speaker. I thank God that SIAC abolished that type of government, and that was the end of it.

Not only that, the Prime Minister now, the same Prime Minister when he was Finance Minister introduced another scheme. This scheme involved taking part of the RCDF and injected it inside the Development Bank for people to loan against or take equity. The same story happened because we wanted to repeat something that was a failure in the past. Do you know why it failed? There was no regulation, no rule and no procedure. It is the same.

But I am happy, Mr Speaker, the Minister of Finance talked about this in his speech. But where are the bills? Are you going to introduce them in 2010? That would be election time. We are now in the second year. The people we preach about on this floor of Parliament that we are going to help are living in the bushes, in the atolls, in the valleys, beside the rivers, along the coasts and up in the mountains. The places that you never reached before you now reach and this is because you want their votes. But today this is what you are. You see the bright lights of the city and so you forget them. There are just too many artificial things in the city.

You see, Mr Speaker, I have lost some weight because I work in the gardens now, and so I am very fit. Some of you have been MPs for only six months but you have put on extra weights.

(laughter)

That is dangerous, Mr Speaker, and I am not joking here.

Sir, we have forgotten the poor people who put us into this House. The people we want to legislate for, and who are listening to us right up in the mountains, down at White River, right inside the small islands of Russell. When you go back to them they will say to you that you are always living in town and you never come home to see them. They will say that you promised them in this book and with your good words in

Parliament but it does not reach them in the mountains. This is a very sad story because we are not serious about our people, so do not try to joke about it. They are people with feelings.

I have a feeling that the same Prime Minister had once put me in danger. I know you remember this, Mr Speaker, when at 10 pm one night in the Tobruk he told me as his Deputy Prime Minister to take the ceasefire agreement to the bushes of Guadalcanal for one leader to sign it. I turned around to the Prime Minister and said 'Prime Minister, who is going to look after my children if somebody happens to shoot me? This really happened. They shot some of my ministers. My Minister of Police then, the Member for Shortlands had his hands and fingers broken. This thing that we are now trying to play around with is not easy. Some people suffered and some people sacrificed their lives to bring us to where we are today. But here we are starting to play around with the country and the people of this nation.

I am debating and I am not talking to the Prime Minister. I am debating, and it is high time that you take note of what I am saying. If not then that is his business.

I am saying these because of the many ill decisions that he is making, and let me quote many of these decisions. From day one people of this country are starting to question this administration, and this questioning does not stopped until this very day.

It is also happening to this 2007 budget estimates. It is all promises, promises, promises and promises. You promise since day one and after 100 days nothing happens. The 200 days have come but still nothing happens, 10 months and still nothing too.

I am happy, Mr Speaker, that you are continuing on with my programs. You people are enjoying the programs of the last government. Stop telling the people of this nation that they are your programs. Where are your programs? You must continue with these programs because it is good for the country. Do not tell me that these programs are yours so that you go around showing off on the reopening of the Solomon Taiyo, the SIPL, Telekom and the servicing of the Guadalcanal and Malaita Provinces' debts. Those were passed by my Cabinet. You are still living on my budget too.

That is what I am saying. We must not play around with the lives of our people.

But then it gradually changes its color. You do not have to go far to find this. It is all in the newspapers, the radio, and at the bottom of trees. If you find a group of people sitting under a tree you will hear them talking about rearming and people saying they are frightened. People are concern about the government sending back RAMSI. That is the story, even if it is a coconut story.

Mr Speaker, there are many political analysts in the Prime Minister's Office. Send them out. Now I can also see a new division called the 'intelligent unit'. Has the Special Branch of the Police moved to the Prime Minister's Office now? Don't you have trust in the Royal Solomon Islands Police? That is the same mistake we made in the past which made this country to drop. You don't have confidence in the Royal Solomon Islands Police and so you form a new agent. This is all history with the same Prime Minister, the same Foreign Affairs Minister, the same Lands Minister, the same Provincial Government Minister. Don't tell me it is new.

A bunch of you were the same people who made mistakes before, so stop making excuses. You are going to repeat it again. Don't make excuses. People are watching.

Hon Sogavare (*interjecting*): Talk on the budget now.

Sir Kemakeza: This is the general debate of the budget, and I am talking about the resources of the country Mr Speaker. I am talking about the resources, the security of the country, which is the life blood vein of this country. What I am talking about is all in this book. The Minister of Finance was talking about all the things I am saying in this book. So much so that he runs out of words and started quoting from the Bible. So I am talking about resources.

Mr Speaker, this drives me to another point, which is structure. The Minister for Finance talked about this in his speech, and the Prime Minister is also still talking about this in his speech.

Sir, I want you to build 50 constituency offices. Mr Speaker, where will my

constituency officer work, may I ask. ? Where is he going to work? Where is he going to live? Is it on Savo? Where is his office there? Am I going to build it? Where? Where are the equipments and facilities? Where are they? This is putting the cart before the horse. That is an ill-decision, wrong planning.

Then you talk about using customary lands as your security to get money from the financial institutions. That is what you saying in here. But where is the amendment to the Lands and Titles Act? Where and when?

Hon Lilo: In July.

Sir Kemakeza: You are saying July but we will be ready for election at that time. We are halfway through the road and we are now on the crossroads. One year before the election, even the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister will go home because of fear of losing the elections. Therefore, now is the time. Mr Minister if you need my assistance I can give you advice on how to go about this thing.

The bill you are talking about in the speech is a wrong one. It is a wrong one. I have the answer for it. The Minister for Lands better do your homework. It would seem to me that three quarters of the Ministers are doing nothing. That is why it is delayed.

The Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister are running very fast and everyone is trying to hold the rope and pulling behind. That is actually what is happening. It is not the Minister of Finance and Treasury who is going to bring the bill but it is the Minister of Lands. He should introduce this Bill now so that it puts every one of us at rest and give us confidence and trust where it is due. Now there is none.

I can only see the salary increase and now there is another bill for the privileges of the Governor General. But I do not want to talk about that otherwise the Governor General gets cross with me.

I am not joking, but I want to know what will be the structure of these constituencies that we are going to put. That is why I asking about the priority of my good government. I have big trust and confidence on this government. In fact it is the cream of this nation, but when it starts to make wrong

decisions and starts to question me, I have second thoughts about you.

Is this what people of this country are expecting from you when some of you are very well-educated and talented people with many years of experience like the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Service? I have very high regards of many of you. Is that the achievements that people in this country would like to see? It is now time for these bills to come in.

Last time we talked about regulation for the RCDF but it is not here yet and also the millennium fund. Is it here already? You keep on promising but nothing is done. I think you are too busy with overseas trips.

You keep on saying it is coming, but when? Let me tell you a story about this phrase 'coming, coming'. I went to eat in one of the restaurants and I ordered a dish of fish. I almost finished three bottles of beer but the fish is not yet ready. So I asked the woman in charge about the fish and she said 'coming, coming' but she just took out the fish from the deep fridge. This is exactly what the Minister of Finance is trying to do. He just took it out from the deep freeze where even its scales are not yet removed. That is exactly what the Minister of Finance is saying, 'coming, coming, coming' and after two hours but the fish is not yet ready.

Last night I watched the television and I saw a man talking with his mouth but there was a machine besides him. Then I began to wonder how because it is the machine that is talking and not the human being. The voice that comes out does not match the man.

Mr Speaker, that is exactly what is happening - remote control. That is why a lot of wrong decisions are being made. You do not go far Minister of Finance. You do not go far Moti's affairs. You go far away for what. Do you want me to tell it out and that is why you interjected me? Remote control and this is because it is not the right decision. It is not the right decision from the very high brains on the other side. If they are true Solomon Islanders like when the Member for Aoke/Langa Langa said last time that any one of you with Solomon Islands blood walks out with me. Who is asking if you are not of Solomon Islands blood? That is discriminatory. The Constitution does not allow

that. Do you study the Constitution? But there is too much remote control.

Here you are criticizing foreigners, but who is controlling the Prime Minister's Office now. You watch first before you start complaining because one finger will go and four fingers will come back to you, like what the Minister for Provincial government said last time. One goes and four comes back to you. You hate foreigners very much but here you are accommodating foreigners. Don't tell me that you are not doing it because you are doing it. You are doing it when you tried to expel people who come and rescue this nation, which we called it as God's gift. That is the answer to the prayers of people of this nation, and here you are fiddling around and tampering with it wanting to do otherwise.

The point is remote control. We are being remote controlled. You should not be like that. You have brainy members in Cabinet and also in Caucus. There is no one with PhD on this side, there is one PhD on that side, my uncle, Minister for Education, and I have big respect for him. The Prime Minister too has a Masters and I have every trust and confidence in him. The Minister of Finance too also is a Masters. So utilize your own and no remote control business. That is why you cannot make decisions. They said I was not good but when I look back, this group is worse than me, I am much better. Any way, Mr Speaker, that is what is happening in the country today.

I now wish to touch on the budget speech.

Hon Lilo: Point of Order Mr Speaker. We only have four days as allowed under Standing Orders to debate this Budget, and I am just wondering now that the MP for Savo/Russells will go into the debate of the Budget Speech. Perhaps we should strictly look into timing the debate by Members so that everybody has the chance to debate the Budget.

Mr Speaker: In terms of the general debate there is no provision for time allocation under Standing Orders unless Parliament decides so. But there is such a provision at the Committee of Supply level.

Sir Kemakeza: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I am very grateful for your ruling. The Minister of Finance should study the Standing Orders before stopping the MP for Savo/Russells.

Mr Speaker, I was elected to come and stand and contribute on this floor of Parliament, and no one in this House, except you, Mr Speaker, can rule me off. No one. We all have the same privilege, the Prime Minister and Ministers, and we all have our time to talk. I have just finished one hour Minister of Finance and so if you can give me another hour it would be fine. Or do you want me to stop now.

The Budget, similar to what I mentioned in my general comments, is all promises again. The Prime Minister promised the nation, the Minister of Finance goes ahead to make promises because I always see the hard working Minister of Finance on the TV, many Ministers too are making promises, and some of them read out statements too. Why read the statements? The same statements are also in this speech.

Do you want to put something that looks proper before coming here? No need. This is a new style but it is in the Standing Orders that Ministers can make statements. But those statements should not be made at this time because you are going to confuse those of us who contribute to the general debate. Which speech are we going to debate? Is it this one (the budget speech) or the first statement by the Minister of Finance? I am sure the Minister of Planning will make another statement, may be the Minister of Police, the Minister of Peace, Minister of Education and the Minister of Commerce. We should only be debating one speech, and now I am debating this one.

Why I am saying it is all promises and why I am saying that may be half or three quarters of the Ministers are not working or may be working but doing different work is because the policy statement of the government, the Grand Coalition is only a statement. But Minister where is the implementation program? Where is the implementation program of the Minister of Peace? Is it coming, and where are the work programs? Those are the things we want to see.

You have been telling us the time frame you are going to do certain projects. If you don't do it yet, then go and do it. I have not seen

any policy statement that is complementary to this speech.

You are not running a hawkers license, but you are running the affairs of this nation. So you and I are answerable to our people and country. No more and no less.

I want to see the implementation program of each Department. The Prime Minister knows this very well. He told me before about his 100 days work program. I was his Deputy Prime Minister in the past and I know he is a hardworking Prime Minister. I know that it is you that do not support him. He needs your full support.

I did everything for him. I achieved the Cease Fire Agreement, the Townsville Peace Agreement, the Marau Peace Agreement and I brought back peace to this nation and that is why he recommended me for a knighthood. Thank you Prime Minister for this. And it is all because I achieved something.

I was not given knighthood because of my status. I was given knighthood because I achieved something for the people of this country and this country.

That is what I expected you to do so that it is compatible with this budget and speech. That is why I am still questioning the regulations, the laws, the amendments, the acts, the work programs and the implementation programs. Where are the rules and the procedures so that they are complementary to these 2007 estimates? These things should guide you, Mr Speaker, on the point I raised earlier on, the limited resources that we have, which is the first point I get from the speech, implementation.

The Minister of Finance wanted me to stop and so I have two more points before I finish because I have a long list. One word in the speech is trustworthy. Where is trustworthy? Why is the Auluta Basin not take off the ground and you moved it to July, the Minister for Agriculture. What happened?

Mr Speaker, nobody on the other side of the government side will tell any one in this nation why investors do not want to come because they do not have any confidence in this country. Because of what? It is because of the security issue. Investors are starting to question the behaviour of this government. That is what

is happening. You do not tell anyone but I know it.

Investors are starting to question what would happen to their investment in Solomon Islands. They start to question whether their \$2million investment is safe to be invested in Solomon Islands. They question whether they would be able to get back their money. They question otherwise they come to invest in the country but the next day their investments will be destroyed like what has happened to Gold Ridge, SIPL, ICLARM and the list goes on and on.

Where is the trust, confidence and trustworthy you are talking about? Where is it? Even other Pacific Island countries are giving traveling warning to their citizens not to come to Solomon Islands because it is not safe. We are scaring people because of our behaviors. We scare our visitors and investors. We are also telling our development partners to hold back their money because we are not sure what would happen.

They will come and say, 'Mr Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, we are ready to help you' but when they go back they will ask for a credible budget first or they will ask for assurance of security or they will say a group will come to do feasibility study and the report of the feasibility study will come in 2009 and by the time we want to try and implement it, 2010 the election comes and nothing happens.

That is exactly what they did to me. They did it to me and that is why I know it. And that is exactly what they are doing now to this government. I can read it. Even though we might see the Minister of Planning signing agreements or the Minister of Finance talks about this and that, that is exactly the same thing they did to me in 2001 to 2003 until RAMSI came to Solomon Islands before they gave us the money. They want confidence in the country because it is their taxpayers' money and so it is their money. I know they are going to give one excuse after another. The PM knows about it. That is exactly what they did to us in 2000 when he was prime minister and I was his deputy and so he knows the story very well. He knows the protocols of aid donors very well and he knows the conventions very well.

You young people will think you are going to get the \$200 million that was signed with them. I tell you that you will get that in 3000. This is true. Where is the 1999 STABEX \$60million Minister of Infrastructure? Is it here already? The Minister of Finance who signed it for rural infrastructure since SIAC is the Prime Minister now but we never get that money until today. Are you sure it is coming? If it is, so much the better. Only money from the ADB comes. You say it goes to a special account but that special account even not one dollar is there. Is it true Minister of Infrastructure who is not in Parliament this time?

The Minister of Finance should not be answering me now because you should do so when you reply. I am advising you. I am not spoiling you, Mr Speaker.

Grassroots policy is very good and I agree with it. This is the only point I thank the government for but it must be done as soon as possible. It is a very good policy because it touches the people who voted us.

I feel sorry for our people that sometimes I was in tears when I think about the woman in the bush sheltering under a banana leaf trying to scratch her cassava. But here we are saying that we are talking about her affairs. What sort of human beings are we. Let us have a heart for our people. I am not drunk right now, Mr Prime Minister but I am talking. But that is what is happening. Grassroots policy is very good and so let us do it. If you need my assistance I can offer it.

The other thing I want to congratulate the government for is a separate budget for the Judiciary. I am not only talking about bad things but I am talking about good things too, so don't get angry with me because you are also doing things. We have been talking about this for many years but it does not happen until now. Mr Speaker, I thank the Government for this. Next time a separate budget for Parliament too.

The Public Accounts Committee report is very good. It is excellent report, Mr Speaker, except that the Chairman tries to promote himself by saying it is the first in history. No, it is not the first in history. It is only first in history in the life of this Parliament that a backbencher of Government is the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. I see this as

somewhat bias, personal interest and wanting to defend the government. But he did say something in here that the Minister of Finance did not mention in his speech.

Mr Speaker, this budget is a deficit budget, it is not a balanced budget. The Minister of Finance is saying in the speech that he will not borrow money locally or abroad. That is what he is saying. But how are you going to finance this deficit? It is in the Public Accounts report.

Let me quote the Minister of Finance: “...recurrent Budget surplus of \$4.9million whereas the true position was a projected significant deficit. Such items should have appropriate explanatory notes to enable the reader have a clear understanding of the projected outcomes”. In other words, it is \$73million deficit.

Where are you going to get money to pay for this deficit when you already announced telling the people of this country you will never borrow any money Mr Speaker? I can detect it. You are dealing with the wrong people at the wrong time. The Minister of Finance wants to hide this. Why did you want to hide it from the people of this nation? This is their budget so tell them where you are going to get the \$73 million.

It is your problem Mr Prime Minister. It is your problem. I am merely pointing it out because it is my duty to point it out. If I do not point it out you will hide it and people will think it is a true budget. But it is false. This is a totally false budget. The Minister has to explain this before we pass it in Parliament. It is a serious matter. It is a really serious matter in any budgetary system.

Mr Speaker, the last point is increase revenue. As a former minister for revenue, I would like to say this. The speech says we will reduce import and also stop the business licenses of provinces and also help tourist operators. I wonder if that is true. But it is simply like this, and the Prime Minister knows this very well.

When I was the minister for revenue, for Customs and Inland Revenue, the Prime Minister now was my Commissioner of Income Tax and we introduced the Goods and Services Tax. That is my bill when I was the minister there, which rescued this nation up until today. When I introduced this tax they said it is the last

term of the MP for Savo/Russells. I was going to lose the election instead the opposite happened when my majority was higher than before. So that is on revenue.

When revenue is reduced on one side it has to be recouped somewhere. Mr Speaker, where is the Minister of Finance going to get that? Who is he going to kill? Where in here? You did not mention it here so that it will justify your increase of 28.8%, an overall increase in revenue.

You did not even mention the over collection in 2006 and what your focus would be this year. If you are going to collect that level of revenue in 2007, then some business people will be hit hard. I think the Minister is going to introduce it somewhere may be through business tax, operating tax, levy or increase the Goods and Services tax. No, Mr Speaker.

I agree with the Minister that this country is already heavily taxed. If you want to give incentives to our rural people then do it in a different way or is it because he stops exemption on the export of round logs. But he did mention in the speech too that logs are depleting.

Sorry, Mr Speaker, I cannot go on because the Minister of Finance would like me to give opportunity to other colleagues and so I am going to stop. Although I have a lot more to say I cannot continue but I will do that in the committee of supply.

Mr Speaker, I once thank again the government. If there is anything I said that does not go down well with my colleague Ministers and the Prime Minister, forgive me because that is how I talk. I do not take politics personal. You are my good friends and you are doing something for this nation. It is your turn, so please deliver what our people are expecting from you.

Mr Speaker, with that I resume my seat.

Mr NUIASI: Mr Speaker, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to stand on the floor of this honorable House to contribute to this important 2007 Appropriation Bill 2007.

Mr Speaker, before I proceed on with the detail of my discussion, I would like to thank all those who have participated in preparing this 2007 Bill for us in this honourable House to debate.

Mr Speaker, this Bill as far as I am concerned is a straightforward bill that all of us should support and implement. There is nothing harsh that would hinder the development of our country should all of us come together and contribute and inject our ideas together for the betterment of our nation.

Mr Speaker, the Appropriation Bill we are debating today in this House is unique. It is unique in itself because an appropriation bill holds together the relevant ministries to work closely with each other to address rural development issues which have not been done so for the past couple of years.

Mr Speaker, we would not be expecting ministries to work in isolation on this important Appropriation Bill. They will be working hand in hand in order to implement important programs. Mr Speaker, this should enable the rural people to see what the government is doing in the near future.

Mr Speaker, for those of us who have just come into this honorable House, it is alarming to see for the first time the bottom up approach strategy of any government would be introduced and implemented.

Mr Speaker, much has been said on the streets about the diplomatic ties between Australia and Solomon Islands. A lot of people have been saying that it is at its lowest and the relationship and mutual respect of both countries is diminishing.

I for one, Mr Speaker, would say that there is a growing diplomatic argument but Australia and Solomon should enter into such debates so that they know each other and what they would like to do for their own country. This is the only way Australia will know what Solomon Islands like and vice versa.

Mr Speaker, when all of us criticize this important appropriation bill and not put in alternatives that would enhance or improve this Appropriation Bill what are we talking about?

Mr Speaker, as elected Members of Parliament, all of us is vested with big responsibilities and our responsibilities are to see that the economy of our own country goes forward. That can be only done if we appreciate each other in this honorable house, and put our heads together so that we implement the policies of the government of the day and ensure that it

goes well for us as mentioned in the programs of the government.

Mr Speaker, I would not deliberate on the past because I know nothing of the past, but I would start from here, and encourage and ask all of us to be reliant, true and honest with each other in discussing this important bill.

Mr Speaker, there has been a lot of talk about RAMSI in the security arena. But one has to know very well what RAMSI is here for. If we can say the right things about RAMSI, RAMSI came into Solomon Islands with more than one component to help Solomon Islands. And one of the components is security that all of us have been referring to. RAMSI also came into Solomon Islands to help us know or attain transparency on the work we are doing in our organizations especially in the ministries and to enhance economic growth through which we will achieve maximum benefit that is required of us. Therefore, Mr Speaker, rather than just merely talking about RAMSI and not knowing what they are here for will be a misleading statement to our rural people. Mr Speaker, there is nothing wrong in our relationship with RAMSI as far as I am concerned.

Mr Speaker, successive governments have been talking about rural development but what have they done so far? For me as a new Member of Parliament, I have seen nothing so far. Seeing that this budget is geared towards rural development and the bottom up approach strategy, why not all of us together implement it so that we will be proud to see things happening in our rural areas and especially the grassroots people as we term them.

Mr Speaker, our people have been longing for developments. People are preparing themselves in their communities, constituencies and provinces. So why try to deviate and discourage them from this bottom up approach strategy which they are looking forward to?

The bottom up approach strategy to me, Mr Speaker, must be fully understood. I think to implement this bottom up approach we must start somewhere. Not everything we think and everything we say will be implemented during the life of this House. That is impossible. But at least we have to start somewhere.

The struggles that we will be going through in implementing the programs will be

areas that we may need to correct ourselves to help us draw policies that will be conducive in carrying out rural development in the rural areas.

Mr Speaker, the Grand Coalition for Change Government is presenting before us here a budget, an appropriation bill that would address and ensure this bottom up approach strategy will be implemented.

As other speakers have said, many of our legislations will have to be reviewed or amended. I support them in that statement but all these things cannot happen at once. It would be good for us parliamentarians rather than amending and reviewing legislations, let us see where these legislations will fit in, in trying to implement this bottom up approach strategy in this 2007 Appropriation Bill. That will be the road where we will identify areas that need amending, areas that need improvement and areas that need deleting. .

To achieve the programs in the budget, Mr Speaker, the government first of all must ensure that:

- (a) The Public Service is pooled with the necessary qualified manpower.

That is why in this budget you will see much funding for emoluments. Mr Speaker, unless we have a pool of qualified manpower that are experts or geared towards developing this policy, we would not go anywhere.

- (b) Create a rural atmosphere that would stimulate rural development.

Mr Speaker, a lot of us have been saying that not enough funds are allocated for rural development. I think most of us are fortunate to have been given money to develop our constituencies first and foremost and then other allocations in the provincial budget will also help us.

If you look carefully at the other ministries, they have been allocated some funding for development in the constituencies.

Mr Speaker, the sectoral development that will be implemented will identify problems such as infrastructure. These are all components of development because development cannot

happen unless there is infrastructure, and unless there are things that would enhance movement of development.

Mr Speaker, if all the components are broken down or broken into pieces you will see these things also included. That is why in my first statement I said that ministries must work together. They should not work in isolation as they used to be. All of them will have to plan for what they would carry out in any of the constituencies or in any of the provinces.

Likewise, Mr Speaker, the provinces are also planning to carry out this bottom up approach strategy. Therefore, why not try it so that we can see where we fit in and see where we can go from here to the future.

Mr Speaker, it is not easy for us to just talk about this bottom up approach. It is going to be painful as it will change the ways we have been living. But there are no people who have been receiving money will be different or receiving funds from the national government will be different. Accepting to implement new strategies will not be easy for the first time. However, when the results come, people will appreciate and see that this is the way forward, and this is what the government is embarking on.

Most of us have been referring to the past. As I have already said, Mr Speaker, I would not refer myself to any past developments or any past budgets or anything because in my opinion the past has gone so let us look forward to the future. If we look forward to the future and start thinking about the future and start to collect ourselves together to ensure that the future is bright for Solomon Islands then all of us should support this budget and ensure we pass it so that we implement the programs that we have been talking about.

Mr Speaker, this government now has the right tool. The right tool that it has now is this 2007 Appropriation Bill. If this Bill is passed in Parliament, I see no reason why we should not achieve the programs we have been talking about. We are serious ourselves, Mr Speaker, in trying to implement these programs because we are mandated by our people, and they are the ones we see have these problems.

Mr Speaker, there are a lot of people who would want to see development to happen

but they cannot have them because there is no priority and they do not have the chance or the opportunity. Like my area in West Are Are, there is not much development taking place there. But with this bottom up approach strategy, I am starting to experience the light shining through. I think some projects inside this budget might be diverted to West Are Are, and that would be the first time for us to have a project through this bottom up approach strategy.

Likewise, Mr Speaker, we will try to work on this \$1million allocation and see how best we can use it. I for one believe that if I start to work, some of our projects will be implemented, and this is one component of this bottom up strategy. I am happy that after this budget is passed and we are paid this money, we will start to implement our projects, and this will be visible in my own constituency.

Mr Speaker, there are many difficulties our people are facing but nobody dared addressing them. So now we are trying to address them

Mr Speaker, the taxation regime is quite high, as some of us have alluded to. In fact it is high but it is the government of the day that can put in legislation to change this. If the government of the day sees it fit it can amend or review the taxation regime.

Mr Speaker, when we talk about all these things who are we referring to in this House? After all we are the legislators. We have committees. We have technical know how. We have people to help us if we seek advice from them. So let us not blind our rural people that these things will be affecting them. It is us who are creating these things to affect the rural people because we ourselves did not look into what we are doing so that we put them in place. So who is suffering? Nothing but our own people are suffering.

Mr Speaker, I do not see any problem with this budget. It will take time, as I have already said, to amend, or to review legislations or for us to come up with new policies that would enhance the conduciveness of programs for our rural people. Should we not start now? Let us start now, Mr Speaker.

The taxation regime is a component that all of us know. We are well aware of things that will hinder the flow of programs.

Mr Speaker, we know there are challenges ahead. We are aware of those things but those challenges can only be addressed if we try to face them. The challenges are good challenges because unless we have challenges we cannot learn from our mistakes.

Mr Speaker, as leaders and as elected representatives of our own constituencies and representatives of the nation in this honorable House, our real challenge should be the betterment of our nation.

Mr Speaker, this honorable House is here to make legislations. We are here to pass legislations that would enhance development and the economic growth of our country. Therefore, let us all put our heads together.

Sir, I am someone who does not want to see us arguing in House when we know very well that we can contribute towards an issue of importance. We should work together, consult each other on the goodness of legislations, and when it comes to the House all we need to do is to pass them. Some may say this House is for debate. Yes, Mr Speaker, but if we debate things that will help our country, then I would agree with that.

Mr Speaker, having briefly talked on this Appropriation Bill, I can see nothing wrong with the estimates. Whether it is a deficit budget or a balance budget or a surplus budget, it is a normal government program, and this has always been the case. I see no difference when we have a balance budget. There is no difference too if we have a deficit budget. But the government of the day has the right to present a budget so that it carries out its programs as it sees fit.

Mr Speaker, when talking about things we should also be mindful of what are we talking about, like what has been said about ICSI.

Mr Speaker, as the Chairman of ICSI we are looking seriously into this Act. We are looking seriously into restructuring state own companies. May be soon we will be presenting amendments, as one of our speakers has said. We are not wasting our time. We are doing something for the nation because unless these

state own companies make profits we could not have any dividend, and dividends are paid to the government.

Mr Speaker, my board and my administration are serious this time. We will be addressing things and sooner or later you will see changes happening to all state own companies, and I am serious in saying this.

Otherwise some of you might think that I enjoy riding in a hilux. No, I am carrying out the government's program, and this is a privilege under ICSI Chairman too. The government has seen it fit to allocate me a vehicle. ICSI does not have money this time and I am trying to revive it, Mr Speaker, and you will see this. It will eventuate and you will be surprised and say the chairman meant what he said. That is what I want to say.

Having briefly talked on this budget, Mr Speaker, I will not prolong my discussion on this budget because I see no reason why I should debate this budget. The figures and the allocations are acceptable to me as the honorable Member for West Are Are. What I would only like to say is, may be some figures here should be ploughed back to West Are Are.

With this, I support the Budget.

Mr TORA: Thank you Mr Speaker, for allowing me to join other colleagues to contribute briefly to this 2007 Appropriation Bill.

Before doing so, Mr Speaker, I too would like to take this opportunity on behalf of my good people of Ulawa and Ugi Constituency to thank especially the Minister of Finance and the senior officials of the Public Service across the board. I cannot mention you all but you know who you are for putting this very important appropriation bill ready for us to now debate at this time. To compile such a document takes time and is a commitment. Those involved in compiling this budget deserve a word of thanks from all the 50 Members of this Parliament, on behalf of their people in their respective constituencies.

I for one have seen and would like to thank those who have been involved in compiling this budget to be ready in time for the Minister to table in this honorable house.

Mr Speaker, I would like to just remind all of us in this Chamber that after four years any government can change. Budget comes annually every year because it is the program of the government of the day. If the government does not put in its budget to be passed in this honorable House, services that our people deserve or their expectations will not be received.

We have already heard many experienced speakers on the floor of this Parliament when debating this appropriation bill. They traveled from Solomon Islands to other parts of the world and they come back. But for me my people are anxious. They want to see this budget passed so that important services are delivered to our people. That is the only expectation of our people at this time.

Before I came in I went to open a meeting of the Board of Management to welcome an officer from the World Bank this morning, I met some of my constituents who asked me to come to Parliament because they want us to pass the budget. Sir, we should not drag this budget. We want to move things forward. So I appeal to all of us on both sides of the house to forget about our differences and come forward and let us work together.

Our people need help now especially those living in the rural areas. We enjoy riding in air conditioned vehicles, we enjoy living in this city, but it is our obligation that we pass this budget so that our people receive what they expect.

I would like to congratulate the government of the day, for seeing it fit to give back to God what belongs to Him. In previous years, I have not seen the government committing one tenth of its revenue to be given to our churches because churches are part of the government and therefore God deserves to receive one tenth of what is given to us in order to carry out work in the churches and to meet the needs of pastors, ministers and bishops in their work because all of us are Christians. I want to congratulate the Grand Coalition for Change Government for seeing it fit to put aside one tenth for God's work. This is very important.

I believe all of us do tithing from our salaries. Are all of us doing this or is it just some of us who are doing this? We are

stewards. We look after God's creation and therefore we must give back what belongs to Him.

Mr Speaker, I see this budget as one of the budgets that will address developments that we want to see in the rural areas. They are our people who voted us. Like my good friend from North Malaita, who said it in his speech that he wants to thank the government for this budget as it will address what he has seen as not there in his constituency. All of us want this budget to be passed.

I would like to ask every one of us to put our heads and hands together. We are all responsible leaders and that is why our people have confidence in us and voted us into this House because they believe we are going to do something for them.

Mr Speaker, this is the chance of the Grand Coalition Government to bring up this appropriation bill because it should have been brought to this House last year but somehow it is being tabled at the beginning of this year. But there is nothing wrong with it. I see it as straightforward.

On behalf of my people of Ulawa/Ugi Constituency, I would like to thank our development partners. I cannot mention their names but thank you very much for the very big help that you are giving towards our development budget because you have a heart for the people of this nation, Solomon Islands.

Mr Speaker, without going any further I would like to once again thank the Honorable Minister for Finance and Treasury, the Honorable Minister for National Planning and Aid Coordination, the Auditor General, the Budget Section of the Ministry of Finance, all Permanent Secretaries, all chief accountants and your senior officers in the public service for your time. I know most of your time is spent outside from your families in trying to complete this important bill in preparation for debate and to be passed in Parliament at this meeting.

With those few remarks, Mr Speaker, I support the Bill.

Mr DAUSABEA: Mr Speaker, I will be very brief in my contribution to the debate of this Budget.

Sir, first of all let me take this opportunity to thank you, Mr Speaker, for the care and concern that you have taken after the ordeal that I have gone through and my colleague Member for Central Honiara.

I also wish to thank His Excellency, the Governor General for making it possible for me and my colleague for Central Honiara to participate in electing the new Prime Minister of Solomon Islands. Thank you very much for your concerns in allowing me to participate on behalf of my people of East Honiara Constituency.

I also wish to thank colleague Members of Parliament who have concern for us. Some of them even came to visit and share with us on what we have gone through. It is a difficult time but it is time that I wish to move on in representing my people. I also wish to thank my constituents for the support they have given me. As we all know, I am still waiting for the time which will be done fairly.

Mr Speaker, I wish to participate very briefly on the budget. Much have been echoed and alluded to by former colleagues who were in the government in the past but I have my own version in contributing to this budget.

Mr Speaker, one only has to ask the question, why we change. You as the founding father of this nation, Mr Speaker, know very well and you know why. As time goes on things change, systems change and so we must go along with the changes otherwise we will be left behind.

Mr Speaker, I can recall since joining Parliament way back in the '90s that I think there were several attempts in this honorable Chamber to change the system the government of the day has been running the affairs and the wellbeing of the people of this country.

It is sad to note, Mr Speaker, that those changes were either undermined or sabotaged of their good goals and objectives. I wish to refer to 1994, when my colleague Member for Ranogga/Simbo heading the government at that time was also trying to make changes to accommodate the needs and aspirations of the people of this nation at that time but sadly so his government was undermined and changed by none other than the so called investors in this country.

Mr Speaker, in 1997 when the honorable Member for Aoke/Langa Langa who was heavily criticized this morning tried to make changes he also was undermined. But I must congratulate the Honorable Prime Minister of the Grand Coalition of Change Government for taking the bold step in addressing the needs and aspirations of the people of this country. I will support him all along because I think it is time the country serves the interest of the rural people and the indigenous people of this country.

Mr Speaker, some of my former colleagues have alluded to this government as repeating itself. I do not think we are repeating ourselves in the way this budget was framed. I am calling on all Members of Parliament to accept changes and go with changes otherwise you will be left behind.

The Minister of Finance, I must commend you and your staff for revisiting the idea of rural focus. Mr Speaker, 80% of people in this country live, sleep and eat in the rural areas.

Mr Speaker, I wish to state here very clearly that changes are sometimes painful but we must take them as they come. As I said this is a global world and when time and systems change we must go along with them for the betterment of our people.

After 27 years, Mr Speaker, when Solomon Islands as a nation was given birth by the British Colonial masters who trusted and believe that we will make sound and good judgments for the destiny of the new nation, Solomon Islands, but after those 27 years we have gone nowhere.

In almost every general election, Mr Speaker, people think of names of parties that will be used as catchword to lure voters to support them with their ideas. But after the parties and people were elected into Parliament the first thing they forgot about are the parties they used during election campaigns. I think we must be fair and we must be responsible.

Mr Speaker, I said earlier that I support this government and I support this budget because I believe looking back more than 10 years we must serve our people. We must serve them right from this honorable chamber and not just talking on the street or in the media. We must make laws. If there are laws that are

required to look after our people or to assist them in business or in whatever, we have to use this Chamber to make those laws.

Mr Speaker, I say this merely because I have seen certain things in the past that I am not happy about and that is why I joined this government. There are many things that need to be put right if this nation is to have a future for its young and energetic generation. And the people who are to decide on their future are the 50 Members of Parliament who are sitting right here.

The word 'rural' sounds very, very good, Mr Speaker, and even another word that was used is 'grassroots'. We tend to use the mind and play psychological warfare in the minds of our people so that we get elected into Parliament. But when we get elected we tend to serve other people. That the already well-offs, the very few that are living in Honiara, I am a Member of Parliament for Honiara, I can see them scavenging on the government. Mr Speaker, that is why I am telling the nation and my people, let us go for change and let us support this budget. Let us see how it works before we criticize. In my world the past never exists. Some people are crying over the past. Let us decide today for the betterment of our people and let us go forward.

This budget here, Mr Speaker, has been criticized from the first page to the last page by some Members whom we came together in the 1990s. What has gone wrong with budgets in the past? That is one thing that we need to ask ourselves. I think the time for criticizing is far gone. Leave that behind. Let us all come together and build our nation.

The division that we have in this honorable chamber is opening us up to people with different motives to invest and reap this country and go off to their countries. This has been going on. I am very sad to hear some of my colleague Members criticizing my hard working Minister for Finance

(hear, hear)

and the Prime Minister. Why don't you just give them support and work together? Let us see how it works. If it fails life is meant to be like that. Get experiences from it, redirect and

go forward. But you cannot say just because the coops did not work in the 60s it will not work now. That is a fallacy. I tell you that is a fallacy.

It is time for us to sit down and study why it did not work at that time and how we can make it work again and make laws in this Parliament so that it will work and continue for the best interest of our people in this country. It is the indigenous people that I am talking about.

Some of you seem to be thinking that that idea is gone because you have tried it. May be something is wrong with your mechanisms and that is why it did not work and may be it is corrected now in this budget here. So let us give it a go.

Mr Speaker, I am not going to debate in details. People are running around talking about the diplomatic row between Solomon Islands and Australia. We call them development partners. Partner is the word. Just give me the definition of 'partner'. One should not be overtaking the other. They should be working together, not one in front and one at the back.

Some of my Members here who are well acquainted with partners tend to believe them as though they are the government of this sovereign country. What is wrong with us? What is wrong with you and me? Even in our olden days our parents looked after us.

Today when you talk about partners you said because you hurt them and so you are not going to receive any thing. God does not create you and me to be dependent on others if you are a biblical person. God create you and me to look after our own families, and He has given providence to this country. But when I heard academic honorable Members of Parliament crying, my goodness they are taking me back to the past. Yes, they are taking me back to the past.

Let us believe in ourselves and in our working relationship. Even you and your wives sometimes have arguments because marriage was meant for argument sometimes, but not to divorce. May be that is a simplest definition I can give for Members to understand.

I heard about rearming. People cry as if the heavens are falling. A sovereign nation needs to look after itself. How can you ask our neighbors that you are crying so much about

rearming the protective unit of the Prime Minister? You tell me, can you ask somebody from Indonesia to look after the Prime Minister of Australia. Can that be done? You are generalizing all police officers by saying that they are all militants.

Something must be wrong with the system at that time, and I know what went wrong at that time and you know it very well. Why don't you tell the truth? Or is it because they said it and so we have to go along with them? I think I know better at that time what was going on in this country. I know better than these people who are trying to tell us what to do in this country now.

Rearming the Close Protection Unit for His Excellency, the Governor General and the Prime Minister is an important sovereign task of a sovereign nation. It is only that unit that should be rearmed.

Mr Speaker, I am one of those who were very helpful in bringing back guns from Malaitan militants. No Member from Malaita at that time did it, but I did it. Despite the fact they shot my house and carried out an attempted assassination on my life, my wife and my children I went and did that task. My case was reported and nothing has been done to it until today despite the fact statements were already collected. Why? Just because my name is Charles Dausabea and that is why they did not want to take action on it. Had it been for somebody else they would have taken action.

Mr Speaker, let me come to the budget. I look into the budget and my only concern that needs to be rectified or must be rectified in the next one is to increase the amount of money that is to be allocated to the rural people. We will do that certainly and I believe the able Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance will do it. Take note of it and do it. But let us take the first step by getting this budget passed and let us move into our rural population.

Mr Speaker, that is my only concern that we need to improve may be in the next budget. I think and I believe the government has been cautious about this because a lot of funds have been given to ministries that look after small businesses, and yet that money never ended in the rural areas. There must be a mechanism put in place so that when this for rural development

goes down to the rural areas. Not like what the Member for Savo/Russells said today about the SICOPSA where people in the villages went to collect SICOPSA and ended up drinking in the urban centres.

I am calling on the government to be cautious about allocating money and giving it to the people. A mechanism must be put in place that people must be accountable and answerable for it if anything goes wrong.

We have gone through it in the past and I do not want to see it repeated again. I know because of those lessons the Minister and the Prime Minister have taken note of it to see that the money allocated to the rural people must end up in the rural areas. The only concern I have is that the amount is a bit too small, and may be the next one we will increase it.

Mr Speaker, before I resume my seat I also wish to inform the House that my statutory portfolio has been accused for being allocated a vehicle. As your new chairman for the Visitors Bureau, I feel that comment is very unfair because I have just been in the office for about two weeks but my portfolio or my was mentioned in this honorable House.

Mr Speaker, as the new chairman, I wish to inform the House that I have gone further. I called an honorable colleague from Vanuatu who has come across to discuss with me the way tourism has been developed in Vanuatu so that we can take that kind of approach here in the Solomon Islands.

Mr Speaker, this colleague has briefed the Cabinet and the Prime Minister on this approach. I will be calling on all Members of Parliament that we might meet sometimes because the approach goes direct to the rural areas. Some of them never go to the capital in Vila. This year he will be having about 135,000 passengers coming on boats and going straight to the islands. They go straight to targeted spots in the rural areas rather than coming to Honiara.

I think that is a good model this country needs to approach rather than waiting for hotels and motels to be built. We must move on because people want to visit this country, Mr Speaker. That is the approach the new chairman of the Visitors Bureau is bringing into this country and we will see it developed. May be if the Member for East Are Are wants his area to

be visited he can see me after this so that we note down the areas that he wants to be visited in East Are Are.

Mr Speaker, like I said I will be very general and I am just calling for a unified approach to the budget. Let us support this budget. Let us see it passed before we sit down and complain again. If it does not work then may be some of you on the other side should come over and we come up with another model. But if it works let us put our hands together and move forward so that our people can benefit from this budget.

Lastly but not the least, Mr Speaker, I support the Member for North Malaita on his call about the allocation of the RCDF. I think the Member for Central Kwara'ae, the Member for North West Malaita and myself the Member for East Honiara population-wise have been deprived of this fund. In the last election, Mr Speaker, East Honiara has 31,000 registered voters and my allocation is just the same with the others. I hope when this budget gets through and the Auluta ground breaking takes place, may be some of my people will naturally go back to work there and may be the voters list might reduce.

(hear, hear)

But at the moment I am a bit concerned. For example, the Member for Malaita Outer Islands, my Minister there has only about 3,000 voters as well as the Member for Rennell/Bellona but they have the same share of the cake like I do. I think that is something I want the good Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister and the Cabinet to look into so that when we are talking about representing our people fairly, Mr Speaker, the money for it too must be fair. Otherwise if I take this \$1million and share it among the 31,000 voters it is like one person getting \$32.72 and that is not even enough for a bag of rice. I think that is the concern I have.

Sir, without holding you up, I would like to thank all Members of Parliament, thank you colleagues, especially the new ones. Come and let us work together to serve our people.

To you Mr Speaker, thank you very much. I know that I nominated you and you were unopposed, unfortunately I have to go

somewhere else where I have been detained and now I am back and so I congratulate you.

Thank you every one, thank you Minister of Finance and Prime Minister. Thank you every one and God bless Solomon Islands.

Sitting suspended for lunch break

Parliament resumes and debate continues

Hon ROGOSOMANI: Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to briefly contribute to the 2007 National budget.

Mr Speaker, I think it is only wise as Minister of the Crown to inform this honorable House and the good people of Solomon Islands on what my department, the Department of Tourism and Culture has achieved in the last eight months or so, and what my department will be delivering to our people under this 2007 bottom up approach budget.

Mr Speaker, before doing so, I wish to first of all congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Finance and Treasury for confidently delivering our country's 30th National Budget since independence. I have personally witnessed your tireless efforts since taking up the Finance portfolio in relaying to us and the people the wider sector of our economy in ensuring that the 2007 budget meets the priorities of the government.

Mr Speaker, I wish to also acknowledge all the hardworking Permanent Secretaries and their officers who have one way or another contributed to the formulation of the 2007 Recurrent and Development budgets which we are now currently debating. I know it is not an easy task trying to implement political directives given the limited resources that we have in all the departments.

Sir, I must also thank the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee together with his committee members for critically scrutinizing the 2007 National Budget before it came before this honorable Chamber.

Mr Speaker, I think it is the first time in the history of this Parliament to have the media organization, personnel and television crews actually present while the PAC is in full session. This is a strong and good sign that we are striving forward in terms of achieving

transparency in the manner we are dealing with our National budget.

Mr Speaker, let me now turn to the Department of Tourism and Culture 2007 Budget. I will first of all talk about the tourism aspect and later on touch on the cultural budget of my department.

Mr Speaker, tourism as we all know is a very important sector in any country's economy. In some countries this is the only sector that sustains their economy. In our country, tourism has the potential to be a top income earner for our urban and rural population.

Mr Speaker, since taking up the position as Minister responsible for tourism, people have asked me this popular question - why is that our tourism sector is not developed like Fiji and Vanuatu? Yes, we are behind in terms of the development of this industry but instead of talking about the achievements of other countries, my department is taking some steps in ensuring that our tourism sector is developed to a stage where we can compare ourselves to our neighbors.

Firstly, in our 2007 recurrent budget, we have increased the number of tourism officers within the department to cater for all provinces. These officers will enter the department with a minimal qualification of degree majoring in tourism and marketing.

The main tasks of these officers is to work alongside their provincial and rural counterparts in assessing, monitoring and evaluating tourism related projects in ensuring that these projects contribute positively to the development of the tourism sector.

Mr Speaker, this is advancement to rural people as in the past there were only skeleton staff in the department that could not perform the task, hence resulting in most projects in the rural areas failing.

Secondly, in line with the above step of increase recruitment, my department has increased its touring expense to ensure officers actually go down and assist tourism activities in our rural set up.

In terms of our development budget for tourism, the Minister of Finance had already touched on the allocation of the three provinces namely Central Islands, Temotu, and Rennell & Bellona Provinces that have been identified as

the first three provinces that will be developed under this budget.

Mr Speaker, this does not mean that we are forgetting the other provinces. Under the estimates there is also an allocation for other provinces including Honiara.

Mr Speaker, some may argue that allocation is not sufficient but we have to be realistic as the Minister of Finance has stated that we are providing funds that the government can be best afford.

Mr Speaker, also under the development estimates, there is a provision of \$750,000 to help establish an Institute of Hospitality in our country. Sir, there is no point in further elaborating the need of having such an institute. All of us, I believe, have traveled overseas and see first hand the services provided by hotels that we stay in and you all would concur with me that the level of services provided in most of our hotels, motels, lodges and resorts is still below standard. Hence my Department is determined to have this institute as soon as practicable.

Mr Speaker, the Tourism Department will also benefit from the ongoing institutional strengthening and capacity building program of the government under its development budget. There is an allocation for this which the department will help its provincial and rural staff and officers.

Mr Speaker, allow me sometime to inform this Parliament and our people on some of the actions that the Tourism Department has achieved or is planning to do to continue to lift the development of our tourism sector.

Firstly, my department with the kind and generous assistance of AusAID is currently conducting an international visitor and quality survey to find out what tourists really want to see and feel in the Solomon Islands. This survey is considered to be crucial for the advancement of the tourism business as it will identify the various activities that our tourists would like to have here in the Solomons. Thereafter, the department can draw some clear policies targeting the need of our tourists.

Mr Speaker, just last week we had discussions with Vanuatu representatives who are willing to assist us in arranging some cruise

ships coming from the Vanuatu remote areas to visit our remote and rural areas.

Mr Speaker, this issue is still at its discussion stage and we will further explore this but my Department is determined to venture into this arrangement as it will also help our bottom up approach as the main beneficiary are the village people. Mr Speaker, I will inform this House and the people of this country on the progress of this arrangement as we move on this year.

Someone mentioned Anuha and Mamara/Tasifarongo land – yes, my Ministry is fully aware of these two huge tourism potential sites. We will be working together with key stakeholders on the way forward for these national tourism projects to be revived.

I welcome constructive ideas to assist my department in reviving these two projects. I have already appointed a new Board to the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau and in their meeting last week I challenged them to work as the marketing arm of my department to bring more tourists to our shores. I also urge the new Board to stop worrying about the suspension of government's subvention or grant for if they demonstrate good management and governance they will be entitled to this subvention later in the future.

Mr Speaker, I will now briefly touch on the Cultural Division of my department. Our culture, as we all know, is very unique and diverse. Some strong elements of culture include giving and sharing, loving, peaceful entertaining, friendly and happy. That is why we are termed as the happy isles of the Pacific.

Of course, Mr Speaker, we do have some weakness in our cultures but if we care to promote, protect and preserve the strong elements of our cultures, Solomon Islands will be one of the best countries in the world to live in. Recognizing the importance of our culture, my department under its current budget will increase its manpower establishment in the National Archives, National Museum, Cultural and Arts Gallery Division.

Mr Speaker, arrangement is now underway to have in place a National Archivist, a very important position which has been vacant for the last five or six years.

Sir, last year during the Melanesian Arts Festival in Fiji our participation was branded the best and had huge followings during the Arts Festivals. This only proves that our culture is strong and exciting. In recognizing the importance of our culture the government had decided to use the proceeds from the site of the former Arts Gallery to construct a new Arts Gallery and also assist provinces or constituencies that are embarking on building or hosting traditional and cultural shows.

Mr Speaker, our culture is very important and our children must be taught to respect our diverse cultures. For if we have cultural breakdown then we may face problems like we have in the tension and the April riots.

Mr Speaker our way of life is very important and must be handed down to our younger generations so they can live peacefully amongst themselves. Cultures are crucial as the saying goes, 'IF YOU DO NOT KNOW WHERE YOU ARE COMING FROM THEN YOU WILL NOT KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING'.

My department will be formulating a National Cultural Policy in ensuring that our culture is preserved, protected and promoted to be beneficial to our people and country.

Mr Speaker, globalization is coming whether we like it or not hence it is only timely that we have a cultural policy so we can maintain the good side of culture while reaping the benefits from globalization.

Mr Speaker, before I take my seat I have already covered my department in the 2007 budget, however, I believe it is only reasonable for me to say some good advice to my good people of Lau/Mbaelelea constituency. My hardworking people of Lau/Mbaelelea, I am urging you on this floor of Parliament to assist the government in implementing this budget. This 2007 budget is targeted at people like you who are struggling to meet your basic needs every day.

Mr Speaker, my people of Lau/Mbaelelea I want all of us to participate in this budget, for we must not be spectators in the implementation of this budget. We will encounter frustration and anger, but with cooperation and patience we will stand to benefit from this budget.

Let me finish by quoting what our good Bible says, 'before you eat, you must sweat'.

Mr Speaker, with these few remarks I support this bill.

The House adjourned at 3.30 pm